

Launching the Africa Climate Solution— A REDD-Agriculture, Forestry and Sustainable Land Use (AFOLU) Bio-carbon Coalition

Wednesday, 10th December 2008

For immediate release

“Include All of Us Now,” Africa tells international community

The clock is ticking for Africa. Any delays in recognising Africa’s potential contribution to adaptation and mitigation measures on climate change will reverse gains in sustainable development. This was the key message behind a fresh and bold initiative launched at the COP 14 meeting in Poznan, Poland by the countries of Africa.

The African Climate Solution – the most ambitious initiative towards climate mitigation, adaptation and improved rural livelihoods for the continent – was launched in Poznan at the COP 14 meeting by a grouping of 26 African countries in East, Central and Southern Africa. The African Climate Solution entails the reduction of green house gas emissions by forest resources (REDD) and carbon sequestration through agriculture, forestry and land use (AFOLU) in Africa and throughout the developing world. It intends to build a global coalition of developing countries into a REDD-AFOLU Bio-carbon Coalition. The Initiative is supported and endorsed by President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana, The Honourable Vincent Karega, Minister of Natural Resources from Rwanda, The Honourable Catherine Namugala, MP, Minister of Tourism, Environment, Natural Resources of Zambia, The Honourable Rejoice Mabudafhasi, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, South Africa, Mr. Agus Purnomo, Head of Indonesia’s National Council on Climate Change, The Honourable Ligia de Doens, Minister of Environment for Panama, The Honourable Ambassador Blake of Antigua and Barbuda on representing G77+China.

“It is no longer a question of if or of when, Africa should be and will be part and parcel of a post –Kyoto Protocol regime,” said Mr. Sindiso Ngwenya, Secretary General of COMESA who gave a key note presentation at the launch of the Africa Climate Solution. “This initiative is African in origin but is intended to include all developing nations. We all face the same problem of dealing with climate change and sustainable development. We are seeking the support of countries in Asia, Latin America and Small Island States to ensure that not only Africa’s voice but that of the world’s poor and excluded will be heard loud and clear in articulating solutions for mitigation and adaptation measures on climate change.”

Africa is leading a high level delegation to Poznan comprising representatives from organisations representing farmers, the private sector, the research community, civil society development, partners and banks. The African Climate Solution initiative is a culmination of multi-sectoral and continent-wide consultations started in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2008.

According to the United Nations’ panel of climate experts, Africa is “highly vulnerable” to the impacts of climate change. Drivers include recurrent drought, degrading lands, and declines in agricultural productivity, and widespread poverty. Climate change has serious implications for economic growth, sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as it magnifies, intensifies and speeds up already serious threats to ecosystems and the people.

“The development gains attained in Africa are being threatened by the effects of global climate change,” said Ngwenya, who has championed the call to use forest and agricultural systems to sustain Africa’s livelihoods. Over 100 developing nations have thus far received nothing from the global carbon markets because they are reliant on agriculture and forestry sectors which have been excluded from the current arrangements.

The African Climate Solution calls for the expansion of eligibility of resources beyond REDD to include the full range of bio-carbon in the climate change negotiations. Agriculture, forestry, and land use all provide important opportunities for mitigating climate change and incentivising sustainable land use throughout the developing world. Africa is calling for inclusion in the global carbon markets and the Clean Development Mechanisms of carbon credits

for afforestation, reforestation, agroforestry, and enhanced natural regeneration, re-vegetation of degraded lands, reduced soil tillage, and sustainable agricultural practices.

“Despite the expansion of the global Market for Carbon emissions which the World Bank last year valued at over US\$7.5 billion, Africa been left out in the cold.” Ngwenya said. Most of all it excludes poor farmers. If they are included we can not only take the pressure off our existing forests the carbon market can help lift them out of poverty.”

Africa’s civil society organisations (CSOs) have added their voice and endorsed the African Climate Solution as a model for a better future after 2012.

All COMESA members have signed a declaration calling for the post Kyoto treaty to “include agriculture, sustainable land management, sustainable forest management, afforestation, reforestation reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. This declaration is now also supported by The East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

Lead advocate for CSOs, Dr. Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, speaking at the launch, underlined the importance of global carbon market in transforming Africa’s agriculture and economies.

“We are saying the carbon markets must reward our resource-poor farmers for contributing to efforts towards mitigating the effects of climate change,” said Dr. Sibanda, who is also Head of Mission and CEO of the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), based in South Africa.

“Africa has spoken with one voice on its readiness to join hands with the international community in securing a cleaner and sustainable planet for current and future generations. The time for that action is now.”

Africa has set the ball rolling, having developed a framework for the creation of an African Fund that would provide a sustainable carbon financing mechanism suitable for investments sustainable agriculture / agroforestry projects in Africa. The Fund will acquire offsets from African land-use projects on a large enough scale to channel meaningful streams of revenue to communities to ensure the successful implementation and on-going stewardship of land-use projects. Already a number of international partners have endorsed the African Climate Solutions, some of whom include NEPAD, TerrAfrica, WWF, World Agroforestry Center, ICRAF, Terra Capital Global, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Food Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and (ASARECA) and Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

Ahead of COP 15 in Copenhagen, the global climate change negotiations currently taking place in Poznan provide the best potential for Africa to formally contribute to climate change mitigation, adaptation, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

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Note to Editors:

For interviews, contact:

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International Emissions Trading Association (IETA) Side Event:

Issues surrounding the inclusion of agriculture and land use change in a trading system

Wednesday 10th December 11.30 – 1.00pm
The IETA Options Room – Pavilion 12 in Poznan

A press conference is scheduled for 1330hrs at the media centre press conference room on first floor in 8th Pavilion.

Speakers include:

Secretary General Sindiso Ngwenya of COMESA will introduce the African Bio-Carbon Initiative and launch the Nairobi Declaration. He will also moderate the event.

Speakers include:

- The Honourable Vincent Karega, Minister of Natural Resources from Rwanda
- The Honourable Ambassador Blake of Antigua and Barbuda, representing G77+China
- The Honourable Mrs. Ligia Castro de Doens, Minister of Environment, Panama
- Mr. Agus Purnomo head of Indonesia's National Council on Climate Change (TBC)
- Mr. Kevin Hogan representing President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guayana
- The Honourable Catherine Namugala, MP, Minister of Tourism, Environment, Natural Resources of Zambia
- The Honourable Rejoice Mabudafhasi Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs South Africa
- Dr. Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, Head of Mission and Chief Executive Officer, Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis
- Senior Australian negotiator, Department of Climate Change in the Ministry of Environment, Australia