



Press Release

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BILLION HECTARES OF FORESTS WITH POTENTIAL FOR RESTORATION, STUDY SHOWS

Issued on behalf of the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration

London, UK, 26 November, 2009 (IUCN) – Land areas around the world, bigger than Canada, have been identified as having potential to be restored to good quality, healthy forests, a new study has found.

As the global effort to help tackle climate change by reversing the earth's alarming loss of forests steps up, scientists using sophisticated satellite mapping have produced a world map identifying areas in which more than a billion hectares of former forest land and degraded forest land has restoration potential.

That's about six per cent of the planet's total land area. Restoring forests to some of these lands could be achieved without prejudicing other vital land uses, such as food production. The Global Partnership on Forest Restoration (GPFLR) says that the needs and rights of indigenous peoples and others who are dependent on forests must be respected when considering restoration projects. GPFLR will now work with individual countries and local communities to deliver restoration where communities benefit.

"With a global population already approaching seven billion, and forecast to increase to more than eight billion by 2025, the pressure on all of our natural resources is immense," says **Tim Rollinson, Chairman of the GPFLR and Director-General of the British Forestry Commission**. "At the same time, the Earth's forests continue to shrink, and what's left is increasingly being degraded. We know how to restore forests and make them sustainable. We now also know where we should do it, so we should be getting on with it."

The findings were announced today in London at an international meeting of the GPFLR, of which IUCN and the Forestry Commission of Great Britain are founding members. The assessment has revealed that the potential to restore the world's lost forests is much greater than the previous estimate of 850 million hectares.

The GPFLR partners say that forest restoration can have a significant impact on climate change as well as improving lives, and that urgent action on restoration should be taken hand in hand with efforts to stop the continuing global loss and degradation of forests. Preliminary analysis indicates that by 2030 the restoration of degraded forest lands will make the same contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gases as that which could be expected from avoided deforestation (70 Gt of CO² emissions) and perhaps as much as twice that amount. The GPFLR will work with countries over the next year to clarify and refine these figures on a country by country basis.

"Forest restoration experiences around the world provide evidence that, while it is impossible to replace a pristine forest once it's gone, many of the functions it originally provided can be restored," says **Stewart Maginnis, Director of IUCN Environment and Development Group**. "Forests provide such vital services, like clean water and fresh air, that we can win on all fronts by bringing them back to life. We need to protect the forests we have left, and restore what we've lost."

For more information or images, or to set up interviews, please contact:

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Notes to Editors

1. Images, including a video version of the map and pictures from forest landscape restoration projects in China and Tanzania, are available to illustrate this story. Contact the media contacts listed above, or see www.ideastransformlandscapes.org for details and images of successful forest restoration projects in many parts of the world.
2. The Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration brings together a range of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors around the world to work together to encourage and facilitate the restoration of forest landscapes. www.ideastransformlandscapes.org
3. Forests once covered more than 50 per cent of the world's land area. Today that figure is below 30 per cent as a consequence of humans removing forests for unsustainable logging and conversion to other land uses, such as cropping, grazing, industry, and towns and cities. Deforestation continues to be a problem, especially in countries in tropical regions, but the forest area in many countries in temperate regions is increasing. For example, the forest area in Europe increased by an estimated 13 million hectares – about the size of Greece – between 1990 and 2005. However, the rate of deforestation continues to outstrip the rate of reforestation, so that globally the world continued to lose a net 7 million hectares a year – almost the area of Scotland – between 2000 and 2005.
4. Forests act as giant carbon 'sinks', or stores, holding billions of tonnes of carbon in their plants and soils. When forests are removed and not replanted or regenerated, much of this carbon is emitted to the atmosphere, contributing to the global warming that is causing climate change.
5. The area of Canada is 997,000,000 hectares.
6. Production of the world map of areas with potential for forest restoration was achieved with assistance from PROFOR, the World Bank's Programme on Forests and the Government of the Netherlands.

PROFOR is a multi-donor partnership formed to pursue a shared goal of enhancing forests' contribution to poverty reduction, sustainable development and protection of environmental services. Through improved knowledge and approaches for sustainable forest management (SFM), PROFOR seeks to encourage the transition to a more socially and environmentally sustainable forest sector supported by sound policies and institutions that take a holistic approach to forest conservation and management.

About IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges.

IUCN works on biodiversity, climate change, energy, human livelihoods and greening the world economy by supporting scientific research, managing field projects all over the world, and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,000 government and NGO members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

www.iucn.org

About The Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission is the government department for forestry in Great Britain. It was a co-founder of the GPFLR, along with IUCN and the international environmental organisation WWF.

www.forestry.gov.uk