

## SUMMARY OF THE SIDE EVENT JOINING FORCES TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 15 (SDG15): DELIVERING ON THE GLOBAL AGENDA FOR FORESTS, CLIMATE AND DEVELOPMENT: 16 NOVEMBER 2016

This event was hosted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and co-hosted by the UN Development Program (UNDP), UN Environment, the UN-REDD Programme and the World Bank Group. The event focused on joining forces to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 (protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss). The event convened on 16 November 2016 during UNFCCC COP 22 in Marrakech, Morocco. Attracting diverse stakeholders, the event highlighted best practices and lessons learned with the objectives to: showcase how initiatives in land-use sectors, especially REDD+ implementation, can be catalytic in strengthening efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by presenting flagship joint initiatives; strategize the way forward on the agriculture–forestry nexus in the context of deforestation and delivering on SDG15 and other SDGs; and discuss how the momentum created by the adoption of Paris Agreement can be leveraged to scale up funding for land use sectors, including forests and climate actions.

## REPORT OF THE SIDE EVENT

Moderator Matt Frei, Channel 4 News, UK, introduced the event, noting he was very impressed by the general “busyness” of COP 22, as well as by the sense of global family.

Noting that we can no longer look at the management of natural resources in a compartmentalized way, José Graziano da Silva, Director-General, FAO, underscored that promoting sustainable solutions on forests and land use has direct impacts on all SDGs, especially SDG1 (no poverty) and SDG2 (zero hunger). He stressed that most people suffering from food insecurity live in rural areas in developing countries, and emphasized that investing in them is fundamental for sustainably managing forests, halting biodiversity loss and combatting desertification. Recalling that deforestation and forest degradation account for 10% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, he highlighted the REDD+ mechanism as a catalyst for delivering on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that include land use and forestry. Underscoring the need to work at the nexus between agriculture and forests in an integrated manner, he urged for intensification of initiatives to make agriculture more productive, climate resilient, and address hunger, poverty and climate change.

Emphasizing the need for “good planning, implementation and deep pockets,” Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director, UN Environment, highlighted that the 2016 emissions gap report shows a CO<sub>2</sub> gap of 12-14 gigatons, which will need combined actions from state and non-state actors to be addressed. Thiaw



Panel (L-R): **Matt Frei**, Channel 4 News, UK; **Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim**, Coordinator, AFPAT/IPACC; **Samuela Lagataki**, Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and Forests, Fiji; **Siti Nurbaya Bakar**, Minister for Environment and Forestry, Indonesia; **Vidar Helgesen**, Minister of Climate and Environment, Norway; and **James Close**, Director of Climate Change, World Bank Group

noted that the UN-REDD Programme is supported by 64 tropical forest countries, demonstrating they can work collectively despite their differences. He also noted that REDD issues have been the least controversial during the climate negotiations, and stressed that climate negotiations and actions are at the crossroad, requiring joint, sustained efforts “to complete the marathon together.”

Highlighting links among forests, climate change and the SDGs, James Close, Director of Climate Change, World Bank Group, underscored a shift in mindset around sustainable development, noting that forests and landscapes are central in the equation. He emphasized the need to step up work on forests and landscapes to help countries implement relevant commitment in their NDCs, moving towards decarbonized economies. Providing examples, Close described REDD+ as the catalyst, linking different sources of finance for sustainable rural economies. He further stressed, *inter alia*: the need to engage the private sector; the opportunity to integrate the SDGs and support land use commitments; access to finance; social inclusion; and involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in the implementation phase.

The second part of the event was an interactive panel discussion moderated by Frei and addressed experiences and lessons learned from different countries.

Discussing peat management to address peat fires in Indonesia, Siti Nurbaya Bakar, Minister for Environment and Forestry, Indonesia, noted participatory efforts for canal blocking in community and corporate land. Noting that the programme has been successful as the number of hectares burned was reduced significantly, she highlighted guidelines and regulations from the central government, addressing not only peat management, but also law enforcement, administrative sanctions and penalties. Bakar also highlighted technological supporting systems for early warning, monitoring and awareness at the site level, saying that it would not be possible without technical and scientific support from the international community. Providing examples from various provinces, she stressed that community participation is not confined to construction, but extends to landscape management, emphasizing that work on ecosystem restoration cannot be successful without engaging indigenous and local communities, the private sector, civil society, and academia.

Samuela Lagataki, Permanent Secretary for Fisheries and Forests, Fiji, underscored the importance of the existence of a concrete legal framework under the Paris Agreement. He recalled that since 2009, all efforts to plan activities and engage local communities regarding REDD+ were inhibited by uncertainty due to ongoing negotiations, and emphasized the importance of the Paris Agreement, as well as that of the participative approach.

Noting that forests are part of the solution to combat climate change, Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Coordinator, Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad (AFPAT) and

Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC), stressed that the Paris Agreement cannot be achieved without forests and that proper forest management cannot be attained without the engagement of IPLCs. She lamented that few NDCs have a human rights dimension, let alone addressing indigenous rights in particular, and stressed that “we do not ask for permission or wait for legislation to protect our forests, it is our duty to do so.” Providing examples of successful involvement of indigenous peoples in policy designs in Indonesia, the Philippines, Ecuador, Chad, Cameroon and the Central African Republic, she called for, *inter alia*: engagement of indigenous peoples in decision making; and use of indigenous knowledge, respecting their rules and customary laws regarding forest management.

Stressing that without forests, commitments under the Paris Agreement and the SDGs cannot be fulfilled, Vidar Helgesen, Minister of Climate and Environment, Norway, discussed his country’s efforts to support developing countries, willing to take actions on restoration and preservation of forests. Noting strong language regarding forests both in the Paris Agreement and the SDGs, he underscored the increased recognition of their importance. Regarding main implementation obstacles, Helgesen highlighted, among others: the interplay between agriculture and forestry, noting that evidence from 25 countries, including Brazil and Indonesia, shows that it is possible to simultaneously increase productivity and reduce deforestation; illegal logging; and weak governance structures. Noting that the programmes they are involved in are based on performance, he stressed that “we do not worry about the money we spend, but rather about the money we do not spend.” He urged for awareness raising, a change consumer behavior and attracting investments from the private sector using innovative policies to minimize risk associated with investments in agriculture and forestry.

Stressing that IPLCs know the best way to protect forests and have a direct interest in stopping illegal logging, James Close, Director of Climate Change, World Bank Group, highlighted the Dedicated Grant Mechanism, an innovative new grant programme for fighting forest loss, which is putting project design and funding decisions in the hands of IPLCs and gives them the power to set priorities and implement programmes aimed at conserving their natural environment.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed, *inter alia*, the proportion of forest restoration as opposed to plantations.

Providing closing remarks, Magdy Martínez-Solimán, Assistant Administrator and Director of Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP, summarized the discussion, underscoring that acting on forests allows for achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement, which in turn helps the achievement of the SDGs. Advocating for the need for forests to become “a big cause for the world,” he stressed that no one can address them unilaterally, urging for a strong coalition among governments, civil society, the private sector and multilateral organizations.