

**Presentation by IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre at the Ecosystem  
Restoration Day at the CBD COP 11**

**“Uniting to restore 150 million hectares by 2020”**

**17 October 2012, Hyderabad, India**

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to join my distinguished fellow panellists today to celebrate the restoration of ecosystems and extend my thanks to all those who worked hard to make today happen.

The goal of restoring ecosystems is completely aligned with IUCN’s vision of ‘A Just world that values and conserves nature’. Of course this means that we have ambitions to see the threat of deforestation and ecosystem degradation stopped. But, in addition, our role in “helping the world to find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges” pushes us to seek practical nature-based *solutions*. This is why we have been intensively involved in restoration work for more than 10 years.

Our interest, and that of many of our partners, is to look beyond the drive to achieve single outcomes at individual sites, for example only carbon, or only food, to looking at broader landscapes within which multiple ecosystem goods and services can be generated – to benefit people, economic development and nature conservation.

I hope to convey to you today how this delivery of benefits for nature and people at a *local level* becomes extremely significant to achieving existing global and national targets and commitments when taken to a global scale; and that scaling up landscape restoration efforts can *only* be done by us coming *together in partnership*, across borders, across sectors and across the public-private divide.

I speak to you today both as Director General of IUCN – the world’s largest professional and global network – but also as part of the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration which IUCN hosts. This is a 10-year partnership between more than 30 governments, international organizations, NGOs, indigenous peoples’ organizations and private enterprises. “Global partnership for local results” is what we do!

Let me for a moment dwell on forest ecosystems as an entry point to looking at degraded ecosystems in a fresh way. Ten years ago we were told that the role of forests in rural development was – at best – to provide a safety net to vulnerable communities in times of hardship and shocks.

Today we know that 1.6 billion people depend directly on forests for their livelihoods, for non-timber forests products – such as nuts, rubber, honey, medicinal plants; and for timber and charcoal. We know that forest and tree resources contribute over 25% of household income to many rural families on a regular basis.

At IUCN, we have estimated that forests provide poor rural communities with *direct* livelihood benefits worth some US \$130 billion a year – a figure that equates to the annual global total of Official Development Assistance.

So is this the answer? Is it just a question of more trees?

No. The factors I've described call for a different approach to restoration. We believe that it should:

- Be driven by the dual imperative to improve ecosystem integrity and human wellbeing
- Recognize the needs and claims of different stakeholders, not least those of rural women and children
- Be capable of delivering different mixes of specific ecosystem goods and services while being able to adapt to changes over time
- Finally, that it take place at a broader landscape scale, because it's only at that level that it is possible to negotiate necessary trade-offs between different land-uses while still delivering an optimal mix of the goods and services people need from their ecosystems.

The scale of the restoration opportunity worldwide is huge – we and our partners have estimated it to be more than 2 billion hectares.

There are several international commitments of relevance to landscape restoration on a global scale:

- The CBD Aichi Target 15, that calls for 15% of degraded ecosystems to be restored;
- The UNFCCC decision from the COP in Cancun, which established the global goal to slow, halt and reverse forest and carbon loss, including through enhancement of forest carbon stocks; and
- The UN Forum on Forests call to its members – all the member States of the UN – to implement forest landscape restoration.

Restoration of ecosystems within a landscape perspective can contribute to other global goals, including notably those related to combating land degradation, emphasized in the outcomes of the Rio+20 summit, and to ensuring food security.

In September 2011, the Government of Germany and IUCN, in support of the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration, co-hosted a high level event on Forests, Carbon and Biodiversity. The event launched the *Bonn Challenge* – a target to restore 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested lands by 2020 – specifically designed to catalyse and support implementation of existing international commitments, such as the ones I have just mentioned.

We feel that the 150 million hectare target is a realistic step towards the overall potential of 2 billion hectares.

IUCN has estimated the value of restoring this much land. We have found that in terms of food security, jobs and other direct benefits to communities and local economies restoring 150 million hectares would deliver US\$84 billion of benefits per year, net of costs. This includes such things as income from timber, charcoal for energy, increased crop production, non-timber products, and rewarding communities for directly contributing to climate change mitigation by capturing and storing CO<sub>2</sub> in restored landscapes.

We also calculate that restoring 150 million hectares would contribute to global climate mitigation by sequestering 1 Gigaton of Carbon equivalent per year.

When in the lead up to the Rio+20 summit the public voted on the most important areas for Heads of State to act on, this target secured the most votes in the forest category – more than 1 million votes from the public – and this was voted second overall after sustainable energy. This confirms that restoration is not just something that “experts” can talk to each other about and work on – it is something that captures the imagination of us all – from politicians to the men and women ‘on the street’.

This public appeal has recently been tested and harnessed through the launch of the Plant a Pledge Campaign, designed by IUCN and supported by Airbus as a contribution to the Bonn Challenge and to the Global Partnership. This was launched in June in Rio.

In Rio the Global Partnership also announced the first country and landowner pledges to the Bonn Challenge – totalling over 18 million hectares!! We expect several more significant pledges to be made in the coming months, and expect to pass the 30 million hectare mark very soon.

So as you can see, significant progress has been made within only one year of the launch of this ambitious target. What we're witnessing is the taking off the biggest restoration initiative the world has ever seen. This gathering today is further proof that restoration's day has come!

But can we be sure, once commitments are made to the Bonn Challenge – that the implementation of landscape restoration is possible? Or is just wishful thinking? No – there already is a rich and long case history.

IUCN recently held its congress in Jeju, South Korea. While there, we appreciated again how much the Republic of Korea is an excellent example of successful restoration, with a remarkable recent history of restoration of its forest landscapes that may appear, to some, almost counter-intuitive. Contrary to the often-stated assumption that countries lose forests as they grow economically, Korea did not “deforest to develop” and only then begin restoring its degraded landscapes which is what many countries have done, or are still doing.

Korea entered the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as an impoverished, degraded country ravaged by decades of war and conflict. Over the course of 50 years, Korea then set about successfully restoring its degraded landscapes while it developed – and, remarkably, while its population doubled.

This example helps us to challenge two long-standing myths – that landscape restoration takes too long and costs too much. Look at what Korea has achieved over 50 years, with a 50-fold return on its investment.

And if 50 years is too long, look at how Costa Rica almost doubled forest cover in 25 years – reinforcing its green image on which a highly successful eco-tourism industry is built.

And if 25 years is still too long, look at what the Ministry of Natural Resources and local communities achieved in Northern Tanzania in 15 years – 2 million hectares of new natural forests and agro-forests that almost doubled household income.

As illustrated so clearly by these examples, and supported by our own analysis, the restoration of ecosystems at a landscape scale can be – and ought to be seen – as an economic driver rather than a financial burden.

Today we are on the cusp of seeing landscape restoration widely accepted as critical and achievable nature-based contribution to solving some of the world's most pressing challenges.

To achieve this vision we need to reach out: across the sectors we are familiar dealing with; reach out to new sectors, and form partnerships at national, regional and global level, dedicated to attaining our goal. The diverse participation in this panel and this event reflects this growing desire to step outside our own constituencies and it is restoration opportunities that are bringing us together.

In closing I invite you to watch a minute excerpt from the Plant a Pledge film. I invite you to join us, and to join those countries and partners that have already made concrete commitments - and make the Bonn Challenge to restore 150 million hectares of lost forests and degraded lands by 2020 a reality. This will go a significant way to achieving the CBD's own Target 15 and addressing many other global challenges.

Thank you.