

African Leaders Convene First Regional Forum To Explore Market-Based Conservation Strategies

9/19/2005

Teams from Five African Countries Launch Strategic Effort to Develop Payments for Ecosystem Services that Address Conservation, Poverty Concerns

(CSRWire) Kampala, Uganda - A diverse group of government, business, policy, community, civil society organizations and academic leaders today announced the beginning of a long-term cooperative effort to develop ecosystem services markets aimed at combating environmental degradation and poverty in Africa.

The announcement came at the opening of a four-day workshop co-hosted by The Environmental Conservation Trust of Uganda (ECOTRUST), the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) Uganda, Forest Trends (U.S.) and the Katoomba Group, entitled Building Foundations for Pro-Poor Ecosystem Services in Africa. The workshop brought together more than 70 experts from Eastern and Southern Africa, Europe, North America and Australia to assess the current and potential capacity for these countries to develop systems that reward landowners, local communities and private enterprises for conserving valuable ecosystem services like protecting watersheds and wildlife habitat.

"This initiative supplements efforts of African governments in creating a new source of conservation finance and is in line with the goals of NEPAD, and sub regional initiatives such as the East African community and SADC", said Major General Kahinda Otafiire, the Ugandan Minister of Water, Lands and the Environment.

"Paying landowners, communities and companies to protect ecosystem services could have a great impact on conservation and provide important new income opportunities for Ugandans," stated Dr. J.R. Sonko Kaboggoza, Chairman of the Board, ECOTRUST, Uganda. "Many countries have had successful experience in mobilizing private companies, municipalities and others who benefit directly from ecosystem services to pay for conservation. We are eager to explore how to adapt these programs to work well in Uganda and other regions of Africa."

"Payments for ecosystem services offer an exciting possible solution to some of Africa's biggest economic and ecological challenges," added Dr. Aryamanya-Mugisha, Henry, Executive Director of the National Environment Management Authority, Uganda. "We need to thoroughly examine projects currently underway throughout Africa, learn from them and develop policy frameworks to support practical and realistic PES programs that will produce tangible results on the ground. This workshop provides the first forum for discussing strategies specifically designed for Africa."

African countries have become increasingly interested in payments for ecosystem services (PES) over recent years and a number of projects have emerged on an ad hoc basis. For example:

- In Uganda, ECOTRUST launched the "Trees for Global Benefits Program" in which companies like Tetrapak and Future Forests have so far purchased carbon emissions credits of about US\$100,000 that pay individual farmers in Ruhinda and Bunyaruguru counties of Bushenyi District to plant indigenous tree species. The payments are channeled through European-based carbon broker, Bioclimatic Research and Development (BR&D), and a Ugandan national conservation trust fund, ECOTRUST, to individual farmers. With the first deals signed in 2004 and 2005, the project is still in the pilot phase with payments to 100 farmers having already been made.
- In the Rift-Valley Province of Kenya, the Shompole Community Trust, with funding from the Ford Foundation, European Union Biodiversity Conservation Program and Timber Trade Federation, established an exclusive 10,000 ha biodiversity conservation area in 2001, where the local community is paid to provide ecotourism services to the clients of organizations like the Kenya Wildlife Service, African Conservation Center and Art of Ventures who visit to view game, scenic landscapes, and spend their nights at the lodge. The Shompole Community Trust manages the conservation area, receives all the funds from the tourism facilities and manages the social development projects on behalf of the community.
- Two water conservation projects in South Africa, "Working for Water" and "Working for Wetlands" have trained teams over the past 10 years to improve water quality and supply by removing alien invasive plant species and providing services that rehabilitate wetlands and wetland functions. The programs also train team leaders to cost the work and develop quotes for buyers, which include local landowners, and establish a monitoring program for follow up work. Each water or wetlands team acts as an individual unit, providing the service and being paid for it.

Despite these positive developments, there has been little discussion and assessment about the strategic role PES can or should play in achieving economic, environmental and social objectives.

"There are many unrecognized opportunities for expanding PES in Africa to have a significant impact on conservation and poverty reduction," stated Michael Jenkins, President of Forest Trends. Jenkins continued, "We

envision local landowners being paid by cities and industries such as water bottling companies and hydro-electric power plants to preserve watersheds that can supply fresh water. Carbon emission offsets, purchased by utilities and other businesses throughout Africa, offer an opportunity for communities and landowners to be rewarded for sustainable land management. However, these markets will not materialize if we don't focus energy and resources in these African settings."

Building Foundations for Pro-Poor Ecosystem Services in Africa was organized in collaboration with Ecoagriculture Partners, Kenyan Resource Center for Indigenous Knowledge (Kenya), BEA International (Kenya), LEAD (Malawi), and Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (South Africa). Sponsors include: Forest Trends, The Katoomba Group, International Fund for Agriculture and Development, The Ford Foundation, The World Bank, PROFOR, The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, The Global Environmental Facility, The United Nations Development Fund, Mitsubishi Corporation, United States Forest Service, Global Forests Products and CINCS.

Forest Trends and the Katoomba Group have been leading work internationally on the development of payments for ecosystem services. They launched the Ecosystem Marketplace SM in 2004 to provide much-needed transparency for emerging ecosystem markets. For more information about ecosystem markets, please visit www.ecosystemmarketplace.com.

Notes to Editors:

About Forest Trends

Established in 1999 by an international group of leaders from environmental and community development NGOs, forest industry, multilateral development agencies and investment firms, Forest Trends works to achieve sustainable forest management and conservation by creating and capturing market values for ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, water purification, flood control, and biodiversity conservation; support innovative projects and companies that are developing these new markets; and enhance the livelihoods of local communities living in and around those forests. For more information visit www.forest-trends.org.

About The Katoomba Group

The Katoomba Group is an international working group composed of leading experts from forest and energy industries, research institutions,

the financial world, and environmental NGOs dedicated to advancing markets for ecosystem services. The Katoomba Group seeks to address key challenges for developing markets for ecosystem services, from enabling legislation to establishing new market institutions, developing pricing and marketing strategies, and monitoring performance. Visit www.katoombagroup.org for more information.

About ECOTRUST, Uganda

The environmental Conservation Trust of Uganda (ECOTRUST) aims at promoting positive environmental management and sustainable development practices through increasing access to conservation finance especially to the poor rural communities. As the first Ugandan national nongovernmental conservation trust fund, ECOTRUST was established in 1999 under the Ugandan Trustees incorporation act. The trust fund has developed transparent fund administrative mechanisms that have enabled the institution to create visible change in some landscapes in Uganda. ECOTRUST works on development of conservation finance models targeting funds from non-traditional sources like payment for ecosystem services in addition to traditional conservation finance mechanisms. For more information visit www.ecotrust.or.ug.

About National Environment Management Authority, Uganda

Established in 1995 by an Act of Parliament, The National Environment Management Authority is in charge of supervising, monitoring and coordinating all activities in the field of environment in Uganda. NEMA has been raising awareness about environmental issues, promoting sound environmental practices in the private sector and mainstreaming environmental issues in Uganda's poverty reduction strategy, sectoral policies and programmes. While NEMA has relied mostly on command and control approaches in addressing some of Uganda's environmental management objectives, NEMA recognizes the need for economic instruments (such as payments/incentives for ecosystem services) and their potential for encouraging biodiversity conservation and alleviating poverty. For more information visit www.nemaug.org.

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