

# Forests Can Play an Essential Role in Reducing Climate Change Impacts of Aviation

*Leading international NGOs issue a joint policy paper recommending REDD+ as an integral part of meeting 7.8 billion tonne aviation emission gap*

**Utrecht, Netherlands/London, UK/Washington, DC (4 April 2016)** - Today, leading international non-governmental organizations released a briefing paper, "Linking Flights and Forests," which highlights the vital role forests can play in fighting climate change and recommends that countries include REDD+, a policy framework for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, as a means for the international aviation sector to meet its commitments to cap and reduce its carbon pollution.

Read [Linking Flight and Forests: The Essential Role of Forests in Supporting Global Aviation's Response to Climate Change](#)

The briefing paper was released prior to a regional meeting in the Netherlands of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the UN body responsible for setting the standards for international flights. The meeting continues ICAO's dialogues toward finalizing a global market-based measure (MBM) to assist the international aviation sector in achieving its agreed emission reduction targets which aim to cap international aviation emissions at 2020 levels and to deliver "carbon neutral growth from 2020." If the international aviation industry were its own country, it would be among the top-ten emitters of carbon dioxide globally. Countries are currently developing the components of the MBM, including what types of activities should be eligible as offsets, and will finalize the MBM at the 39th ICAO Assembly in September-October 2016.

Even with proposed operational and aircraft efficiency improvements, the increasing demand for air travel would leave the international aviation industry falling short of meeting its post-2020 emission reduction commitments with a gap of 7.8 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide. **In order to close that gap, the briefing paper concludes, ICAO should allow REDD+ as an eligible activity under the final MBM.**

REDD+ is a framework developed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. This framework was specifically recognized by all member states of the UNFCCC as a valuable mitigation strategy and financial incentive in Article 5 of the 2015 Paris Agreement, sending a strong global signal about the importance of REDD+ and its role in addressing climate change. REDD+ offers incentives to protect, restore and sustainably manage forests and their natural capital and has nearly a decade of proven results under a variety of GHG programs. To address climate change, it is important to protect the world's forests, which store more carbon than is contained in the world's atmosphere. Tropical forests alone absorb almost a fifth of all carbon dioxide released each year from the burning of fossil fuels, thus playing a significant role in slowing the rate of climate change. Unlike mitigation efforts in most other sectors, each REDD+ credit not only avoids one tonne of carbon dioxide

from being emitted into the atmosphere, but can also protect biodiversity, support local communities and ensure that vital ecosystem functions remain intact.

The group of non-governmental organizations--which includes Conservation International (CI), Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Forest Trends (FT), Global Canopy Programme (GCP), International Union for Conservation of Nature National Committee of the Netherlands (IUCN NL), Sustainable Travel International (STI), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)--see REDD+ as a proven, efficient and effective way to achieve emission reductions at scale, as well as additional benefits for society and the environment. It is in line with the goals and principles of the ICAO MBM, and the supply of robust and cost-effective REDD+ offsets can play a key role in filling the emissions gap and supporting the aviation sector to meet its climate goals. The critical window in which countries can ensure this mutually beneficial partnership between forests and flight and include REDD+ credits as an eligible mitigation option for the MBM, is between now and the ICAO Assembly in September-October 2016. **These organizations call on ICAO to include REDD+ credits as an eligible mitigation option for the MBM.**

"A commitment by ICAO and the aviation industry to offset aviation carbon emissions through the protection of forests would underscore the remarkable impact of the Paris Agreement. Through this measure, the aviation sector can lead the world in financing the protection of tropical forests, which together provide 30% or more of the solution to climate change while simultaneously providing benefits to local communities."

**Peter Seligmann, CEO of Conservation International (CI)**

"Last year, the Paris Agreement endorsed REDD+ as a key mitigation and finance mechanism that can deliver climate and finance benefits. The aviation industry can make history this year by using the power of markets to achieve their reduction targets, and become a pioneer in forest protection."

**Gustavo Silva-Chávez, REDDX Program Manager, Forest Trends (FT)**

"Harnessing the aviation sector's commitment to address its carbon emissions to help reduce global deforestation is one of the most compelling ways to slow climate change. ICAO and the world should seize this opportunity to meet its climate objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals."

**Andrew W. Mitchell, Founder Director, Global Canopy Programme (GCP)**

"Addressing climate change takes courage and collaboration by many. The work of ICAO and the aviation industry in offsetting its carbon emission and supporting REDD+ clearly demonstrates to governments, the private sector, and consumers the critical nature of protecting our forests and planet."

**Geoff Bolan, COO, Sustainable Travel International (STI)**

"ICAO is poised to build on the momentum from the climate agreement in Paris last year. Ensuring post-2020 carbon neutral growth in international aviation can be enhanced through the mitigation potential of forests, as the Paris Agreement highlights. A well-designed market-based mechanism that includes REDD+ will not only drive rapid emissions reductions but also benefit tropical communities and ecosystems around the world."

**Lynn Scarlett, Managing Director of Public Policy, The Nature Conservancy (TNC)**

“REDD+ has mobilized millions of dollars to reduce forest emissions around the world through a suite of innovative approaches that include helping local communities farm more sustainably, protecting important wildlife corridors and preventing planned conversion of natural forests. The MBM has the potential to drive substantially more investment at all scales to finally turn back the clock on deforestation.”

**David Antonioli, Chief Executive Officer, Verified Carbon Standard (VCS)**

“The inclusion of REDD+ in ICAO’s Market-based Mechanism would be a landmark step towards addressing deforestation and forest degradation, the source of one-sixth of global emissions, while protecting forests that support key biodiversity, critical ecosystem services and local communities.”

**Todd Stevens, Conservation Science and Solutions, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)**

## **ENDS**

### **Resources:**

- [Linking Flight and Forests: The Essential Role of Forests in Supporting Global Aviation’s Response to Climate Change](#)
- [Linking Flight and Forests: Technical Overview and Background on the International Civil Aviation Organization and its Processes](#)

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