PRESS RELEASE

Asia-Europe informal talks push forests forward in climate negotiations

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As the clock runs out on climate change negotiations at COP 15 on its final day in Copenhagen, a series of informal discussions among Asian and European delegates underscore the importance of achieving consensus on an agreement for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, more simply known as REDD. There is now a likelihood that agreement on this important proposed scheme could be reached in Copenhagen.

“Avoidance of deforestation was facing a lot of opposition, which eventually led to its exclusion from the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol,” said Dr Axel Michaelowa, Senior Founding Partner of the Climate Policy Consultancy Perspectives, adding, “REDD is now one of the bright spots in a sea of darkness in Copenhagen.” Dr Michaelowa was the moderator of the panel discussion on “Institutional Set-up of REDD and the Involvement of the Private Sector,” an official side event of COP15 organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the Government of Slovenia.

The experts at the panel discussion noted that REDD could promote the inclusion of forest development as part of the future climate mitigation agreement. It also promotes biodiversity and species conservation. Case study research of small-scale forestry conservation projects by the Japan-based Asia-Pacific Forum on Environment and Development in Vietnam, Cambodia and Nepal shows that trade-offs between biodiversity, climate change and income generation may occur. Nevertheless, a mix of policies that incentivise sustainable forestry, including technology development and the utilisation of local knowledge.

Moreover, funding facilities by the World Bank and the UN have sprung up to support early implementation of REDD, such as a US$8 million investment by the Asian Development Bank in research and preparatory work. Some panelists explored the inclusion of REDD in generating carbon credits for emissions trading as a probability for the future, especially when
technical questions of how forests can generate carbon credits are expected to be conclusively resolved.

The panelists included Dr David McCauley, Principal Climate Change Specialist at the Asian Development Bank, Dr Charlotte Streck, Director and founding partner of Climate Focus, Mr Fitrian Ardiansyah, Programme Director of Climate and Energy for WWF-Indonesia, and Mr Masanori Kobayashi, Coordinator, Programme Management Office of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategy (IGES).

The event was among a number of public and closed-door discussions between Asian and European experts with selected negotiators throughout the year in Hayama, Singapore, Copenhagen and Brussels. “Informal discussions between Asian and European actors in the negotiations have helped to bridge serious divisions through influence and the development of personal relations”, observes Mr. Ismid Hadad, Financial Mechanisms Chairman of the Indonesian Council on Climate Change and part of the country’s delegation in Copenhagen.

“The Asia-Europe Environment Forum,” explains Ambassador Dominique Girard, Executive Director of the Asia-Europe Foundation, “provided a neutral and even friendly atmosphere for negotiators and their civil society advisers to discuss matters in a way that they cannot do inside the Bella Centre. We contribute to a policy environment conducive to constructive discourse and cooperation.”


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The Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) is a platform for dialogue and debate on sustainable development issues. It is:

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- A recognised reference point for Asia and Europe consensus on sustainable development;
- An interface between government and civil society for policy recommendations;
- An Asia-Europe network on sustainable development;
- A contributor to the agenda of the ASEM Environment Ministerial and other Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) fora;

The ENVforum was initiated in 2003 by the Asia-Europe Foundation and is co-organised with the Hanns Seidel Foundation of Germany, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies of Japan and the United Nations Environment Programme. The Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia (SENSA) came on board as a co-organiser in 2006. The Korean Environment Institute (KEI) was a partner in 2008. For more information please visit env.asef.org.

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