

Additional CEPF Resources for the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot for Post-earthquake Environmental Support to Haiti

March 2010

Background:

During the 15 January 2010 meeting of the Donor Council, the Council approved the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot Ecosystem Profile, with an allocation of \$6.5 million. Funds are designated for a suite of conservation actions, including improving protection and management of 45 key biodiversity areas, integrating biodiversity conservation into landscape and development planning and implementation in six conservation corridors, supporting Caribbean civil society to achieve biodiversity conservation by building local and regional institutional capacity and by fostering stakeholder collaboration, and supporting a Regional Implementation Team to coordinate CEPF activities on the ground. Haiti harbors five of the key biodiversity areas targeted for investment, one of which is located only 22 km from Port-au-Prince. A second site is in the vicinity of three urban areas in the west, now the destination of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

At the same time as approving the ecosystem profile, the Donor Council directed the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for emergency support for Haiti because of the major earthquake that hit Port-au-Prince on 12 January 2010.

This request for urgent, additional funds for the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot is warranted due to (i) the immediate threat to two of Haiti's key biodiversity areas important for the watersheds of Haiti's urban areas, (ii) the need to support the environmental community which has been severely impacted by this earthquake, and (iii) the need to increase the allocation of \$6.5 million for this hotspot specifically to infuse extra funds into Haiti. Civil society in Haiti no longer has the infrastructure or capacity that it did at the time of preparation of the ecosystem profile. The situation on the ground is far more challenging and pressing than planned for, with increased threats to biodiversity and far fewer resources to address them. This special request has the strong endorsement of environmental experts inside Haiti and abroad, who were consulted extensively to prepare this proposal.

While attention has understandably focused on the human dimension of the disaster, the environmental community in Haiti and abroad has expressed serious concern about the earthquake's immediate impact on the fragile environment, particularly with respect to Haiti's last remaining forests and its globally important biological diversity.

Inside Port-au-Prince, the environmental community has been hit hard, and the country's already limited conservation capacity has been set back significantly. As with virtually all government agencies, the Ministry of the Environment lost its offices, and some ministry staff lost their lives. The

earthquake happened at a critical time when the ministry was being reorganized and as key UNDP, GEF and IDB initiatives were being mobilized to strengthen the government's efforts to manage the last remaining natural areas of the country.

Regarding REZO-EKOLO, Haiti's informal network of 13 local conservation and sustainable development organizations, its members survived, but many of them lost their offices and places of employment. They remain in contact with each other informally, but now lack the basic office equipment and resources to work, hold meetings, and engage in efforts to ensure that the country's environmental resources are safeguarded during this difficult time.

Outside Port-au-Prince, pressure on Haiti's already degraded lands is increasing as secondary impacts of the earthquake emerge with the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people who are fleeing the capital and returning to their traditional villages and cities. Environmentalists believe pressures on Haiti's remaining forests may take on several forms. The refugees will seek wood to make new houses because so many people perished in their unstable cement homes during the earthquake. They will require new land for farming. With the societal dislocation and transportation bottlenecks, the price of charcoal (the principal energy source for many Haitians) has already increased. This price rise will lead to more forest exploitation, as thousands of newly unemployed refugees seek whatever means they can to earn money and survive.

Biodiversity in Haiti:

Prior to the earthquake, 98 percent of Haiti's original forest cover was gone, with the largest remaining forests located in the key biodiversity areas of Massif de la Hotte and Massif de la Selle. These two sites rate exceptionally high globally from a conservation perspective due to their large and diverse populations of endemic and globally threatened amphibians, as well as more modest numbers of endemic birds, reptiles, and mammals. Massif de la Hotte (128,000 ha) in southwest Haiti has been officially recognized as harboring the highest number of Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) species in the world. Similarly, Massif de la Selle in Southeast Haiti (166,900 ha), which is only 22 kilometers from Port-au-Prince, is near the top of the AZE list. Both sites are wholly irreplaceable globally because they contain the only known populations of many globally threatened species.

Both key biodiversity areas also provide important ecosystem services in Haiti. Massif de la Selle is a major source of water for Port-au-Prince and its forests help to control soil erosion and landslides. Massif de la Hotte is located in the upper watershed of four southern cities. Maintaining forest cover on these sites is directly linked to the welfare of these cities by moderating flooding and soil erosion, and maintaining freshwater supplies. Unfortunately, management capacity in both sites is woefully inadequate, and their forests are already under intense pressure. With the migration of the earthquake refugees, Haiti's two globally significant key biodiversity areas may well come under extreme threat to the point where they are completely destroyed.

CEPF Investment Strategy in Haiti:

The CEPF Donor Council approved the ecosystem profile for the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot on 15 January 2010. CEPF's strategy considers funding for Haiti through several investment priorities, including support for (i) protected areas management strengthening, community outreach and planning, and sustainable development projects in Massif de la Hotte and Massif de la Selle; (ii) capacity building for local civil society groups and networks; and (iii) mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in development plans and policy. In the course of preparing the strategy, the profiling team conducted extensive data collection and analysis and held consultations with more than 30 people representing Haiti's civil society and government, including key members

of REZO-EKOLO. Since the profiling effort, local stakeholders have conducted new planning efforts to identify conservation priorities in Massif de la Selle.

This request for emergency funding, therefore, builds upon these earlier planning efforts and is well aligned with CEPF's investment strategy for the country, which is scheduled to start mid-2010. This emergency funding package would be for one year, at which time originally planned CEPF investment could be considered as appropriate.

Proposed Emergency Package:

With Port-au-Prince's conservation sector in disarray and pressures mounting on the country's forests, CEPF proposes to support an integrated package of activities that are designed to mitigate the immediate threats of the disaster, while also building a foundation for the engagement of civil society organizations in planning for relief and reconstruction. All local Port-au-Prince based NGOs, such as the Société Audubon Haïti, have lost their offices. While they have laptops, and bank accounts, their ability to perform basic administrative and financial tasks is limited.

Due to the need to deliver funds speedily, efficiently and in accordance with CEPF operational requirements, funds will be made available via a single grant to BirdLife International who will be responsible for sub-granting/contracting and monitoring of CEPF compliant use of the funds. BirdLife already maintains memoranda of understanding with several Haitian NGOs and will enter into CEPF compliant and approved contracts and/or sub-grant agreements with these local entities. It is envisioned that at least four local groups will receive funds via BirdLife International, including Fondation Macaya pour le Développement Local, Société Audubon Haïti, Fondation Seguin, and Federation des Amies de la Nature.

Objective 1. Emergency actions to prevent the destruction of forests in Massif de la Selle and Massif de la Hotte

CEPF will support short-term strategies to avert the conversion of forests through a series of activities:

- Strengthen management capacity to safeguard La Visite and Macaya national parks, the two protected areas in Massif de la Selle and Massif de la Hotte.
- Support local communities and municipalities in planning for and accommodating earthquake refugees in order to prevent encroachment into forested areas.
- Reduce demand for charcoal through the provision of efficient cook stoves and alternative energy sources for local communities. Opportunities may exist to receive solar panels through the GEF's emergency project to Haiti.
- Build on existing community sustainable development projects that integrate conservation with simple strategies to improve the livelihoods of buffer zone residents, such as agroforestry, forest management, and reforestation.

Within REZO-EKOLO, the Fondation Seguin works in Massif de la Selle on community outreach and development and the Fondation Macaya pour la Développement Local has community development projects in Massif de la Hotte. Both NGOs are community-based and their staff are from these areas. They will be recipients of CEPF emergency funds to carry out this objective, and will work with other local and international development organizations to ensure strong collaboration.

Objective 2. Establish an Environmental Network Resource Center

With the Haitian environmental and development community in disarray, CEPF will respond to the urgent need for an office that can serve as the central node and resource center for Haitian environmental and community development groups that have lost their own offices. This resource

center will provide basic office equipment and operating resources and a space for meetings to coordinate actions, and will serve as a clearinghouse to facilitate the exchange of information related to the environment and reconstruction. It will also provide support to implement objectives 1 and 3 of this emergency package.

Key partners to lead this objective will be the Federation des Amies de la Nature, which leads REZO-EKOLO, and the Société Audubon Haïti, regarded as among the strongest environmental NGOs in the country. Other NGOs expected to benefit directly from the resource center include the following local groups:

- Association Paysans Vallée
- Fondation Ecosophique
- Fondation Haïtienne de l'Environnement
- Fondation Macaya pour le Développement Local
- Fondation pour le Relèvement du Milieu Rural Haïtien
- Fondation Seguin
- Groupe 73
- Groupe d'Action Francophone pour l'Environnement
- Haïti Environnement et Développement
- Organisation pour la Réhabilitation de l'Environnement

Objective 3. Foster local civil society participation and integration of environmental concerns into reconstruction and development planning

Once the immediate needs for disaster relief are satisfied, attention will focus on how to rebuild the nation. Reconstruction planning and project development will need to integrate the conservation of Haiti's natural resources and biodiversity for the long-term success of development efforts. Furthermore, strong local participation of Haitian development and environmental groups will help to ensure that the aspirations of local people are fully considered. This objective therefore seeks to support Haitian civil society groups in key aspects of the reconstruction effort:

- Support local consultations with key stakeholder groups in reconstruction planning, with a focus on CEPF priority key biodiversity areas.
- Provide technical assistance from international experts in such areas as forest management, ecosystem services, and land-use planning.
- Facilitate information exchange and civil society coordination with respect to reconstruction and development planning.
- Support direct engagement of local civil society groups in discussions with major donors.
- Leverage reconstruction funding to support conservation.
- Raise local and international awareness of the connection between environmental degradation and human welfare during this critical time, with a focus on Massif de la Hotte and Massif de la Selle as these are the most important water sources for Haiti's urban areas.

Key partners under this objective will include the Federation des Amies de la Nature and the Société Audubon Haïti.

** This proposal was approved through a no-objection approval process by the CEPF Donor Council as of 10 March 2010.*