Prime Minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg, examines the global efforts to halt the deforestation of tropical forests through the REDD+ initiative. He explains why Norway committed to providing up to US$500 million a year to this cause at the Bali climate change summit in 2007 and elaborates on the developments that have taken place since. He emphasises the importance of securing an agreement on REDD+ at the UN climate change meeting in Cancun so international efforts can be rapidly scaled up by means of a global mechanism.

The case for climate and forest action
Since the 13th round of climate change talks were held in Bali in 2007, the proposal Reducing greenhouse gas Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries (termed REDD+ in the UN negotiations) has become a hot topic. Subsequent international climate change negotiations led to the establishment of an interim REDD+ Partnership of almost 60 countries at the Oslo Climate and Forest Conference in May this year.

REDD+ is the most important and cost-effective short- and medium-term climate change mitigation opportunity at our disposal. While there is uncertainty about the precise numbers, it is clear that keeping below the two-degree climate threshold will be impossible without a significant reduction in tropical deforestation. By some estimates, as much as one third of the cost-effective mitigation needed in 2020 could come from REDD+.

Immediate, large-scale and coordinated action on REDD+ will give us the time we need to develop the clean technologies and jobs of the future. However, REDD+ must be a complement to, rather than a substitute for, deep cuts in rich countries’ emissions. The global benefits of REDD+ are enormous in terms of mitigating climate change and conserving biodiversity on a large scale. However, local benefits are equally impressive. REDD+ can contribute to sustainable economic development and poverty reduction. Standing forests preserve rainfall patterns and help communities and countries to adapt to the climate change that will inevitably occur regardless of our success in reducing global emissions. They also play a vital role in the culture of millions of indigenous people.

In sum, these are the reasons why the Government of Norway made the pledge in Bali to provide up to half a billion US dollars a year for REDD+.

The challenges of forest climate action
As many have pointed out, there are important risks involved with REDD+, including risks for indigenous peoples and local communities. However, the status quo is not risk-free, and business-as-usual is not an alternative. Rather, we must address the risks head on. In order to deliver lasting results on deforestation, developing countries will have to improve their forest governance, and radically increased levels of transparency will be required. Financial mechanisms
in the establishment an interim REDD+ Partnership

Yudhoyono of Indonesia. The conference culminated
and Forest Conference together with President
In May this year, I was proud to host the Oslo Climate
architecture
A multilateral climate and forest
negotiations
The economic drivers of deforestation are strong. Global
demand for timber, palm oil, sugar, soy and beef, and
the need to feed three billion more people by 2050 will
all continue to put pressure on forests. A successful
reduction of global deforestation rates will depend on our
ability to offer an alternative income stream that reaches
the actors that make decisions on land-use.
Significant, lasting, global REDD+ results can best be
achieved through the adoption of a UN agreement that
puts a value on forest carbon. Considerable progress has
been made in the negotiations, and the parties came very
close to reaching agreement on a REDD+ mechanism at
the climate change summit in Copenhagen in December
last year.
Key issues remain to be resolved. An operational
REDD+ mechanism will require an overall agreement
on financing and institutions. We must continue to work
towards a global agreement. At the same time, we can and
must act immediately. Early action will deliver significant
short-term emission reductions. Even more importantly,
it will allow us to see what works and what doesn’t, so that
we are ready to scale up immediately once the UN global
mechanism is up and running. Luckily, such action is
already being taken on an unprecedented scale.

A multilateral climate and forest
architecture
In May this year, I was proud to host the Oslo Climate
and Forest Conference together with President
Yudhoyono of Indonesia. The conference culminated
in the establishment an interim REDD+ Partnership

of approximately 60 countries. The purpose of this
partnership is to rapidly scale up action and financing
on REDD+ and improve coordination, transparency and
knowledge transfer between ongoing and future REDD+
initiatives. Putting the REDD+ Partnership into practice
will be challenging but I am confident it will become
a unique feature of the international climate change
landscape and an example for other sectors to follow.
The Partnership was the result of an intense effort
since Bali to put in place an integrated and effective
multilateral, institutional architecture to support global
REDD+ efforts. More than 40 countries are preparing
to implement national REDD+ strategies under the UN
REDD Programme and the Forest Carbon Partnership
Facility. Some countries are already scaling up their
efforts under these two programmes and under the Forest
Investment Program. The Forest Carbon Partnership
Facility’s Carbon Fund will become the first multilateral
mechanism that pays developing countries to reduce
forest emissions. Collaboration between these UN- and
World Bank-administered initiatives is exceptionally
good, and we are well on our way to seeing a truly
integrated architecture to support REDD+ efforts.
The Congo Basin Forest Fund, administered by the
African Development Bank, is meanwhile focusing on
the particular needs of the Congo Basin countries.
A broad constituency of forest countries has emerged
and is now eager to get REDD+ started on the ground.
The multilateral and bilateral initiatives as well as a
plethora of academic institutions and civil society
organisations are together creating a global community
to support REDD+ action. Success stories are emerging,
and we are learning and sharing valuable lessons every
day. These developments are remarkable and in many
cases, developing countries are leading the way.

Developing countries taking the lead
Leadership in reducing tropical deforestation belongs at
the highest levels of government. Only through a holistic
national strategy, anchored and implemented at all levels
of government and society, can the powerful forces of
deforestation be addressed and kept in check over time.
Heads of State and government can therefore play a
particularly crucial role.
The benefits of such top-level leadership are
particularly evident for three of the countries that have
come furthest in their efforts, and whose efforts Norway
is proud to be supporting.
In Brazil, deforestation in the Amazon has decreased
by more than 60 per cent from the 1996–2005 average,
since President Lula initiated his government’s anti-
deforestation efforts. The historical correlation between
prices of raw materials and deforestation appears to
some extent to have been broken. Preliminary reports
indicate still further reductions have been made in the
last year. In 2008 the Amazon Fund was established as
the first prototype of a large-scale, sectoral payment-for-
reduced-emissions scheme with a view to deepening and
sustaining results in the long term. Moreover, President
Lula and his government have unilaterally committed
Brazil to reducing emissions to nearly 40 per cent below

Brazil’s Minister of Environment Carlos Minc, Norway’s Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and Norway’s Minister of the Environment and International Development Erik Solheim exploring the Amazon rainforest in 2008.
Reducing tropical deforestation is intrinsically a development issue. But REDD+ is different from traditional development aid, being a payment for a global service. Clearly, rich countries’ taxpayers need to be assured that their money is being spent wisely, and is helping to put forest countries on sustainable, low-carbon development paths. Existing Official Development Assistance (ODA) financial intermediation mechanisms need to be reviewed to suit results-based climate financing. To be credible and effective, REDD+ requires – and reinforces – sound political and financial institutions.

Climate and forest action continues

Tremendous progress has been made since Bali in preparing the world for a global mechanism to reduce tropical deforestation. Unprecedented pledges for action and financing have been made. An integrated multilateral architecture is being created to support all committed forest countries in their readiness efforts. National strategies are being prepared, monitoring systems set up, and institutional capacities developed. Key countries are pushing rapidly ahead.

What is now required is predictable and sustainable medium- and long-term funding. This is needed in order to reward large-scale, verified reductions in tropical deforestation. I am hopeful that within the next year we will see more results-based REDD+ partnerships emerge. I remain hopeful that Cancun will deliver a decision on REDD+ so we can rapidly scale up our efforts to substantially reduce global deforestation.

Key elements for success

Based on the experience of Brazil, Guyana, Indonesia and other countries, the following key principles appear to be crucial to making REDD+ strategies effective and sustainable.

Strong and broad-based national ownership is needed, and REDD+ needs to be integrated into the country’s overall strategy for poverty alleviation and low-carbon development. To sustain public support, sectoral REDD+ strategies must be seen as integral priority elements of the national development strategy. The REDD+ strategies must also focus on optimising the additional benefits with regard to biodiversity, livelihoods and climate change adaptation. Relevant stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, must be actively involved in the formulation and implementation of the national strategy.

Payments for verified emission reductions, based on robust and independent monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV), must be at the heart of the approach taken. This will target policies and investments in such a way that they deliver results, and only results-based approaches are likely to generate the financing needed. All three countries outlined here consider payments for verified emissions reductions – supported by contributing countries willing to commit to long-term partnerships – as crucial to ensuring sufficient, predictable, and sustainable funding, and as a means of assuring contributing countries that they are getting value for money.

Transparency and adherence to internationally recognised safeguards are essential for international partnerships to work. National control over development decisions must be carefully balanced against adherence to international financial, social and environmental safeguards and related transparency criteria.

Jens Stoltenberg has been the Prime Minister of Norway since 2005. He is co-chair of the UN Secretary-General’s High-level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing. His government’s Climate and Forest Initiative aims to include tropical deforestation in a global climate regime, focusing on results-based financing and drawing on experience gained in Brazil, Indonesia and Guyana.

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