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Paris Agreement a win for forest conservation

Toronto, ON; December 15, 2015 — The landmark climate agreement adopted in Paris offers hope that we can avoid the worst impacts of climate change for humanity and for the millions of other species with whom we share the planet. The agreement laudably charts a path to carbon neutrality and pledges to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius. But another major milestone has been largely overlooked: for the first time, commitments to protect the world's forests are imbedded in the language of the formal climate agreement.

Forests, and in particular tropical forests, store vast amounts of carbon. We can significantly tip the carbon balance by reducing deforestation and regenerating forests in previously logged areas. Tropical deforestation alone represents an estimated 10% of all carbon emissions. Forests also generate reliable rainfall patterns, regulate water supply, stabilize soil, and support high biodiversity, which all contribute to resilience.

Much of the Canadian commentary on the Paris talks has focused on reducing fossil fuel use and adopting green technology. While those actions are necessary, we also have an important role to play through nature conservation, from protecting the boreal forests at home to the rainforests of the Amazon. Anne Lambert, founder of the International Conservation Fund of Canada (ICFC) argues that “conservation of tropical forests is the best investment Canadians can make right now to mitigate climate change”.

The Paris Agreement commits to establishing payment mechanisms for REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) to support developing countries in protecting their forests. It also encourages parties to take any actions to conserve and enhance forests as carbon sinks. ICFC is already making strides towards this goal, including a partnership with the Kayapo indigenous people in Brazil to protect their territories encompassing 11 million hectares of forest – an area twice the size of Nova Scotia. Kayapo leader Chief Raoni, who was present at the COP in Paris, advocates for greater emphasis on forest conservation as part of the global climate strategy: “indigenous people like the Kayapo are fighting to protect forests for their future and for the future of the whole world”.

About the International Conservation Fund of Canada (ICFC)

Founded in 2007, ICFC is the first and only Canadian charity to focus solely on conserving nature in the highly biodiverse tropics and other priority areas worldwide.

www.ICFCCanada.org

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