

A Call To Action Protecting Mangroves for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption

We, the undersigned, coming from governments, academia, businesses, local communities and conservation organizations express the urgent need for action to protect the world's mangroves, uniquely found in coastal areas within tropical and subtropical regions.

Mangrove forests are extremely valuable, but fragile, ecosystems that provide many critical ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, food and energy, coastal disaster protection, shoreline stabilization, waste processing, recreation, and hosts to important biodiversity. Being at the interface of land and sea, they also play key roles in linking terrestrial, freshwater, and marine systems, thus keeping all three productive and healthy.

As various natural disasters have demonstrated, mangroves can protect coastal communities and reduce death tolls in the event of major storms or tsunamis. Mangroves serve as key fish nursery habitats for important commercial and subsistence fisheries, such as groupers, snappers, mullets, and blue and mud crabs. They are a main barrier to nutrient runoff that causes harmful algal blooms. When found adjacent to coral reefs and sea grass beds, mangroves are critical to maintaining the high biodiversity of tropical systems, and thus underpin valuable recreational industries vital to coastal economies. Recent findings also estimate that mangrove forest soils can sequester as much as six times the carbon of undisturbed Amazonian rainforest per year on a hectare by hectare comparison.

Despite their high value and importance to human wellbeing, over 25% of global mangrove areas have already been lost, with no consensus yet for the rate of loss. Continued degradation and deforestation combined with rising sea levels due to climate change will likely accelerate losses. Human settlement along coastal areas will prevent the natural ability of mangroves to adapt to rising sea levels. Continued unsustainable human use, especially clear cutting, overfishing, over-development, diversion of rivers and water flows, pollution, and coral reef destruction will affect the resilience of mangroves to adapt to changing conditions.

In order to reduce threats to mangrove forests and to safeguard their important ecosystem services to strengthen the ecological and socioeconomic securities of coastal communities and nations, we:

CALL ON Parties to accelerate actions to protect this important ecosystem,

RECOMMEND that Parties:

- Develop and implement national mangrove protection policies and legislation to halt further deforestation and degradation, particularly due to land use changes and water diversion, and to promote mangrove restoration activities
- Call for an IPCC expert meeting on protection and restoration of mangroves and other coastal ecosystems as strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Include mangroves in national REDD+ accounting strategies
- Develop methodologies for monitoring, reporting, and verification of mangrove carbon for REDD+ and other strategies

- Ensure that conservation of mangrove ecosystems is included within National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) and other coastal disaster risk reduction and recovery strategies
- Create enabling environments for innovative conservation financing mechanisms, such as payment for ecosystem services, including carbon offset credits, as well as international funds dedicated to mitigation and adaptation strategies
- Develop ecosystem-based management for and including mangrove systems to support the continued delivery of the full suite of ecosystem goods and services mangroves provide and within the framework of integrated coastal development plans

and lastly,

HIGHLIGHT that the “return on investment” from mangrove protection in both livelihood and economic benefits to the communities and nations that make the investment will far eclipse the short-term profits from destructive and extractive uses.

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