

New Report: “Orangutan and the Economics of Sustainable Forest Management in Sumatra”

Developed in a partnership between PanEco foundation and UNEP, this new report demonstrates that Indonesian society could benefit much more from conserving key Sumatran orangutan forest Habitat

Geneva/Medan, 28 September 2011. Conserving the remaining Sumatran orangutan habitat, an area reduced to a little more than 8,000 square kilometres located in the Provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra, is key to the well being of both local and global human well-being.

Locally, these forests provide livelihoods to local people, most often extensive farmers or fishermen. They also secure their well being and safety, preventing exposure to future tsunamis and by regulating fresh water supplies. Globally, they host in their dense rainforest, or in the deep peat below them, important carbon sinks. The potential revenues from these carbon stocks, via carbon trading schemes, is estimated to be far greater than the revenues to be obtained from felling the forests, e.g. for oil palm plantations. In addition, conserving the Sumatran orangutan, in its pristine habitat – aside from being a moral and ethical imperative in itself-- will also directly support the conservation of key populations of many other highly threatened Sumatran wildlife species, such as Sumatran tigers, Sumatran rhinos and Sumatran elephants.

The future of the Sumatran orangutan in the wild at the beginning of the 21st century is far from secure. Its population has declined by more than 90% in the past century, and not much more than six thousand remain in the low land forest areas of Aceh and North Sumatra, most of them within what is known as the Leuser Ecosystem. Sumatra's lowland forests continue to disappear at an alarming rate, however, with more than two percent being lost each year. Most of the forest loss is due to conversion for plantations and other agriculture, especially oil palm plantations.

Developed as a broad partnership between UNEP, the Swiss-based PanEco Foundation and its Indonesian Partner, YEL-Yayayan Ekosistem Lestari, and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), this new report seeks to provide updated and user-friendly information on the many different contributions that Sumatran orangutan habitat provides to human societies, both locally and worldwide. As explained by Regina Frey, PanEco's President « *We finally have a practical tool to show how a green economy could really work, that would truly benefit biodiversity, the local economy, and global human-kind* ». « *I hope it will assist in taking the necessary decisions for our global*

society to change its development path. It is now or never for the Sumatran orangutan» she added.

The PanEco Foundation has been working closely with the Indonesian Government since 1999, leading the SOCP- Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme, an International effort to save the remaining Sumatran orangutan populations from extinction. The term “PanEco” itself stands for a joint effort that bridges language and cultural barriers to lead the way to a society, where resources are used sensibly and mankind and nature are respected equally. The PanEco Foundation supports projects for the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources in both Indonesia and Switzerland. Improving the livelihoods of local inhabitants is just as important as protecting the rainforests if both are to exist together in the future.

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