

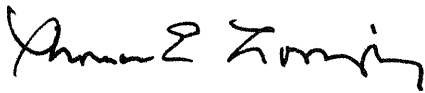
September 23, 2009

The Hon. Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Please consider the enclosed letter, signed by prominent ecologists from around the country. It urges swift action, not only on limiting the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing global warming, but also on the conservation of tropical forests as a critical piece of our approach to halting climate change. The signers of this letter are experts in diverse fields relevant to the potential effects of climate change on biotic systems. They include many of our country's most established tropical biologists and tropical forest ecologists.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas E. Lovejoy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas E. Lovejoy

September 23, 2009

The Hon. Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We commend your leadership at the 2009 G-8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy as well as the July 2009 Major Economies Forum, in particular on their recognition of the scientific consensus that the global average temperature should not exceed 2°C above pre-industrial levels.<sup>1,2</sup> This threshold was also identified in the American Clean Energy Security Act, H.R. 2454, as passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. To realize the goal of limiting warming below this critical threshold, immediate and strong action is needed to reduce America's greenhouse gas emissions. The G-8 declaration calls for developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 80% or more of 1990 levels by 2050, a target that should be matched with ambitious nearer-term emission reductions for industrialized nations. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) can be a critical piece of this near-term action.

We write specifically to urge you to make the conservation and restoration of native forests in the tropics and sub-tropics a central pillar of U.S. climate policy. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in tropical forest countries, coupled with aggressive action in our own country to reduce emissions, can play a crucial role in limiting warming to no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and in helping nations adapt to the impacts of some unavoidable climate change.

- Tropical deforestation has contributed 15-20% global greenhouse gas emissions annually over the past decade. REDD is therefore an immediately available source of emission reductions that can be accessed earlier than many other kinds of emission reductions, particularly important during the crucial time-window for action to avert 2°C warming. In addition to the critical preservation of intact forests, restoration of degraded forest land with native forest vegetation is valuable.
- Tropical forests store some 300 billion tons of carbon in their biomass. Emissions from deforestation, principally in the tropics, have placed Indonesia and Brazil as the world's third and fourth largest emitting nations, and constitute a major source of emissions in many other tropical and sub-tropical nations. Providing economic

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<sup>1</sup> Responsible Leadership for a Sustainable Future, G-8 Statement on the Global Economy, Climate Change, Development and Africa, July 8, 2009 ("2009 G-8 Declaration"), paragraph 65. See also U.S. Global Climate Research Program: Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States (2009); and see Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report (L. Bernstein et al., eds., IPCC, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Declaration of the Leaders of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate, July 9, 2009, paragraph 1.

incentives for preservation of forests can play a critical role in achieving the early reductions needed to avert warming greater than 2°C.

- Tropical forests are storehouses of natural resources that provide food, fiber, medicines, and ecosystem services to the globe. Because tropical forests house more than half of the world's species, deforestation threatens the biodiversity of the entire world. REDD, by conserving biodiversity and protecting these natural storehouses, can be vital to reducing ecosystem and consequent human impacts of climatic shifts.
- Tropical forests drive global weather and hydrologic cycles and protect watersheds on which millions depend. Forest destruction will exacerbate climate-triggered strains on water supplies. But REDD can help modulate those impacts.

Further, compensating forest peoples for protecting forests can buttress forests' role in the survival of some of the world's most vulnerable people. REDD also offers developing countries the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in rising to the global climate change challenge, set forth in the G-8 declaration, of reducing global emissions goal of achieving at least a 50% reduction of global emissions by 2050<sup>3</sup>. REDD may also provide a model for restoration of other ecosystem types, in which reversing degradation could benefit biodiversity and improve carbon sequestration capacity in other regions.

We commend you on the 2009 G-8 declaration's commitment to "support the development of positive incentives in particular for developing countries to promote emission reductions through actions to reduce deforestation and forest degradation," and to "consider the inclusion of financial mechanisms within the future global agreement on climate change."<sup>4</sup> REDD has a significant role to play in making this commitment a reality. It requires no new technology, but rather policies that acknowledge the value of forests and by incentivizing their preservation.

A wide range of policy tools is available to achieve this goal. The benefits are many – for the climate, for the world's biodiversity, for our shared future. We suggest the following as priority actions:

- Begin immediately working on a bilateral basis with tropical forest countries to assist them in developing national capacity to develop forest baselines and robust measurement, monitoring and reporting programs for emissions from deforestation and degradation.
- Develop an effective and transparent registry to record baselines and emissions reductions globally.
- Actively engage with and enlist the expertise and enthusiasm of the scientific community, both within our federal agencies and the academic research institutions.

We urge you to make reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation and restoration of native forests, a centerpiece of U.S. climate policy.

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<sup>3</sup> 2009 G-8 Declaration, paragraph 65.

<sup>4</sup> 2009 G-8 Declaration, paragraph 78.

cc:

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