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Human rights and finance catch leaders' attention in fight against climate change

Global forum hears that current funding is “not enough for humanity’s biggest challenge”

Lima, Peru (December 7, 2014)--Experts have urged governments, business and investors to act faster and think bigger in fighting climate change and promoting sustainable development – and they name finance, human rights and sustainable landscapes as the necessary artillery.

“We’re not yet acting at either the speed or the scale that the problem demands, but we can win this battle,” Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, said in a keynote address at the 2014 Global Landscapes Forum, held in Lima this weekend. “Business leaders recognize that the cost of inaction is rapidly becoming greater than the cost of action. ... Left unchecked, climate change has the potential to become a significant barrier to our growth and that of every other sector,” he said.

Stephen Rumsey, chair of investment company Permian Global, also noted the shortfall. “Only one percent of global income goes to philanthropy and only one percent of philanthropy goes to the environment. This is not enough to confront the biggest challenge mankind has ever had,” Rumsey said.

It is necessary “to think about the big picture here,” said Peter Holmgren, Director General of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). “It’s clear that the finance sector must step up if we are serious about the landscape approach,” he said. “We need to talk trillions, not billions.”

The landscape approach to land management aims to bring together all land-use sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, energy and fisheries, to find ways to ease pressure on the world’s resources, which are threatened by climate change. Landscape approaches as a solution to the current climate and resource crises are a core theme of the Global Landscapes Forum, now in its second year, organized by CIFOR, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

More than 1700 people from 90 countries attended the event on the sidelines of the annual climate change summit, including country climate negotiators, ministers, CEOs, indigenous leaders, civil society leaders and researchers.

“Landscape does not have a one-size-fits all definition,” said Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme. “But the reason why we believe the term is highly useful is that it indicates the key role of humans in shaping the land,” he said.

Commenting on calls for large new funding streams, Cándido Mezúa, Chairman of the National Coordinator of Indigenous Peoples of Panama, said the “millions and trillions” of dollars, if they become available, must be shared fairly. He called for a climate finance mechanism beyond the Green Climate Fund that would protect forest

communities and Indigenous Peoples. “Indigenous Peoples want to have an indigenous territory climate fund, where all our rights will be respected and we will be able to follow through on our commitment to safeguard and protect the forest,” he said.

Polman was among the many speakers at the two-day conference referring to rights, acknowledging the damage that business practices have wreaked on indigenous people and forest communities. “For too long, their lives and livelihoods have been a hidden and unaccounted-for cost of the commodity expansion that has benefited the rest of us.”

Rachel Kyte, World Bank Vice President and special envoy on climate change, described the climate challenge as “fundamentally different” from anything known in human history, requiring very different solutions. “We will have to fundamentally manage our landscapes differently to provide the nutrition for the people who will live on this planet. To provide the livelihoods and the sustenance to those people who live in the rural areas. To provide ourselves with the diversity of nature that we need to survive,” she said.

Helen Clark, UN Development Programme Administrator and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, said that “climate change is undermining any development gains made.” Sustainable landscapes are essential for climate change mitigation, adaptation and sustainable development overall, she added. “It’s encouraging to see that key elements of sustainable landscapes feature among the 17 goals and 169 targets” contained within the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), she said.

The SDGs are a set of future international development targets, which world leaders are expected to finalize in late 2015. Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, Peru’s Minister of Environment and President of COP20, the UN climate conference currently underway in Lima, expressed optimism that the talks would succeed in leading to the next international climate agreement in Paris in 2015.

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Multifunctional landscapes and land uses are at the heart of the intertwined challenges associated with climate and development. The [Global Landscapes Forum](#), held alongside the UN climate negotiations, creates a platform for positioning landscapes in the new international agreements on climate and sustainable development. The annual event brings together more than a thousand negotiators, world leaders, researchers, civil society leaders, business leaders, practitioners and policy makers in agriculture, forestry and development, funding organizations, and media, making it the largest, most influential event outside the UNFCCC COP.