

TESTIMONY
OF
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THE NATURE CONSERVANCY
SUBMITTED TO
THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE AND FOREIGN OPERATIONS
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There are large unmet needs for conservation of renewable natural resources in the poor countries of the world. But the Nature Conservancy (TNC) recognizes that, in the current fiscal situation, some degree of austerity is inevitable. Conservation programs should shoulder their fair share of reduced spending, but we should not disproportionately target conservation and the protection of lands, water, wildlife and clean air. In a spirit of responsibility, the Conservancy urges the Committee to continue its tradition of support to international conservation by restoring in Fiscal Year 2012 a line item for conservation within the Development Assistance account of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) at the FY2010 enacted level, less whatever overall level of reduction is ultimately applied to the total USAID budget. We support investments in conservation and climate programs as appropriate to U.S. leadership and in the amounts requested by the President -- \$241 million for USAID and State Department investments in tropical forest conservation and sustainable landscapes; \$215 million for USAID/State investments in building resilience to climate-related disasters and damages; \$195 million for USAID/State investments in clean energy; \$190 million for the Strategic Climate

Fund, including \$130 million for the Forest Investment Program and \$40 million for the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience. We also urge support for the Global Environment facility (GEF) at the pledge level agreed by the U.S. Government -- \$143.75 million -- to prevent the creation of new arrears; and \$15 million for the Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA) debt-for-forest program (a reduction from recent years).

An arc of ecological destruction stretches across many countries in the tropics. Competition in and among developing countries for fresh water, food and arable land can lead to civil unrest, mass migrations and conflict. Conservation of renewable natural resources -- such as fertile soil, clean and abundant water, forests, fish, and biodiversity -- by contrast, promotes peace and security. Hence, international conservation assistance makes a direct contribution to U.S. national security. As Gen. Anthony Zinni said last year, *“Protecting “green” wealth in the developing world offers far greater potential for peace and prosperity... loss of “green” natural resources, such as forests, fresh water, fish and fertile soils, can play a significant role in driving instability and conflict.*

The Nature Conservancy supports local conservation groups and communities in the developing world. We help implement sustainable development projects to create jobs and improve the productivity and standard of living of rural people. We work cooperatively with landowners to promote conservation on private lands. We are a private, non-profit organization. Our current capital campaign has raised more than \$1 billion of private dollars for conservation, of which more than \$100 million is destined for our international work.

The United States was the first country to make conservation of nature a national goal, recognizing that our country’s bounty is vast yet vulnerable. In recent decades, the United States has taken this good idea

global. Our government is helping to protect the planet's natural capital that is the foundation of future prosperity. President Teddy Roosevelt said "*The conservation of natural resources is the fundamental problem. Unless we solve that problem it will avail us little to solve all others.*" This was true for us in 1907, and it is true for the developing countries today.

A growing population of over 6.8 billion people is placing ever greater stresses on our planet's vital systems. If we hope to feed the future, and address global health and climate change, the conservation of nature's resources must become a central priority. The world has too often taken a short-term view of development -- damaging or destroying natural resources or placing quick profit over long-term sustainability. Vast areas of primary forest have been cut or burned, converted to farming or ranching, and then often abandoned after a few years. Having expanded into the planet's remaining natural areas, humans now appropriate one-quarter of the globe's primary productivity to our needs -- an astonishing level of consumption by one species. Only very good management can allow this share to grow further without fundamentally undermining the systems that underpin life on Earth.

Through programs such as **Feed the Future**, U.S. government agencies are investing in food security to safeguard livelihoods and support development, with a goal of halving the number of people suffering from hunger by 2015. Global conservation serves these same goals. Designated marine reserves allow depleted fish populations to rebound, promoting food security, benefitting local fishermen and protecting biodiversity. Adoption of integrated farming and natural resource management systems can make agriculture and livestock more sustainable. The Coral Triangle, a six-nation initiative to conserve one of the world's richest ocean ecosystems, is promoting sustainable development by replenishing nurseries for globally significant fisheries and protecting marine resources that support the livelihoods of 125 million people in the region.

Developed nations including the U.S. have made sizeable commitments to mitigate and address the impacts of climate change as part of their development strategies. Conservation dollars deliver climate co-benefits as well. Fifteen percent of all global carbon emissions originate from tropical deforestation and degradation. With vast, intact forest reserves, Brazil and Indonesia will play a crucial role in mitigating carbon emissions, as will Central Africa. A combination of conservation and climate incentives can protect these forests and sustain the communities and wildlife in these and other strategically important countries. Investments in the Forest Investment Program and other sustainable landscapes programs contribute to sustainable economic development by reducing illegal logging that undercuts legitimate agricultural and forest product producers, supporting land tenure reform that creates a stronger legal framework, improving monitoring capabilities and training staff in implementation and enforcement of forest conservation programs.

Protecting and restoring the natural resources on which local communities depend is also important to assure greater resilience to those systems in the face of climate impacts we are already witnessing. The World Bank and the U.S. Geological Survey have estimated that each dollar spent on preparedness saves seven dollars in disaster response. Incorporating climate change vulnerabilities into development planning is essential to making smart, efficient development investments in countries that face water shortages from receding glaciers, droughts from changed rainfall patterns, coastal flooding from sea level rise, and reduced agricultural yields from hotter temperatures. U.S. foreign assistance and support for the Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Funds have vital roles to play in strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities and countries in preparation for these emerging challenges.

U.S. agencies, local and regional governments, international conservation organizations, and other donors are partnering to build a more sustainable future. Germany and France, which have already given large sums to international conservation, recently pledged to increase support to at least \$600 million each per year by 2014. Norway is dedicating \$1 billion per year to forest conservation in the tropics. International conservation is about more than just protecting biodiversity -- it is a cross-cutting strategy for creating development, health, peace and stability in strategically important regions. It is a precondition for solving a host of other challenges. Further, investments in climate resilience, sustainable landscapes and clean energy foster opportunities for global commerce and strengthen U.S. relationships in key regions in an increasingly competitive and volatile world.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the largest single source of environmental funds (including conservation) in the world. The U.S. Government contributes 22 percent, which is leveraged by other governmental and local donors, so that ultimately every dollar of U.S. money is leveraged at least 10 to 1 for on-the-ground environmental projects. We support the Administration's request of \$143.75 million, which covers the U.S. pledge but provides nothing toward the United States' arrears.

The Tropical Forest Conservation Act was bipartisan legislation supporting debt-for-nature agreements that relieve official debt owed the U.S. based on earlier loans, in exchange for funding tropical conservation, while also leveraging private dollars. This successful program has generated commitments that will ultimately be worth \$266 million to support forest conservation in Costa Rica, Indonesia, Panama, Peru, Guatemala, Colombia and other countries. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.