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Leaders from World's Most Forested Countries Call for New Approach to Manage Remaining Forests and Promote Green Growth in Post-Paris Agreement Era

Global Network, MegaFlorestais, brings together forest agency leaders to better adapt to increasing pressure on forest land and climate change mitigation challenges

WASHINGTON, DC (25 April 2016) – Eight former leaders of public forest agencies from across the world are calling for the new, participatory approaches to forest regulation that are required to address urgent global challenges, including climate change mitigation, green growth, poverty, and the struggle against deforestation. The Paris Agreement, signed last week in New York, places greater importance on conserving forests and other carbon sinks. With 70 percent of the world's forests in public ownership, forest agency leaders are increasingly crucial stakeholders in helping countries meet their climate pledges.

A recent [analysis](#) co-authored by this diverse group of leaders from Brazil, Nepal, Canada, Indonesia, Mexico, and the US reflects on transitions in forest governance and lessons learned for forest agency leaders over the past decade. The analysis highlights the importance of new and innovative efforts to reduce deforestation, promote transparency and inclusiveness, and engage citizens—especially the local communities and Indigenous Peoples who have successfully stewarded these lands for generations.

"Forest tenure and rights issues have magnified in importance over the past 10 years," said Sally Collins, co-chair of MegaFlorestais and former senior official with the US Forestry Service. "I've seen the pressures on forests grow and change radically, and there is an increasing demand for decision makers to respond to these challenges, as well as to recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to own and benefit from their forests and resources."

This unique group of authors was brought together by an informal network called MegaFlorestais, comprised of current and former heads of forest agencies from the world's most forested countries. The group—created as a space for open and honest exchange on forest issues—has met annually since 2006 to discuss key challenges in forest governance. At the network's 11th annual event last week in China, the current generation of forest agency leaders came together to continue the conversation on how to best adapt to new trends in green growth, public forest reforms, forest tenure, and land rights.

Chen Fengxue, co-chair of MegaFlorestais and representative of the host country, emphasized at the event that "most global problems such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and drought are primarily caused by destruction of the forest ecosystem. If the situation is not dealt with properly, these problems will threaten the safety of ecosystems at the country, regional, and even global level."

At these annual meetings, leaders like Chen Fengxue can speak freely and without pressure about the

challenges their agencies face, and share new ideas to help solve the global challenges that lie ahead. As Collins highlighted, the beauty of MegaFlorestais is that these forest agency leaders “all care so much about the world’s forests,” and their presence at this forum emphasizes their commitment to open dialogue and finding common solutions.

Lessons learned from the MegaFlorestais network have already led to concrete policy changes, as governments are increasingly seeing that resource rights issues must be addressed collaboratively, across all sectors. New models of public administration of forest areas have surfaced—such as in British Columbia, Canada—showing that cross-ministerial collaboration, inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and land reform are possible.

In Peru, a new executive board is being formed to guide the country’s forest agency, and will reserve 4 of the 12 positions for representatives of indigenous communities.

“One of the most interesting things happening at MegaFlorestais is the discussion about the maturing idea of land management, said Fabiola Muñoz, executive director of Peru’s forest agency. “It is not only about the forests, but also about the people—those who will ultimately be affected by changes in land use or land management decisions. MegaFlorestais is an important space that allows us to share the *vivencias* [firsthand experiences] of the regulations and practices that have been put into place in our countries.”

At this year’s meeting, current leaders signed an endorsement of the MegaFlorestais network, recognizing its global importance as a tool for sharing skills and ideas, discussing challenges, accelerating learning, and spurring innovation. Participants also affirmed their ongoing commitment to the group by finalizing a new, five-year plan for MegaFlorestais.

“This five-year plan will help us continue to promote innovative new ideas and practical solutions, as well as open dialogue and inclusiveness,” said Collins. “I encourage the leaders of today’s forest agencies to take heed of this call for the betterment of the world’s forest, the 2.5 billion people who depend on them for their survival, and for all of us who hope to have a stable and controlled climate in the not too distant future.”

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MegaFlorestais is an informal network of public forest agency leaders dedicated to advancing international dialogue and exchange on transitions in forest governance, forest industry, and the roles of public forest agencies. The group includes the heads of forestry agencies of the largest forested countries in the world, and provides the opportunity for these leaders to share their experiences and challenges in a frank and open manner. The process aims to foster stronger relationships between forest agencies, collectively strengthening their abilities to play leading roles in addressing forest governance and sustainable forestry issues. For more information, please visit: www.megaflorestais.org.

The Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) acts as the Secretariat of the MegaFlorestais network. RRI is a global coalition of 13 Partners and over 140 international, regional and community organizations

advancing forest tenure, policy and market reforms. RRI leverages the strategic collaboration and investment of its Partners and Collaborators around the world by working together on research, advocacy, and convening strategic actors to catalyze change on the ground. RRI is coordinated by the Rights and Resources Group, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC. For more information, please visit: www.rightsandresources.org.