

Destruction of Carbon-Rich Mangroves Costs up to US\$42 billion in Economic Damages Annually

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Globally Coordinated Action and Policy Interventions Required to Stem Loss of One of the Planet's Most Threatened Ecosystems.

Mangroves

are being destroyed at a rate 3-5 times greater than the average rates of forest loss, costing billions in economic damages and denying millions of people the ecosystem services they need to survive, according to a new report launched today by the United Nations Environment Programme - UNEP.

The Importance of Mangroves: A Call to Action

launched at the 16th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, describes how emissions resulting from mangrove losses make up nearly one-fifth of global emissions from deforestation, resulting in economic damages of some US\$6-42 billion annually. Mangroves are also threatened by climate change, which could result in the loss of a further 10-15 per cent of mangroves by 2100. Found in 123 countries and covering 152,000 square kilometers, over 100 million people around the world live within 10 kilometers of large mangrove forests, benefiting from a variety of goods and services such as fisheries and forest products, clean water and protection against erosion and extreme weather events.

UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner said, "Mangroves provide ecosystem services worth around US\$33-57,000 per hectare per year. Add to that their superior ability to store carbon that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere and it becomes clear that their continued destruction makes neither ecological nor economic sense." "Yet, the escalating destruction and degradation of mangroves - driven by land conversion for aquaculture and agriculture, coastal development, and pollution - is occurring at an alarming rate, with over a quarter of the earth's original mangrove cover now lost. This has potentially devastating effects on biodiversity, food security and the livelihoods of some of the most marginalized coastal communities in developing countries where more than 90 per cent of the world's mangroves are found." "By quantifying in economic terms the value of the ecosystem services provided by mangroves as well as the critical role they play in global climate regulation, the report aims to encourage policymakers to use the tools and guidelines outlined to better ensure the conservation and sustainable management of mangroves," he added.

The report argues that in spite of the mounting evidence in support of the multitude of benefits derived from mangroves, they remain one of the

most threatened ecosystems on the planet. The report describes financial mechanisms and incentives to stimulate mangrove conservation, such as REDD+, private sector investments, and the creation of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions for developing countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while increasing national capacity. Mangrove degradation and loss is predicted to continue into the future if a business-as-usual scenario prevails. The Importance of Mangroves: A Call to Action offers readers and especially policymakers many management and protection measures and tools that are available for use at national, regional and global scales to help ensure a sustainable future for mangroves. Policymakers, it says, should consider several of these, including integrating mangrove-specific goals and targets into the post-2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals agenda, as well as better coordination of global action on mangroves through the development of a Global Mangrove Commission, and the streamlining and coordination of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Protecting these long-term reservoirs of carbon, and preventing their emissions from being released back into the atmosphere is, the report says, a sensible and cost-effective measure that can be taken to help mitigate climate change.

The Importance of Mangroves: A Call to Action - UNEP