



New Initiative Will Use Bamboo to Tackle Twin Challenges of Poverty and Climate Change in Latin America

OLON, SANTA ELENA PROVINCE, ECUADOR, April 28, 2011: The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR), together with its funding partners, the European Union (EU), World Bank (WB), and the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), today launched a major initiative aimed at strengthening the use of bamboo in Latin America to enhance economic growth while simultaneously adapting to the adverse effects of climate change that trouble the region. The initiative combines a range of tools and incentives to take advantage of the social, environmental and economic benefits that bamboo can offer.

“With this initiative we are working with local communities to build technical capacity in cultivating, harvesting, processing and marketing of bamboo resources,” said **Alvaro Cabrera, INBAR’s Regional Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean**. “We are working with community, NGO, and government organizations at a national and regional level to develop codes, standards and policies that prioritize bamboo as a major building block for green growth strategies.”

Rosa Edith Rada, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Design of the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil (UCSG), said bamboo is readily and locally available in many countries across Latin America. “Affordable, fast growing and immensely strong, bamboo can generate income for the rural poor with little capital investment. It can provide a more eco-friendly alternative to production and construction using timber, concrete and steel.”

INBAR’s Regional Initiative for Economic Development and Adaptation to Climate Change will focus initially on coastal regions of Ecuador and Peru. These regions are some of the poorest and most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in Latin America and suffer from recurrent floods, landslides and other natural disasters. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of these events.

One major aspect of INBAR’s new initiative is to help vulnerable communities to climate change build elevated bamboo houses that can withstand floods, storms, landslides and earthquakes.

“Poor communities are the most vulnerable to natural disasters, due in part to the fact that they are forced to build their homes on mountainsides, deltas and other volatile areas,” said **Gabriela Arcos, Environmental Specialist at the World Bank**. “Poverty means they are also less equipped to prepare for, or to recover from natural disasters, be they climate-related or not.”

But while the challenges of poverty and vulnerability are immense and complex, the solutions don’t always have to be. “Simple things like elevated bamboo houses can make a real difference,” said **Tatiana Garcia Alfaro, Project Manager at the Delegation of the European Union to Peru**. “Ecuador and Peru’s long tradition of building with bamboo provide a strong foundation for local action, which is highly relevant for the initiative’s design and implementation. This initiative is an excellent example of how to make local bamboo houses safer, stronger and more affordable.”

Climate change is already impacting local agricultural production systems across Ecuador and Peru, including coffee, cacao and banana sectors. These systems have long been a source of food and a

source of income for local communities across the region. “Coffee production systems in Northern Peru are already deeply affected by climate change related events. This initiative will allow us to strengthen bamboo value chains so that in turn bamboo can generate an additional and reliable source of income for local producers, artisans, construction workers and entrepreneurs, “ said **Leonor Rocha, Project Manager at the Center for Research, Training, Evaluation and Advocacy (CICAP).**

“Strengthening value chains is fundamental for ensuring local producers and smallholders have equitable access to economic benefits, move up the value chain and ultimately out of poverty,” said **Nianjun Shen, Project Manager at the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC).** “With this aim, the initiative will use bamboo to promote innovations along existing commodity value chains, such as cacao, banana and coffee. By forging inter-linkages between bamboo and these sectors, the initiative will take advantages of reciprocal influences arising from shared infrastructure, logistics and market corridors across Ecuadorian and Peruvian borders.”

The initiative will also support mechanisms to promote technology transfer between the two countries. The initiative launch was held at the Museum of *Los Amantes de Sumpa* in the coastal city of Olon in Ecuador with over 150 participants coming from Government, NGO, research and community organizations, and the private sector. The Museum incorporates local bamboo materials into its design and construction.

The partnership consortium is comprised of, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) who will act as the supervisory body for the CFC-funded project within the initiative, with implementing partners in Ecuador: Services for Alternative Development in the South (SENDAS), Association of Banana Producers (ASOGUABO), and the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil (UCSG), and in Peru: the Center for Research, Training, Evaluation and Advocacy (CICAP) and the Program for Rural, Social and Economic Development (PROGRESO).

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For more information or to arrange an interview with one of our spokespeople, please contact Violeta Gonzalez (English) at vgonzalez@inbar.int

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About the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR)

INBAR is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to reducing poverty, conserving the environment and creating fairer trade using bamboo and rattan. INBAR was established in 1997 and represents a growing number of member countries all over the world. Headquarters are in China and there are regional offices in Ecuador, Ghana, Ethiopia, and India. For more information, visit www.inbar.int.