



Press Release

For immediate release: 17th February 2006

MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR AWARD RECOGNISES BIODIVERSITY AS KEY TO TSUNAMI RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT

Following an agreement signed in Jakarta **today**, Friday 17 February 2006, conservation organisation **Fauna & Flora International received the first international humanitarian aid grant given specifically for environmental work in Aceh**, an area devastated by the earthquake and tsunami of December 2004. US\$17.5 million (£10m) has been awarded from the Multi Donor Fund, in partnership with the World Bank, to integrate environment protection into post-tsunami reconstruction. In a year when landslides have devastated many parts of Indonesia causing loss of life and village habitats, **preserving tropical forests and mangroves is the first line of defence against erosion and natural disasters.**

Said Mark Rose, Chief Executive of Fauna & Flora International (FFI):

This is a significant recognition of the global importance of natural resources to livelihoods. We can put millions of pounds in here in terms of relief and rehabilitation, but unless forests and mangroves remain there is a real danger of future disasters. There will be no water, no agriculture, nothing. The risk is that in the north of Sumatra people will be starving. The forest is like a sponge, soaking up winter rainfall and releasing it steadily down streams over the year, while the mangroves protect the coastline from erosion and flooding. Without either you would have no soil, no food, no clean water, and no security from the sea or torrential rain.

The grant **is unusual** because the one-off environmental award is distinct from the World Bank's normal environmental grant-making. The new project will be implemented by FFI and the Leuser International Foundation. FFI has been working on forest conservation and human livelihood issues in Aceh for several years, so was able to draw on established trust and credibility as it focused on humanitarian aid in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami. **The new project will help people rebuild their lives without destroying the things they depend on.**

Frank Momberg, FFI Post-Tsunami Response Coordinator said:

Integrating environmental concerns into Aceh's reconstruction is an incredible challenge. However, we have a historic chance to build a better, sustainable future from the start as Aceh recovers from years of conflict and the devastation caused by the tsunami. With the support from the Multi Donor Fund we hope to enable local stakeholders to secure the environmental services, such as climate regulation and clean water, and biological diversity of Aceh's forest for generations to come.

The project will ensure the sustainable use of Aceh's forest wealth, particularly the mature rain forests of Leuser and Ulu Masen, and help provide livelihoods to local communities. While protecting the habitats of rare species like the Sumatran tiger, Asian elephant and orangutan, the project will also protect important water sources that supply the majority of water needed for domestic, agricultural and industrial use in Aceh.

/Ends

For further information:

David Beamont

Tel: +44 (0)1223 579332

Mobile: 07900114908 (after hours)

david.beamont@fauna-flora.org

PHOTOGRAPHS OF FFI's WORK IN ACEH ARE AVAILABLE

MORE INFORMATION

1. Fauna & Flora International (FFI) is the world's longest established international conservation body, founded over 100 years ago. Renowned for its science-based approach, FFI has pioneered sustainable conservation work that tackles problems holistically, providing solutions that simultaneously help wildlife, humans and the environment. FFI acts to conserve threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, are based on sound science and take account of human needs.

2. The grant is from the Multi Donor Trust Fund for Aceh and Nias, administered by the World Bank. The Fund for Aceh and Nias represents a pool of over US\$530 million in grant resources, provided by donor countries and international organisations to support the implementation of the Government's rehabilitation and reconstruction process in close cooperation with the Aceh Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR). Contributing donors include the European Commission, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the World Bank, Denmark, Norway, Canada, Sweden, the Asian Development Bank, Germany, the United States, Finland, Belgium, New Zealand and Ireland. The programme funded will be known as the Aceh Forest and Environment Project.

3. Working in close collaboration with local partner, the Provincial Nature Conservation Agency, along with local government, traditional leaders and communities, FFI has been spearheading conservation efforts in Aceh province since 1998. During that time, it has developed and implemented a series of initiatives to help conserve globally important biodiversity in the forests of northern Aceh, using the internationally important Asian elephant as a flagship species and indicator of environmental change. As a result of this work, FFI was one of the few conservation organizations working in Sumatra prior to the tsunami disaster, and with two offices and a team of locally based staff it was ideally placed to provide vital assistance. FFI's ability to continue to operate effectively in Aceh has been based upon strong relationships and trust with community members and local government, strengthened by the fact that the majority of the staff are Acehnese.

4. The earthquake and tsunami of December 2004 devastated Aceh's society, economy, infrastructure, and institutions, especially along the West Coast. In this narrow coastal belt, communities and agricultural lands border directly on protected forests and karst mountain ranges. These forested areas include the Gunung Leuser National Park and Ecosystem in the south, and the Ulu Masen Forest Complex in the north. Even within Indonesia, this area is unique, comprising the largest remaining contiguous forested area (3.3 million ha) with the richest assemblage of biodiversity in South East Asia, including tigers, elephants, rhinos and orangutans. These areas also provide valuable ecological services needed for Aceh's recovery, including water supply, flood prevention, erosion mitigation, and climate regulation.

5. As the pace of reconstruction quickens in Aceh in 2006, there is growing concern that the increasing demand for wood and other natural resources will have a negative long-term impact on the region's environment and ecology. The need for building materials to reconstruct hundreds of thousands of houses, as well as community health and education infrastructure, will create a high demand for timber supplies that could lead to widespread, uncontrolled, and illegal logging from protected forests. The Government of Indonesia (GOI) and the Government of Aceh through the BRR have recognised concerns about illegal logging and forest destruction linked to the reconstruction process. Donor agencies and large international NGOs also recognise the risks involved in sponsoring projects that contribute to illegal logging or environmental degradation, especially given the high visibility and civil society scrutiny. The BRR and the Governor have adopted policies to prohibit logging of natural forest in Aceh and to promote a "green future" for the province. Through close cooperation with local government agencies, communities and NGOs, the FFI- Leuser International Foundation project aims to slow down the loss of forest while advising reconstruction agencies on sustainable building and recovery practices. **/end all**