The International Herald Tribune

                      December 15, 2007 Saturday

**Conference on climate nears deal on forests;
Developing nations would receive aid in trade for saving trees**
BYLINE: Peter Gelling - The New York Times Media Group

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 704 words

DATELINE: NUSA DUA, Indonesia

Governments at the United Nations meeting on climate change agreed in principle
Friday to a system that would compensate developing countries for protecting
their rain forests, a deal that officials described as a nascent but innovative
effort to mitigate deforestation and global warming.

The cutting down of forests across the globe contributes a startling 20 percent
of the world's annual greenhouse pollution through burning, gases released from
deforested soil and smoldering peat, scientists say. By comparison, the U.S.
share of greenhouse emissions is 24 percent of the world total.

''It's a landmark in bringing a large group of developing countries into active
participation in reducing emissions,'' said Philip Clapp, deputy managing
director of the Pew Environment Group, the conservation arm of the Pew
charitable trusts in the United States. ''It has the potential for first time to
generate the kind of investment in forest protection that has been unavailable
until now.''

The precise ways that countries with large rain forests, like Indonesia and
Brazil, will be compensated have not been fully worked out.

UN officials said that part of the financing would come from developed countries
in the form of aid and that other funds will come from carbon credits - part of
the system of incentives for reducing greenhouse gases mandated by the 1997
Kyoto Protocol.

Officials said that Indonesia, which has the world's third-largest area of rain
forest after Brazil and Congo, rallied developing countries to support the deal,
which until now has been held up by disputes over how to assess the usefulness
of rain forests in moderating global warming.

''This agreement is very important to us and to the world,'' said Nurmasripatin,
a member of the Indonesian delegation at the conference, which is taking place
on the resort island of Bali. ''There is consensus that we must limit carbon
emissions from deforestation. But developing countries are not able to do it on
their own.''

The World Bank estimates that Indonesia - the world's third-leading emitter of
greenhouse gases, after China and the United States, mainly because of the
destruction of its forests - stands, along with other major forested countries,
to earn billions of dollars if the plan is successful.

The agreement on deforestation, formally known as the Reduced Emissions from
Deforestation in Developing Countries, is part of the wider discussions here on
reaching a global agreement on addressing climate change.

The talks, which began Dec. 3 and were nearing their conclusion Friday, are
aimed at reaching an accord to start two years of negotiations to work out a new
treaty to succeed the Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012.

Environmentalists here said the deal on protecting forests was a good start but
some had reservations about its implementation.

Frances Seymour, director for the Center for International Forestry Research, a
U.S.-based nonprofit group, voiced concern that the system was vulnerable to
corruption and could be undermined by a growing demand for biofuels.

Global demand for palm oil, a popular biofuel, has increased dramatically in
recent years and has led to the widespread clearing of tropical forests to make
way for palm plantations.

Seymour also said she worried that the benefits of the UN plan would not reach
indigenous people who derive their homes and livelihoods from the forests and
could even displace them as companies buy up the land in order to receive the
compensation.

''We have to make sure those who are not as well connected have their interests
recognized as well,'' Seymour said.

The World Bank, together with the Nature Conservancy, another U.S.-based
environmental group, announced this week the establishment of several pilot
projects to further the aims of the UN plan.

A $100 million Readiness Fund would provide developing countries with technical
and financial assistance to measure carbon stored in its forests and devise
strategies to reduce deforestation. It would also finance research on measuring
reductions in emissions though sustaining forests.

A $200 million Carbon Fund will test the financial mechanisms in the UN plan,
such as the trade of carbon credits, that could lead to less deforestation.

 The International Herald Tribune

                          December 15, 2007 Saturday

**Evidence of progress emerges at Bali talks;
Next step for climate: Negotiations to limit greenhouse gases**

BYLINE: Thomas Fuller and Peter Gelling - The New York Times Media Group

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 1311 words

DATELINE: NUSA DUA, Indonesia

Countries represented at a United Nations conference on climate change looked to
be heading for a landmark agreement on a time frame for negotiations to combat
global warming, officials said Friday.

After a weeklong deadlock between the United States and the European Union,
diplomats reported that agreements were falling into place, with Germany's
environment minister, Sigmar Gabriel, joking that the ''climate in the climate
convention has changed.''

Yvo de Boer, the head of the UN climate change agency that helped broker the
talks on the island of Bali, said negotiations here had been particularly
fraught because the issue of global warming goes ''to the core not only of
climate change but of economic policy.''

''These past two weeks have been unique in that we are about to embark on
something that for many years countries have been unwilling to embark on,'' de
Boer said.

An agreement in Bali offers the possibility that the world, including the United
States, will spend the next two years negotiating a treaty that limits
greenhouse gas emissions and ultimately slows the warming of the planet.

Yet the difficulty of simply agreeing to these negotiations portends an
acrimonious two years of actually deciding who carries the burden of reducing
greenhouse pollution.

The differences in philosophy at the meeting were striking and fundamental. EU
negotiators said they favored specific government-imposed caps on emissions and
wanted industrial countries to lead the way. The United States favors relying on
the market - its delegates said that higher oil, natural gas and coal prices
will drive consumers away from fossil fuels - as well as technology to reduce
greenhouse gas emissions.

Developing countries, a vaguely defined group that includes members as diverse
as China and Costa Rica, refer to the historical responsibility of countries
that became rich with the convenience of burning coal and oil for energy - a
luxury that developing countries may not have.

''The developed countries have had 200 years to follow a carbon-rich path to
industrialization,'' said Munir Akram, the permanent representative of Pakistan
at the UN and the spokesman at the conference here for the G-77 plus China, the
bloc of developing countries represented here.

''We cannot afford to allow our development to be stalled or reversed,'' he
said. ''The levels of poverty in the developing world are so high that we need
to grow and we need to grow rapidly.''

Developing countries, including fast-growing China, insist that rich countries
be subject to emissions limits. But emissions cuts by developing countries, they
say, should be voluntary.

There appears to be little disagreement on the timetable for a new agreement:
2009 is widely cited as the deadline for a global deal to replace the Kyoto
Protocol, the agreement to limit emissions that all major wealthy countries
follow except the United States.

But even supporters say negotiating the deal in two years will be tight.

''It's very ambitious timetable, and it will certainly not be achieved if we
keep the same kind of method of work as we have done over the last years,'' said
Artur Runge-Metzger, the head of climate change issues at the European
Commission. The EU would like to ''at least double the number of negotiating
sessions over the coming two years,'' he said.

Delegates here say that by Thursday night the meeting had moved swiftly away
from the gloomy stalemate that had prevailed for the previous week. The United
States, which had been widely blamed for creating an impasse, had become ''more
flexible,'' said Gabriel, the German minister.

Coincidentally or not, the change in tenor at the meeting came after Al Gore,
fresh from accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Norway for helping raise awareness
about climate change, gave a rousing speech to the Bali delegates.

Gore told them they could accept a minimalist outcome in Bali because the Bush
administration would be out of office by the time the substance of the climate
change agreement was negotiated.

''Over the next two years the United States is going to be somewhere it is not
now,'' Gore said. ''You must anticipate that.''

Among the hundreds of speeches given at the two-week conference, Gore's was
probably the most talked about.

''My sense is that people were incredibly impressed by the presentation he
made,'' said de Boer, the head of the UN climate change agency. ''It was a very
important moment.''

Among the highlights of the climate change conference was an agreement to
compensate developing countries for protecting their rain forests, a plan that
environmentalists described as an innovative effort to mitigate global warming.

The cutting down of forests across the globe contributes a startling 20 percent
of the world's annual greenhouse pollution through burning, gases released from
deforested soil and smoldering peat, scientists say. By comparison, the U.S.
share of greenhouse emissions is 24 percent of the world total.

''It's a landmark in bringing a large group of developing countries into active
participation in reducing emissions,'' said Philip Clapp, deputy managing
director of the Pew Environment Group, the conservation arm of the Pew
charitable trusts in the United States. ''It has the potential for the first
time to generate the kind of investment in forest protection that has been
unavailable until now.''

Doug Boucher, the director of the tropical forest and climate initiative of the
Union of Concerned Scientists, a nonprofit U.S. group, called the plan a major
breakthrough in helping combat global warming.

''Up until now we have left deforestation out of our attempts to address climate
change,'' Boucher said.

He said cutting down forests contributed more to global warming annually than
all types of transportation combined.

The precise ways that countries with large rain forests, like Indonesia and
Brazil, would be compensated have not been fully worked out. UN officials said
that part of the financing would come from developed countries via aid and that
other funds would come from carbon credits - part of the system of incentives
for reducing greenhouse gases mandated by the Kyoto Protocol.

Norway has pledged nearly $2.8 billion over five years to developing countries
that preserve their forests.

Officials said Indonesia, which has the third-largest area of rain forest after
Brazil and Congo, rallied developing countries to support the plan, which had
been held up for years in part by disputes over how to measure the reduction in
greenhouse gases from preserving forests.

''This agreement is very important to us and to the world,'' said Nurmasripatin,
a member of the Indonesian delegation at the conference. ''There is consensus
that we must limit carbon emissions from deforestation. But developing countries
are not able to do it on their own.''

The World Bank estimates that Indonesia - the world's third-leading emitter of
greenhouse gases, after China and the United States, mainly because of the
destruction of its forests - could, along with other major forested countries,
earn billions of dollars if the plan is successful.

Environmentalists said the plan to protect forests was a good start, but some
had reservations about its implementation. Frances Seymour, director for the
Center for International Forestry Research, a nonprofit U.S. group, voiced
concern that the system was vulnerable to corruption and could be undermined by
a growing demand for biofuels.

Global demand for palm oil, a popular biofuel, has increased sharply in recent
years and has led to the widespread clearing of tropical forests to make way for
palm plantations.

Seymour also said she worried that the benefits of the UN plan would not reach
indigenous people who derive their homes and livelihoods from the forests and
could even displace them as companies buy up land in order to receive the
compensation.