

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

1.5 Million Trees to Be Planted in Kenya by Aga Khan Development Network and Lions Clubs International

Nairobi, 19 October 2011 -- The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and Lions Clubs International today committed to planting 1.5 million trees in Kenya by June 2012. The United Nations has declared 2011 the International Year of Forests.

The pledge was made at a tree planting ceremony in Nairobi City Park attended by Hon. Noah Wekesa, Minister for Forestry and Wildlife, Lions Clubs International President Wing-Kun Tam and Prince Hussain Aga Khan.

Kenya has one of the greatest rates of deforestation in Africa. To combat rapid deforestation and the subsequent effects of soil and water degradation, the Kenyan Government pledged in 2010 to increase forest cover by 10 percent. The AKDN-Lions Clubs partnership will contribute to meeting that pledge.

Forests not only provide environmental benefits, but also offer significant income and livelihood options for more than one billion forest-dependent people around the globe. Trees provide a wide range of products (timber, fruit, medicine, beverages and fodder) and valuable “services,” including sequestering carbon, providing shade, controlling erosion, beautifying landscapes and increasing the fertility of soils.

Kenya’s Mau forest is an example: As the nation’s largest “water tower,” it stores rain during the wet seasons and releases it during dry months, yet during the past 15 years, over 100,000 hectares (247,105 acres) of Mau forest have been cleared. As a result, the “water tower” is no longer working: rivers that originate in the forest are drying up, with downstream effects on farmers, hydroelectric plants, tourism and industry.

“We are not just emphasising tree planting, but tree *growing*,” said Prince Hussain Aga Khan. “The long-term stewardship and husbandry of trees should be seen as creating viable assets for farmers and communities. We see sustainable tree growing as having a significant impact on both poverty alleviation and the environment.”

President Wing-Kun Tam welcomed the partnership, saying, “Trees help the environment by providing an array of benefits, not least more oxygen for humans and homes for animals. I believe this partnership will change the landscape of our communities for the better within just one year.”

The partnership will source seedlings and expertise from the Kenyan Forestry Research Institute, Kenya Wildlife Service and nurseries operated by local youth and women entrepreneurs in the country. In addition to tree planting activities, conservation measures will be encouraged, especially at schools. Schools in the programme will be provided with fuel-efficient cook stoves that will reduce wood consumption by 50 percent. Rain water harvesting systems will also be added.

The Lions Clubs International’s tree planting program builds on a 2011 commitment to plant one million trees globally – a commitment that has already been surpassed by 500 percent. AKDN’s tree-planting commitments in Kenya – undertaken by its affiliated institutions, including the Aga Khan Foundation’s coastal programs, the Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa, Serena Hotels, Frigoken and the Nation Group – are on track to plant nearly 10 million trees in Kenya by 2014. These activities build on a tradition that has planted over 120 million trees in Asia and Africa over the last 25 years.

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Notes:

Lions Clubs International is an organization that works to empower volunteers to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace and promote international understanding through Lions clubs. It has 1.35 million members in 206 countries.

The agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network are private, international, non-denominational development organizations. They work to improve the welfare and prospects of people in 30 countries in the developing world, particularly in Asia and Africa. The Network's nine development agencies focus on social, cultural and economic development for all citizens, regardless of gender, origin or religion. Its budget for philanthropic activity in 2010 was in excess of US\$ 600 million.