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Press Release

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Forest Leaders Urge Governments to Take Firm Action on Climate Change

Geneva (Switzerland), 1 December 2015 - "We need a global agreement at COP 21 with clear actions and firm commitments, outlining effective pathways to address climate change," said Ben Gunneberg, CEO of PEFC International ahead of the upcoming PEFC Forest Certification Week. "These commitments must recognize the multiple benefits of forests and encourage policies that promote sustainable forest management and the use of certified forest products. This will enable PEFC as the world's leading forest certification system to further enhance its contribution to tackling climate change, safeguarding forest ecosystems and sustainable livelihoods."

With the start of the 2015 Climate Conference (COP 21) in Paris, the contribution of forests to tackling climate change is high on the agenda of PEFC Forest Certification Week, the annual gathering of the world's leading experts in sustainable forest management certification. Scheduled to coincide with COP 21, the meeting will bring together more than one hundred experts, including the heads of national forest certification systems of some forty countries.

Sustainable forest management, and the use of products certified to originate from sustainably managed forests, are considered key elements in mitigating climate change. Forests not only store carbon, but also supply wood, which itself stores carbon, and can be used as a substitute for fossil fuels and for non-renewable materials such as plastics, steel or concrete. Different from such alternative materials, wood products from sustainable forests are essentially carbon neutral: the carbon released at the end of their life cycle has previously been captured while the tree was growing.

Among the many contributions that forest certification can make to mitigating climate change, the experts will hone in on three key issues in more detail:

1. How can we further improve access to certification for the many small-, family- and community owned forests, thereby optimizing their impact whilst securing sustainable livelihoods?

2. How can we best fine-tune sustainable forest management requirements for future impacts of climate change?
3. How can we further encourage companies, governments and consumers to increase their use of certified forest products to take direct and immediate action on climate change?

"Companies, governments and consumers around the world already value the contribution that PEFC provides to protect forests and fight climate change. The recent PEFC/GfK Global Consumer Survey demonstrated that [consumers want companies to label their products](#), and companies are increasingly adopting procurement policies that specify PEFC. Governments around the world recognize the credibility that the PEFC label provides, with most recently the UK government highlighting that PEFC has the [highest level of compliance](#) with its respective sustainability criteria," said Mr. Gunneberg.

"In Paris, we now need firm commitments that clearly recognize the multiple benefits that sustainably managed forests provide. We need firm action that promotes the uptake of public policies promoting sustainable forest management, forest certification, and the use of certified forest products. We need to send strong signals to the private sector and consumers alike to act on their preference, to choose certified forest products over non-renewable materials, and to make a conscious choice for PEFC-certified products to ensure a more equitable sustainable future for our planet," emphasized Mr. Gunneberg.

About PEFC International

PEFC, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, is a leading global alliance of the national forest certification system. More than 260 million hectares of forests are certified to PEFC's internationally recognized Sustainability Benchmarks, supplying more than 16,000 Chain of Custody certified companies with responsibly sourced timber and wood-based products. For more information, please visit www.pefc.org

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