

## **A speech by HRH The Prince of Wales for the WWF dinner to launch the Amazon Initiative**

**25th October 2007**

I am delighted, as a long-standing admirer, to have this opportunity to pay tribute to WWF. In a world where non-governmental organizations come and go, rising and falling in response to public enthusiasm, WWF has maintained its focus, delivering results year after year. I know my father has played a very large part in this since his involvement first began with you back in 1965 and he has worked tirelessly for the causes closest to your hearts. Indeed, he continues to do so to this day as your President Emeritus.

Much has changed, of course, since those early days when that remarkable man, Sir Peter Scott, and a few other visionary individuals realized that the world's wildlife had little or no protection and set out to do something about it. Their extraordinary efforts, and those of their successors, some of whom are here tonight, have made a huge difference to our world. WWF has a fine record of identifying the threats and generating both public support and positive actions to improve the situation, whether it be protecting endangered species or raising awareness of our abuse of the world through the "One Planet Living" campaign.

And we must remember that in no small part thanks to WWF, climate change has perhaps, at last, achieved general recognition as the single most important issue that each and every one of us has to confront in our lives. If I may, I would like to take this opportunity, publicly, to congratulate former Vice President of the United States Al Gore on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for his indomitable efforts to raise awareness of the reality of climate change. I have known Al for more years than either of us would care to remember and he is a genuine giant on the world stage, to whom people in every corner of this planet owe the greatest possible debt of gratitude. I suppose it was inevitable that Al would be accused of 'alarmism and exaggeration' in certain quarters, but I find it almost unbelievable that with all the evidence that we see around us of the effects of climate change, such as melting ice caps, the increase in the number and ferocity of storms and more extreme weather patterns, that anyone could possibly be arguing the point any longer! That is why the judgement of the Peace Prize committee was so vitally important. It must surely have given yet one more "wake-up call" to those for whom the whole idea of global warming is too difficult or, dare I say it, too inconvenient to address.

Raising awareness of climate change is crucial, but now, almost too late in the day, the really important work of doing something about it has to start! This evening I want to focus on the biggest single and immediate opportunity that I believe we have to combat climate change. It is something which can be started now and will reap benefits fast. It is, of course, the protection of the world's remaining, but rapidly dwindling rainforests.

Work by WWF and many others has established rainforests in the public consciousness as some of the most beautiful and mysterious habitats left in the world, richer in the number of plants and animals they support than any other. But much, much more important is the contribution that rainforests, and indeed forests in general, make to maintaining our climate at a level that supports our very existence.

Ladies and gentlemen, the world's forests need to be seen for what they are – giant global

utilities, providing essential public services to humanity on a vast scale. They store carbon, which is lost to the atmosphere when they burn, increasing global warming. The life they support cleans the atmosphere of pollutants and feeds it with moisture. They act as a natural thermostat, helping to regulate our climate and sustain the lives of 1.4 billion of the poorest people on this Earth. And they do these things to a degree that is all but impossible to imagine. Amazonia's forests alone - the forests which WWF wants your help to protect - provide storage for the largest body of flowing freshwater on the planet. The trees release 20 billion tonnes of it into the atmosphere every day. Half of Africa, for instance, depends on rain from the forests of the Congo. (Some scientists are even now asking if Australia's devastating years of drought may be linked in some way to the loss of forests in South East Asia?) Then just take Ethiopia, which has suffered decades of famine. One hundred years ago, 35 per cent of Ethiopia was covered in trees. The figure today is barely 4 per cent.

However, as WWF knows only too well, the destruction goes on at a truly terrifying pace - out of sight and out of mind. Every year 50 million acres - an area the size of England, Wales and Scotland combined - are destroyed or degraded. And the Nobel Prize-winning United Nations International Panel on Climate Change has estimated that emissions from burning forests are responsible for around 20 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Based on that, only the energy sector emits a larger share. Let me say that again. Only the energy sector releases more greenhouse gas emissions than the destruction of the rainforests.

The simple fact is that combatting deforestation is likely to be one of the quickest and most cost-effective means of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and this is the point that we need to take away with us this evening. Sir Nicholas Stern's report states that expenditure of ten to fifteen billion dollars a year could reduce deforestation by half by 2030. And when you realize that figure is less than half of one per cent of the \$3,500 billion the world spends on insurance every year, I think it looks like a bargain. But, having said that, we must go further - half is simply not enough...

I'm sure that this audience knows that the Kyoto Protocol does not have a mechanism to protect standing rainforests. Credits are available for afforestation and reforestation projects, but not for maintaining an old growth forest. And the European Trading Scheme excludes carbon credits for forestry in developing nations altogether, cutting them off from the potential huge benefits this emerging new market could bring. While no doubt negotiated in this way for good reasons at the time, surely we have to accept that the pressing urgency of climate change requires a response that embraces rather than excludes primary tropical forests?

Of course it is essential, as WWF and many others rightly remind us, that stopping the deforestation of the rain forests is not an alternative to rich countries reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. But, ladies and gentlemen, it isn't an either/or. First of all, none of us can afford to go on with business as usual - the problem is too grave and too urgent for that. Secondly, how can we expect developing countries and emerging economies to take action if we - who, unwittingly or not, caused the problem that is likely to affect them more than ourselves - stand by and do nothing? Some of the rainforest nations are already doing what they can, not least Brazil which is working hard to reduce deforestation and with recent success. (And, incidentally, Brazil is also a world leader in producing and using renewable energy.) But none of these countries can solve the problem of deforestation by themselves because too often it is demand from developed countries for palm oil, beef and soya which is the driver. The point is that all of

us - the whole world - is in this together and that is why, together, we need to ensure that all possible measures are deployed .

And this is exactly what WWF's Amazon Initiative is determined to achieve. It will span the nine Amazonian countries, strengthening the existing Amazon Region Protected Area Programme that WWF was instrumental in creating. Eventually, it will safeguard over 300,000 square miles – an area the size of Spain - by creating an endowment fund to support its management in perpetuity. But it will do more. It will create new Protected Areas, green corridors between areas, and encourage and help transboundary co-operation. Above all, it will work with forest-dependent peoples, encouraging them to preserve their livelihoods through sustainable natural resource management. Using the experience gained through the Forest Stewardship Council, WWF will work with Governments and financial institutions to encourage best practice in any development projects in the Amazon. WWF will also engage with the whole supply chain in the key markets of soya, beef and timber. This is so important, as it is critical that consumers, retailers, producers and investors understand the consequences of their buying decisions.

Ladies and gentlemen, the WWF Amazon Initiative is of the greatest possible importance. It needs all our support, and that is why I am so delighted that WWF is working in tandem with my own Rainforests Project which I am announcing today.

It seems to me that the central issue in this whole debate is how we put a true value on standing rainforests to the world community - we simply have to find ways of putting a price on them which makes them more valuable alive than dead. This is quite a challenge, to say the least and I do not underestimate the immense complexities of the work to be done. But after nearly twenty-three years of working to create partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors and to encourage what is now known as Corporate Social Responsibility, I have come to the conclusion – with a few carefully selected volunteers – that it is a challenge worth taking up because of the urgency of the situation.

My Rainforests Project has the support of twelve major companies, which is a most important start - because over all the years of working with such companies as President of Business in the Community, I have invariably found that the private sector has all the essential skills in developing innovative responses to big challenges. It is also my belief – and experience – that if a large number of major players in the private sector can speak with one voice it makes it much easier for the public sector and international agencies to respond positively.

We are also involving a number of experts in this field, from a variety of scientific disciplines including, of course, WWF. We will work with the private sector, governments and environmental experts to develop a range of practical solutions that can start to be implemented within the next eighteen months. This is important, as it is during this timescale that the G8 and UN will be establishing priorities in the run-up to the renegotiation of the Kyoto Protocol.

The task is to review, develop and propose practical mechanisms, including possible legislative and market solutions and other ideas that acknowledge the true value of carbon and the ecosystem services provided by the world's remaining forests. These solutions need to provide credible incentives to rainforest nations, down to the farmers on the ground, and must "out-compete" the drivers of rainforest destruction. It is self-evident that for any solution to be effective we have to find the means to address critical issues such as governance, equity,

transparency and credibility.

We recognize, of course, that a huge amount of work is already underway, not least by WWF and its partners, and it is not the intention of my Project to duplicate this. We have no intention of re-inventing the wheel and we know that we have no monopoly of wisdom. But we want to use every means of identifying the winners from the myriad of proposed solutions and then find ways of implementing those winning solutions practically, equitably and above all quickly. Ladies and gentlemen, I am under no illusions about the difficulty of the task ahead – but if nothing is ventured, nothing is gained. However, as I have said, it must surely be the ethical duty of wealthy nations, which have created the problem of climate change, to find equitable solutions. That means working with developing nations (which incidentally, will suffer most and soonest from climate change) to find ingenious, innovative ways of paying the appropriate price for the ecosystem services provided by the world's remaining great forests. But I am afraid we need to do this very fast indeed. Climate change means that their survival and ours is surely now more closely linked than ever before. Perhaps it is appropriate today, St. Crispian's Day, to wonder if we can indeed "stiffen the sinews and conjure up the blood" in time? WWF has already stepped into the breach and each and every one of us must stand with them and do what they can. Success would literally transform the situation for our children and grandchildren and for every species on the planet. Ladies and gentlemen we must not, and cannot, fail.