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GOVERNORS' CLIMATE AND FORESTS TASK FORCE ADVANCES JURISDICTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING

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The Governors' Climate and Forests (GCF) Task Force held its 11th Annual Meeting last month in Florencia, in the Colombian Department of Caquetá. The theme of the meeting was "New Frontiers in Forest Governance: Promoting Investment, Environmental Protection and Increasing Well-Being." The state and provincial governments that are the members of the GCF are all committed to unlocking the potential of tropical forests as a climate change solution while improving the livelihoods of the communities that depend upon these forests. Earth Innovation Institute proudly participated and organized or supported multiple events at the meeting. Among the highlights were:

- the ratification by Andean-Amazonian Governments of an alliance for low-emission sustainable development;
- the approval by the GCF of a "Call for Collaboration" to private companies;
- the launch of two new Earth Innovation Institute initiatives—"Tropical Forest Champions" and "Back to Fish";
- the approval of a governance structure for the GCF Global Committee on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities to advance the Guiding Principles of Collaboration between Subnational Governments, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities;
- a working session with GCF members, indigenous peoples and local community representatives and civil society members to identify best practices for collaboration during a parallel working session organized by EII along with partners in Acre, Brazil;
- a session called "Voices from Caquetá" highlighting the results achieved by local sustainability projects;

I see all these initiatives as stepping stones toward achieving our main goal: finding successful strategies to fight climate change, improve human welfare, stop deforestation and promote a more sustainable rural development in these forest-rich jurisdictions.

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An Alliance for Low-Emissions Sustainable Development At the session “From Global to the Amazon, Alliance of Andean-Amazonian Governments for Low Emissions Sustainable Development,” governors and representatives that had signed the San Francisco Declaration at the GCF meeting in 2018 ratified their commitments by signing the Andean-Amazon Alliance to continue sharing experiences and lessons learned in their progress towards implementing their low-emissions rural development strategies, strengthening the region´s path towards sustainability. It was very exciting to be able to co-host the session along with the Moore Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Nature and Culture International, Mecanismos de Desarrollo Alterno, and Natura Foundation Bolivia. **A “Call for Collaboration” with private companies** An important milestone for the GCF was achieved during the Business Meeting when GCF members approved a “Call for Collaboration” for private companies to collaborate in the transition to low-emission rural development. Specifically, the Call for Collaboration:

- asks companies to help jurisdictions achieve the Rio Branco Declaration;
- proposes a framework for defining successful jurisdictions in this transition;
- presents key principles for achieving fruitful collaborations; and
- states the benefits of such alliances for private companies.

Earth Innovation Institute helped develop the document in partnership with the GCF´s Secretariat, and for me, this Call represents a big step forward in making GCF commitments a reality with the participation of the Private Sector. Already some companies have expressed their interest in participating in the initiative. **“Tropical Forest Champions” and “Back to Fish” initiatives** At a breakfast attended by nearly 70 governors and representatives from GCF jurisdictions, EII presented **two new EII initiatives: Tropical Forest Champions, and the Pan-Amazon Back-to-Fish Strategy**. Tropical Forest Champions is a proposal to implement the principles and definitions described in the “Call for Collaboration” to build strong and positive partnerships between jurisdictions committed to a more sustainable development model and national and international companies that want to recognize those efforts, help finance the transition and achieve sustainable sourcing agreements. The Pan-Amazon Back to Fish Strategy seeks to promote the development of aquaculture and sustainable fisheries in the Amazon Watershed as a highly productive, low-emission food production strategy. The Back to Fish initiative will support jurisdictions in building capacity for sustainably developing aquaculture and managed fisheries, facilitate exchange of experiences between participating jurisdictions, assist in developing incentives and financial mechanisms to support the transition to fish, and develop Pan-Amazon branding strategies that build on associations

linking Amazon fish with forest conservation, indigenous and traditional peoples and Amazon cuisine. Both initiatives were very well received by participating jurisdictions. During the meeting more than 15 governors from Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Colombia expressed their interest in becoming founding members of Tropical Forest Champions and participating in the Back to Fish Strategy. The session was a big accomplishment in my opinion.

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Deepening Collaboration between Subnational Governments, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities During the 2018 GCF Task Force annual meeting, GCF members, indigenous peoples' and local communities' representatives endorsed a landmark set of Guiding Principles to collaborate on forests and climate. The GCF Global Committee for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, the main body behind the Guiding Principles, formalized its governance structure, which will strengthen the group's mission to support regional processes for implementing the Guiding Principles. In addition, EII along with our partners in Acre, Brazil—Acre's Institute for Climate Change, Pro-Indigenous Commission (CPI), and Acre's Indigenous Agroforestry Agents (AMAAIC) —organized a working session to identify best practices to move the Guiding Principles from pledge to implementation. Reflections on experiences of indigenous and government collaborations from Mato Grosso and Acre, Brazil, and Ucayali, Peru kicked off the session. Participants—including indigenous and local community representatives, civil society groups and GCF Task Force members from across Latin America, California, Norway and Indonesia—exchanged experiences and generated a list of best practices that can be disseminated through the GCF network. These lessons learned are key for strengthening the needed partnerships between regional Governments, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, and I can´t wait to have the final list to include in our work in Colombia. **Voices of Caquetá** At the close of the Annual Meeting, EII co-hosted a very special session called "**Voices of Caquetá**", together with key partner organizations: The Nature Conservancy, Fondo Patrimonio Natural and Fondo Acción. The session focused on presenting the results achieved by local sustainability projects implemented by the aforementioned organizations. The protagonists told the public directly about their experiences as social innovators. Ana Silvestre explained how she became a local leader in her community, leading the change to silvo-pastoral cattle ranching. Jorge Moyano and his son Sergio explained how they are guardians of the forest now and are protecting key watersheds in their municipality. Later, Luis Antonio Valencia, a teacher, explained how he has used his school's educational plan to integrate the forest into the teaching experience. This has changed the way young people see and relate with the forest, helping with its protection in a high-deforestation area. Finally, Oliver Gasca, an indigenous leader from the Coreguaje People, told how they have made big progress in integrating their culture and traditions into public policy, with their Life Plans and with the Caquetá Indigenous Public Policy. The closing message was how we can take these initiatives and spread them all over Caquetá to be

able to have a greater impact on achieving the sustainable development that we are all reaching for, and an invitation to work together to do it. [responsive_img imageid="9743" size1="0" size2="481" size3="961" size4="1441" sizes=""] After a week of excitement and hard work, the GCF 2019 Annual Meeting was definitely a victory for low-emission sustainable development and EII is proud to have played a leading role. Now the challenge is to nurture the seeds we planted and move forward with the implementation of innovative solutions to stop deforestation, fight climate change, increase productivity, and improve well-being in these committed jurisdictions.