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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Making trade work for biodiversity



‘Stunning beauty, breathtaking wildlife, majestic forests, unbounded expanses’: these are just some of the descriptions that come to mind when we think about the Amazon. Home to the biggest genetic bank on the planet, it is arguably one of the best examples of the Earth’s wealth in biodiversity.

The world’s largest jungle belt, spanning the territory of eight countries, the Amazon region has the most diverse range of species to be found in a tropical rainforest. Its ecological value is indisputable. We also agree that it is of great importance to humankind, and that conservation is the key to its continued existence. But in addition, the region has great economic value and shelters over 200 million human inhabitants. Can trade in biodiversity-based products and services, and sustainable use and conservation, come together to provide a real solution for the sustainable development of the Amazon and its inhabitants?



The economic and development potential of the Amazon is a controversial issue, but it must not be ignored; the region has always been economically important to the countries it encompasses. Creating synergies between economic activities and conservation efforts could result in significant development gains for these countries if the international trade potential of the Amazon were unleashed in a responsible way.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES This book shows it clearly: from fruit juices and natural ingredients to cosmetics and medicine, there is a cornucopia of sustainable products to be developed from the wealth of natural resources the Amazon region has to offer. The close link these products have with the Amazon sets them apart, providing new opportunities in international markets. Trade in these products could also contribute substantially to reducing the region's poverty.

Globalization has brought distant worlds and cultures together. With it have come trade negotiations and agreements, like those of the World Trade Organization (WTO). These offer significant opportunities to be seized by biodiversity-rich countries. With increased economic integration, the liberalization of new markets, and growing demand for natural products, a new market for BioTrade is emerging – one in which these nations have a comparative advantage.

Despite this encouraging outlook, however, the traded volumes of sustainable biodiversity goods and services remain relatively low, and we are witness to many unsustainable practices. As a result, markets for these

products are underdeveloped, opportunities are missed and the development capacity of the region is severely hampered.

It is for this reason that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is committed to making trade work for biodiversity. In addressing the relationship between the world trading system and the sustainable development agenda, UNCTAD works alongside the private sector and governments to increase countries' competitiveness and facilitate responsible trade in these products. To coordinate these efforts, UNCTAD created the BioTrade Initiative – a tool to contribute to the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which bridges the gap between the environment and development.

ACTO The development of a regional programme for the Amazon is critical to the success of promoting BioTrade at a regional level, something not easily achieved through isolated initiatives. Recognizing the need for such cooperation, UNCTAD and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) have been collaborating on the creation of the BioTrade Regional Programme for the Amazon since September 2004.

Supporting the preservation, protection and promotion of the Amazon's biodiversity is a fine example of how we can make the environment work on behalf of trade and development. With this in mind, we eagerly await the many surprises that the region has in store for its consumers.