

USAID Director Remarks  
Open Reception  
Caribbean Forester Meeting  
5 August 2013

**Caribbean Foresters Meeting 2013**  
**Forest Management, Climate Change and Biodiversity:**  
*Advancing an understanding of Caribbean forest dynamics  
and creating long-term regional networks*

Good evening.

Honorable Bautista Rojas Gomez, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources,  
Dominican Republic  
Sr. Hector Matos, FAO Assistant Representative, Dominican Republic  
Dr. Ariel Lugo, Director US Forest Service, International Institute of Tropical Forestry  
Invited guest and participants

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today. It is an honor to represent USAID at this 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Caribbean Foresters. I am very proud to be able to say that USAID, in cooperation with the US Forest Service's International Institute of Tropical Forestry, has been involved with the Caribbean Foresters since the beginning, by funding the initial training sessions that led to the formation of the Caribbean Foresters.

But throughout the years many other person and organizations have provided assistance to this group. I want to thank all of the sponsors of this 16<sup>th</sup> session of Caribbean Foresters for working with USAID to make this a successful meeting- the Dominican Republic Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources as the host, the Food and United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO), the GIZ, The Nature Conservancy and the Puerto Rican Conservation Foundation.

The Caribbean Foresters Meeting began with a vision from several "Caribbean Foresters". Their vision, their leadership and their desire for a better future for all of the Caribbean has brought us to where we are today. But today, more than ever this vision and mission is as important as it was in 1982. The theme of this years meeting, "**Forest Management, Climate Change and Biodiversity: Advancing an understanding of Caribbean forest dynamics and creating long-term regional networks**" is of utmost importance. We all know that the world's climate is changing, at a rate faster than expected and faster than we can sometimes understand. Our Islands have been declared a biodiversity "hotspot", demonstrating the global importance of this region. Our small island communities and the biodiversity of this region are especially affected by this climate change. So we must change, we must adapt, we must manage our resources better, and in a different way than we have in the past. Our forest are the keystone to fighting climate change, to maintaining the biodiversity for which all life depends.

I am very happy to hear that this meeting will focus on these forests, on the dynamics of these forests and how to create-long term forest measurement systems to help monitor climate change and biodiversity and to improve regional networks that will help us do this in a more efficient and effective way.

Again, I thank you for inviting me here today to say a few words and I thank the Dominican Republic for hosting this important 16<sup>th</sup> Caribbean Forester Meeting. USAID

is glad that we have been able to assist in the past, today and we hope to continue to provide support for the future. For our future, together as one.

Thank you.  
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