



**INTERNATIONAL FORUM  
ON PAYMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
OF TROPICAL FORESTS**

7-10 April 2014  
San José, Costa Rica

## **Interview with the Minister of Environment for Costa Rica, Rene Castro**

27 March 2014

*What do you see as the greatest threats to forests today? As an Environment Minister who has propelled Costa Rica to a leading role in sustainable forest management and as founder of Payment for Environmental Services (PES), how do you see the conference addressing these threats?*

The first threat is financial, the sustainability of forests. With a growing fiscal deficit, the Costa Rican government may be compelled to reduce all transfers including PES. The second threat is still forest fires, exacerbated in times of climate change by longer dry periods.

*PES is one of your ground breaking initiatives for forest preservation especially in Costa Rica - could you outline some of the mechanisms being discussed in this conference that are aimed at sustaining forests while competing with the short term market profits of forest exploitation?*

The forest is providing non-timber products such as ecotourism, fruit and water conservation. Sustainable timber production is still a challenge in this country, and we will be promoting modern minimalistic housing design for the elder with the TEC forest school. Gradually other housing, furniture and souvenirs are other uses that will promote reforestation and hard wood plantations in at least 6% of the country's territory increasing the forest cover from 52% to 58% by 2021. Currently most of these lands are used for extensive cattle ranching.

*How will PES encourage governments and landowners in poorer countries, particularly in the tropical forest areas to adhere to PES principles?*

First, PES is a net transfer from urban dwellers to rural people. Secondly, it is the most promising and least cost option to mitigate climate change at the global scale and finally, by 2015 PES, at the global scale, will be one of the few - if not the only - option for the UNFCCC in Paris to show action and commitment from the developed world that will engage at least the 54 tropical countries working under the REDD+ alliance.