



Most people are often fascinated by the beauty of the exotic and diverse plants and animals found within forests. However, the forest is far more than what we see; there are numerous not so visible benefits of forests without which our existence would be threatened. To bring focus to the benefits of forests, the UN in 2013, designated 21 March, International Day of Forest (IDF).

IDF is an annual observance and this year, it is being celebrated under the theme; '*Forest and climate change.*' As such, activities planned to mark the IDF observance will aim to promote effective solutions to reduce (mitigate) climate change and to prepare (adapt) to its effects. Importantly the Day will also highlight the need to use forests in a sustainable way.



### Importance of the Forests

**According to UN deforestation accounts for 12-20% of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.**

Forests cover about one third of the world's land mass. We all depend on the forest in one way or the other for our survival and livelihood. Some important functions of forests include:

- ✚ Providing habitat for more than half of the terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects.
- ✚ Contributing to the balance of oxygen, carbon dioxide and humidity in the atmosphere.
- ✚ Protecting watersheds, which supply fresh water to rivers, lakes etc.

- ✚ Providing homes, jobs, clothing, shelter, food, medicine, research, cosmetics and security for millions of people around the world.
- ✚ Forests also play a key role in our battle in adapting to and mitigating climate change.
- ✚ The soil beneath forests provide the ideal conditions for the variety of invertebrates, fungi and bacteria which play a significant role in balancing the nutrients cycle in the soil and forest.

## **Forest and Climate Change**

Most of the increase in global temperature is due to the increase of certain **greenhouse** gases in the atmosphere. Forests play a very important role in maintaining natural processes and store large amounts of carbon; hence, through the carbon cycle and other natural processes, forest help to combat climate change. However, because of deforestation, forests are a large source of carbon dioxide emissions. Therefore, planting trees and reforestation will go a far way in helping to restore the balance of earth's natural processes and help in the fight against climate change.

Today, forests are under threat; as the world's population grows so does the demand for forest products, leading to an increase in deforestation and degradation. There is an annual loss of around 13 million hectares or 32 million acres of forest by people. Loss of forests results in depletion of many valuable plants and animal species.

Almost 30% of the total land worldwide is occupied by the forests containing over 60,000 tree species which are ultimately the great resources of the food, fuel, essential oils, resins, latex, gums, medicines, fiber, water, woods for the population of around 1.6 billion poorest people of the world.

## **How can we help in the fight against climate change?**

- ✚ Plant a tree
- ✚ Preserve our forest
- ✚ Use resources wisely
- ✚ Dispose of waste properly and do not litter
- ✚ Reduce the use of artificial items and practice the 3Rs of waste management – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- ✚ Make conscious efforts to learn more about forests and their benefits and share the information with others.

***The forests are an integral part of survival on Earth. Protect it, for it protects us!***

**Sources:**

<http://www.un.org/>

<http://www.fao.org/>

***You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”,  
C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia,  
GEORGETOWN; or email us at [eit.epaguyana@gmail.com](mailto:eit.epaguyana@gmail.com).***