

COP14: Leaders discuss the use of ecological restoration as a peace-building process

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Kim Jae-Hyun in presence of UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw launching Peace Forest Initiative at COP14. Photo by IISD/EN

Kim Jae-Hyun, Minister of the Korea Forest Service (KFS) launched the Peace Forest Initiative, at the ongoing 14th session of Conference of Parties (COP14) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in India. It is designed to provide a practical platform that will encourage international alliance by demonstrating the value of achieving land degradation neutrality in cross-border and post-conflict situations.

Cooperative efforts on actions such as sustainable land management, forestry and land rehabilitation can facilitate economic cooperation while supporting the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Kim said, *"The initiative is in the early stages, and we are proposing it as a global initiative where actually all people living in border areas in many countries can participate. We want to implement it in collaboration with UNCCD."*

Land rights expert says that this initiative could ultimately contribute to the alleviation of political tension, reconciliation and can become a part of permanent peace-building processes between two countries. This initiative would create more green jobs in the coming years.



Kim Jae-Hyun meets the press at UNCCD COP14. Photo by Tanmoy Bhaduri.

Kim discussed the future of Peace Forest Initiative with UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw last year at the first Global Land Degradation Neutrality Forum in Seoul, Korea. After the Korean War, the whole of mountain areas surrounding the city, were deforested and degraded. Since 1973, more than 10 billion trees were planted in Korea. It was possible through strong leadership, people's willingness and participation. Korea has signed MoU with 56 countries for developing joint projects for restoration, research and knowledge sharing.

Kim further explained, *"While we are looking at the ecosystem, they seem divided because of borders, but the ecosystem is conducting as a whole. If we could restore the ecosystem in border and conflict areas by the participation of local communities, we could contribute to ecosystem restoration in higher magnitude. The Peace Park between Ecuador and Peru is the proof that forestation brings peace, security and goodwill among two countries."*

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