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**DRC Minister of Environment presents ground-breaking program to protect the Congo Basin Forest to UK Government and business leaders at the Houses of Parliament**

**Climate change mitigation program to protect 9 million hectares of forest and benefit approximately 1.8 million people**

*London – 21 May 2014* – At the Houses of Parliament on Tuesday, 20 May, His Excellency Bavon N'sa Mputu Elima, Minister of Environment, Conservation of Nature and Tourism for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), announced that the DRC is embarking on a massive green development program, to be financed by the sale of emissions reductions that will be earned when the program succeeds in significant reduction of deforestation. This is Africa's largest pay-for-performance initiative to capture the natural value of standing forests.

The Right Honorable Gregory Barker, Minister of State for Climate Change for the UK, opened the meeting with warm, welcoming remarks and expressed the UK Government's enthusiasm for the vital work the DRC is doing to protect its forests for the benefit of the global community. Zac Goldsmith, MP for Richmond Park & North Kingston, reinforced the importance of the DRC forest conservation program as a turning point in the battle to protect threatened forests. He then introduced H.E. Minister N'sa Mputu Elima, who described the DRC's history of leadership in the forest conservation movement and made an impassioned plea to the international community to support the launch of this program. "The DRC accepts its responsibility to protect its forests for the benefit of humanity," the Minister said. "But as a developing country we require a partnership with industrialized nations to provide the financial support needed by the program."

"We hope this pioneering climate change mitigation program can become a model for the Congo Basin Forest Nations of Africa and perhaps for forest nations throughout the developing world," the Minister went on. "We believe this program can demonstrate the transformational power of REDD+ to conserve forests for future generations while providing unprecedented green development for our citizens."

The program is unlike anything attempted before and will utilize the UN's REDD+ mechanism to protect nearly 9M hectares of primary tropical rainforest, in a 12M-hectare landscape, almost the size of England. The program area is home to approximately 1.8M people and to many magnificent endangered species, including the forest elephant and the bonobo, the great ape known as the closest relative to humans that lives only in the DRC.

The Minister then introduced Mike Korchinsky, Founder and President of Wildlife Works, one of the organizations on the advisory team supporting the DRC government on the development of the program. Korchinsky explained that in addition to Wildlife Works, the advisory team includes WWF and GTCR, a broad network of local civil society organizations in the DRC. The advisory team is working closely with DRC National and Provincial Governments to design the program. "We are honored to be a

partner with the DRC Government in the development of this critically important program,” said Korchinsky. “The DRC Government has carefully assembled the right mix of technical and community development expertise to build this program in an inclusive and sustainable way.”

Zac Goldsmith gave encouraging closing remarks that this meeting represented the beginning of an essential dialogue between the two countries on how the UK’s International Climate Fund could best support this initiative.

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