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### **Long-term conservation agreements: a tool for reconciling biodiversity conservation with local economic development**

Conserving biodiversity poses a challenge to those governments and communities seeking to develop their natural resources for economic ends. Logging and other resource development activities hold out the prospect of tangible economic benefits, but are often environmentally destructive. Although sustainable resource management seeks to deliver such benefits whilst at the same time conserving natural ecosystems, experience suggests that a number of obstacles limit both the adoption of sustainable practices and their usefulness within the framework of conservation strategies. Similarly, even when resource owners would like to protect biodiversity, they frequently lack the financial means to do so.

To address these challenges, Conservation International (CI), together with a range of partners around the world, has been working to develop and test in the field the concept of a 'long-term conservation agreement', a novel approach that seeks to reconcile resource protection directly with local economic development.

Conservation agreements have the potential to protect a wide variety of critical terrestrial and marine habitats, ranging from vast tracts of African rain forest to sensitive fisheries and coral reefs in the South Pacific. They may also be used to protect the habitats of particular threatened or endangered species, such as the African elephant, American mahogany, or thick-billed parrots in the mountains of northern Mexico.

In this presentation, the author will explore the basic components of the long-term conservation agreement, investigate some of the obstacles preventing their more widespread adoption, and review recent experiences with the practical application of this approach to terrestrial and marine habitats around the world.