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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Science Panel for the Amazon Releases Executive Summary of Landmark Report Assessment of the Amazon

Over 200 renowned scientists from the Amazon and global partners came together as the Science Panel for the Amazon and developed a landmark, comprehensive scientific assessment of the state of the Amazon Basin. Their process included dialogues with Indigenous Peoples and local communities on the threats they're facing and offers solutions and sustainable development pathways to prevent further catastrophic events.

NEW YORK (Monday 20th September 2021) - *On the occasion of the 76th UN General Assembly, the Science Panel for the Amazon (SPA) is releasing an Executive Summary of the Amazon Assessment Report.* As a unique scientific assessment of the state of the Amazon Basin, the Report's recommendations offer sustainable development pathways for policy makers and governments and a resounding call for immediate action.

The SPA Report provides a systematic overview on the state of the Amazon's ecosystems and offers science-based policy making recommendations to conserve the Amazon, while advancing sustainable development pathways for the region. The SPA Report underscores the importance of science, technology, innovation, and Indigenous Peoples' and local knowledge to guide decision and policy-making.

The SPA Report: A Closer Look

The SPA Report was developed by over 200 scientists, of which two thirds are from Amazonian countries, including Indigenous Peoples scientists. Inspired by the Leticia Pact for the Amazon, the Report is the most in-depth, comprehensive and holistic report of its kind on the Amazon. The SPA also aims to have systematic and consistent reporting in the future.

The Amazon basin encompasses the largest rainforest in the world and is a place of immense natural and cultural wealth and diversity but is facing unprecedented changes.

The Amazon basin is endowed with a remarkable share of unique and irreplaceable global biodiversity. This extraordinary diversity confers stability and resilience to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and is a product of complex dynamics that have been co-evolving for millions of years. The Amazon biome is one of the most critical elements of the Earth's climate system and plays a critical role in global water cycles and regulating climate variability. A significant amount

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of moisture flows south via “aerial rivers”, and it is an important source of water for ecosystems beyond the basin. It produces the largest river discharge on Earth, accounting for about 16 to 22% of the world’s total river input to the oceans. It is also a crucial carbon sink, storing approximately 150 to 200 billion tons of carbon in its soils and vegetation.

The Amazon is home to around 47 million people, including nearly 2.2 million Indigenous people, distributed among more than 400 groups speaking over 300 languages. **Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs)** play a critical role in conservation, and sustainable management of Amazonian agricultural and biological diversity, as well as ecosystems. **However, the Amazon peoples, cultures, and knowledge are under threat due to multiple pressures and weakening protection of their rights.**

Senior scientist, and contributor to the SPA Dr. Mercedes Bustamante added, “With recent surges in deforestation that are devastating the most extensive tropical forest on Earth, ***we must also announce a code red for the Amazon***. Saving existing forests from continued deforestation and degradation and restoring ecosystems is one of the most urgent tasks of our time to preserve the Amazon and its people and address the global risk and impacts of climate change. The mosaic of ecosystems extends from the high Andes to the lowland Amazon. It houses the most extraordinary biodiversity on Earth, with more than 10% of the plant and animal species globally.”

Amazon on the Verge of A Tipping Point

The situation in the Amazon appears to be dire, as the region is approaching a dangerous potential tipping point due to deforestation, degradation and climate change. **Approximately 17% of Amazonian forests have been converted to other land uses, and at least an additional 17% have been degraded.** Experts estimate that 366,300 km^2 of forests were degraded between 1995 and 2017, and every year thousands of hectares of forests, mostly degraded, burn across the basin as fires escape nearby pastures or recently deforested areas.

The SPA urges decision makers to act ***now*** and recommends an immediate deforestation moratory in areas that are already reaching tipping points, and to achieve zero deforestation and forest degradation in the entire Amazon region by 2030.

Building Resilience

The SPA makes a case for restoring and remediating forest cover and aquatic ecosystems, conserving biodiversity, agrobiodiversity, and cultural diversity, as well as monitoring deforestation, degradation, and establishing early fire warning systems. Managing Amazonian resilience also requires global action to halt greenhouse gas emissions. While land-use change is the most visible threat to the Amazon ecosystems, ultimately climate change is emerging as one the most insidious threats to the region’s future.

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Solutions and A Pathway Forward: A Living Amazon

Despite the alarming findings, the SPA is encouraged by the significant potential in advancing sustainable development pathways based on a combination of scientific research, Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, and emphasis on the power of stronger regional collaborative partnerships. **The SPA advocates a vision of a Living Amazon that advances restoration initiatives and a transformation to a dynamic new bioeconomy that respects and recognizes nature's cycles and human rights, particularly of IPLCs.**

Safeguarding and strengthening the rights of IPLCs are also vital to preserving forests and biodiversity and fighting climate change. The emergence of a new bioeconomy of healthy forests and rivers in the Amazon should be supported by ambitious policies based on multicultural dialogue, exchange of diverse knowledge systems, and good governance to curb illegal activities and associated conflicts. Advancing sustainable development pathways and achieving zero deforestation and forest degradation in the Amazon by 2030 depends on the combined and collaborative efforts of Amazonian policy makers at the central and local levels, the financial and private sectors, civil society, and the international community.

"Our message to political leaders is that there is no time to waste," said Carlos Nobre, Co-Chair of the SPA. "The current development model is fueling deforestation and biodiversity loss, leading to devastating and irreversible change. **If the Amazon is to survive, we must show how it can be transformed to generate economic and environmental benefits that would be the result of collaborations between scientists, Indigenous knowledge holders and their leaders, and governments."**

The Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA) José Gregorio Diaz Mirabal added, **"Let's save humanity. Let's overcome this economic, climate, food and health crisis and this extinction of biodiversity by respecting this report.** The only thing missing is the support of the governments, banks, companies, and all of humanity".

Background

The Science Panel for the Amazon (SPA) is convened under the auspices of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and was established after leaders of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, Ecuador, Peru and Suriname signed the Leticia Pact for the Amazon, in September 2019. The agreement commits the governments of the

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seven nations to conserve the Amazon and its biodiverse treasures. It highlights the importance of research, technology and knowledge management to guide decision-making vis-à-vis the Amazon. The SPA is inspired by this call. The SPA Report's hallmark is
that it engages multiple voices in the co-design and generation of knowledge.

##END##

Please feel free to reach out to us!

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SPA Amazon Assessment Report 2021
The SPA Report Chapters In Brief
The Science Panel for the Amazon