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FAO: Forests are key for high quality water supply

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By 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in regions with absolute water scarcity and two-thirds of the world's population may experience water-stress conditions. Forests capture and store water and can play an important role in providing drinking water for millions of people in the world's mega-cities. Given this fact, the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), international organizations involved in forests, call upon countries to pay more attention to forest protection and management for the provision of clean water.

"Forests are part of the natural infrastructure of any country and are essential to the water cycle", said Eduardo Rojas-Briales, Assistant Director General of the FAO Forestry Department.

"They reduce the effects of floods, prevent soil erosion, regulate the water table and assure a high quality water supply for people, industry and agriculture." He was speaking prior to the UN World Water Day which will be celebrated this year on 22 March. Forests are in most cases an optimal land cover for catchments supplying drinking water. Forest watersheds supply a high proportion of water for domestic, agricultural, industrial and ecological needs.

"The management of water and forests are closely linked and require innovative policy solutions which take into account the cross-cutting nature of these vital resources", said Jan McAlpine, Director of the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat. "The International Year of Forests, 2011 provides a unique platform to raise awareness of issues such as the water-soil-forests nexus, which directly affect the quality of people's lives, their livelihoods and their food security."

Moreover, forests and trees contribute to the reduction of water-related risks such as landslides, local floods and droughts and help prevent desertification and salinization.

Today, at least one third of the world's biggest cities, such as New York, Singapore, Jakarta, Rio de Janeiro, Bogotá, Madrid and Cape Town draw a significant portion of their drinking-water from forested areas. If properly utilized, forest catchment areas can provide at least a partial solution for municipalities needing more or cleaner water.

For more information click [here](#).