

For a sustainable Peru: Protecting the forests, planting peace

President Vizcarra joins international specialists on a field visit about indigenous and communal knowledge provided by small cocoa producers in the Chazuta Valley, San Martin

The Amazon forests connect 8 countries and hold more than half of the planet's biodiversity. However, today they face severe deterioration, making it the second most vulnerable biome to climate change in the entire planet after the Arctic. This dire situation puts the livelihoods of the people that depend on the forest at risk, most of them rural indigenous communities.

"Our Amazon is vast. More than 60% of our territory is Amazon. It's an advantage, but if we don't take care of it, it can turn into a disadvantage; because the climate is changing, and with it, rivers and rain change too. We're here to look at a good experience, and that's why we picked Chazuta, to see what you have achieved.

These experiences are the ones we need to multiply, and for that to happen we need the support of the mayor, of the regional government, of the communities, the international cooperation, business, of the whole government. If we all join forces, we're capable of reaching any goal, no matter how difficult it is," remarked **Martín Vizcarra, President of Peru**, during his visit to the Chazuta district, deep in the Peruvian Amazon where illegal coca farming was the main source of income of rural families for years, claiming the lives of many and taking a heavy toll on the area's ecosystems.

Vizcarra's participation was in the context of the Good Growth Conference, gathering more than 180 international and national experts in Tarapoto, San Martin. UNDP Peru's Resident Representative, María del Carmen Sacasa, also participated in the field visit .

In the Chazuta Valley, the Head of State was welcomed by the producers of the Allima Cacao Cooperative, founded in 2002 with the support of USAID in Peru. These cocoa producers are the main drivers of a business initiative to articulate cocoa production in the market as a strategy to replace the illegal coca crops. Today, they export their products to Italy and England at great financial benefit, thanks to their fair trade and organic certification.

Nowadays, this district holds approximately 2,500 hectares of cocoa fields, managed by 1,500 families. The main challenges they still face are the restoration of degraded forests, the rise of productivity and quality together with environmental sustainability to maintain competitiveness in the most demanding markets.

María del Carmen Sacasa highlighted the value of experiences like these because "*it shows how through collaboration between communities, the local and national*

government and the private sector, you can stop conflict and generate development that creates wellbeing for the people. The 1,500 cocoa-farming families who live here are examples we must learn from.”

The conference is being held in the framework of the UNDP's Green Commodities Programme (GCP). GCP works since 2009 in eleven countries around the world to find sustainable solutions for important commodities such as coffee, cocoa, palm oil, pineapple, fishing and beef.

From May 13-17, the Good Growth Conference regarding Sustainable Commodities has united more than 300 representatives of the public sector, private business, civil society and international cooperation, through field visits, learning experiences and networking in Lima and San Martin. This initiative is promoted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Conservation International (CI), the United Nations Environment Program (UN Environment) and the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank (IFC).