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1.5 Million Trees to Be Planted in Kenya by Aga Khan Development Network and Lions Clubs International

Nairobi, Kenya, October, 19, 2011 – The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and Lions Clubs International (LCI) today committed to planting 1.5 million trees in Kenya. The United Nations has declared 2011 the International Year of Forests.

The pledge was made at a tree planting ceremony in Nairobi City Park attended by the Lions Clubs International President Wing-Kun Tam, Prince Hussain Aga Khan and Hon. Noah Wekesa, Kenya Minister for Forestry and Wildlife.

Kenya has one of the highest rates of deforestation in Africa. To combat rapid deforestation and the subsequent effects of soil and water degradation, the Kenyan Government pledged in 2010 to increase forest cover by 10 percent. The AKDN-LCI partnership will contribute to meeting that pledge.

Forests not only provide environmental benefits, but also offer significant income and livelihood options for more than one billion people around the globe. Trees provide a wide range of products (timber, fruit, medicine, beverages and fodder) and valuable services, including sequestering carbon, providing shade, controlling erosion, beautifying landscapes and increasing the fertility of soil.

"We are not just emphasizing tree planting, but tree growing," said Prince Hussain Aga Khan. "The long-term stewardship and husbandry of trees should be seen as creating viable assets for farmers and communities. We see sustainable tree growing having a significant impact on both poverty alleviation and the environment."

Lions Clubs International President Wing-Kun Tam welcomed the partnership, saying, "Trees help the environment by providing an array of benefits, including more oxygen for humans and homes for animals. I believe this partnership will change the landscape of our communities for the better within just one year."

The partnership will source seedlings and expertise from the Kenyan Forestry Research Institute, Kenyan Wildlife Service and nurseries operated by local youth and women entrepreneurs. In addition to tree planting activities, conservation measures will be encouraged, especially at schools. Schools in the program will be provided with fuel-efficient cook stoves that will cut wood consumption by 50 percent. Rain water harvesting systems will also be added.



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LCI's tree planting program builds on a 2011 commitment to plant one million trees globally – a commitment that has already been surpassed by 500 percent. AKDN's tree-planting commitments in Kenya – undertaken by its affiliated institutions, including the Aga Khan Foundation's coastal programs, the Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa, Serena Hotels, Frigoken and the Nation Group – are on track to plant nearly 10 million trees in Kenya. These activities build on a tradition that has planted more than 120 million trees in Asia and Africa over the last 25 years.

Notes:

In addition to its efforts toward conquering blindness, Lions Clubs International makes a strong commitment to community service and helping youth throughout the world. It works to empower volunteers to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace and promote international understanding through Lions clubs around the world. It has more than 1.35 million members in 207 countries. To learn more about Lions Clubs International, visit lionsclubs.org.

The agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network are private, international, non-denominational development organizations. They work to improve the welfare and prospects of people in 30 countries in the developing world, particularly in Asia and Africa. The Network's nine development agencies focus on social, cultural and economic development for all citizens, regardless of gender, origin or religion. Its budget for philanthropic activity in 2010 was in excess of US\$ 600 million. AKDN also relies on the services of volunteers to assist in the implementation and maintenance of projects, notably at health and education facilities. For more information about AKDN's environmental activities, see akdn.org/environment.