

Rio Tinto invests \$16m in Makira Natural Park REDD+ Project in Madagascar

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[Rio Tinto](#) has committed \$16 million to the Makira Natural Park REDD+¹ Project in northern Madagascar, through a new partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and Everland. This commitment complements Rio Tinto's investment in nature-based solutions in the south-east of the country.

The Makira Natural Park REDD+ Project encompasses 372,000 hectares of dense primary forest. One of the largest remaining rainforests in the country, harbouring 17 species of lemur and more than 50% of Madagascar's botanical diversity, Makira is critical to the protection of species found nowhere else in the world. Home to approximately 90,000 people who live in 120 villages in the project area, the project works to build the capacity of communities to practice more sustainable agriculture and avoid deforesting new areas.

Rio Tinto's commitment will allow the project to scale up and improve protected area management and bring funds that will directly benefit the rural communities living in and around the Park. These funds will allow the project to reassess the deforestation baseline according to the latest Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standards before credit issuance. Funding will also support monitoring and reporting on the impact of ongoing interventions to reduce deforestation, protect threatened biodiversity, and bring durable improvements to local communities, including increasing their involvement and agency in forest and wildlife protection activities. Rio Tinto's investment also includes a committed offtake of carbon credits from the project.

While Rio Tinto's priority is reducing operational emissions, this commitment is part of the company's work to invest in and develop high-integrity nature-based solutions. These do not compete for capital with, or replace, decarbonisation projects, rather they are standalone carbon and nature investments that can bring positive outcomes in the regions where Rio Tinto operates.

Max Andonirina Fontaine, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Government of the Republic of Madagascar said: "This commitment by Rio Tinto to the Makira Natural Park REDD+ Project underlines the critical importance of project-level REDD+ efforts within our national program as an effective tool to halt deforestation, protect critical ecosystems and biodiversity, and fund urgently needed development priorities for local communities. This commitment by Rio Tinto, in partnership with WCS, is an important milestone in achieving Madagascar's national and international goals on climate change and sustainable development."

Theresia Ott, Chief Advisor, Nature Solutions, Rio Tinto said, "Supporting the development of REDD+, restoration and sustainable landscape management programs in the regions where we work is a critical component of our Nature Solutions program. The Makira Natural Park project has played a key role in demonstrating the success of REDD+ in conserving high biodiversity landscapes whilst bringing positive outcomes for people. We believe these programs are much-needed tools to urgently finance large-scale, long-term activities and therefore to secure sustained protection, while improving climate resilience and restoring the ecosystem services on which we all rely."

Todd Stevens, Executive Director, Wildlife Conservation Society said: "WCS welcomes this well-timed commitment by Rio Tinto, which will provide a critical surge in support of recharging forest and biodiversity conservation, as well as community livelihoods and economic development activities in Makira. We need more public-private partnerships like this to help countries like Madagascar continue to access carbon finance to meet their climate and sustainable development goals, while safeguarding forests and wildlife for generations. WCS salutes the Government of the Republic of Madagascar for their leadership in supporting this process."

Joshua Tosteson, Chief Executive Officer, Everland said, "This commitment by Rio Tinto comes at a critical

moment for the communities and governments of forest nations. At a time when the risks of inaction have become untenable for the world, the reputational risks of voluntary corporate action have made it untenable for many companies to act - when action is most needed to turn the tide on forest loss. We applaud Rio Tinto, the Madagascar Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Wildlife Conservation Society for their bold commitment to protecting and enhancing some of the most important and endangered ecosystems in the world, while directly empowering the local communities whose fate is intertwined with that of the forest."

Notes to editors

In 2003, the Madagascar Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development launched a program, supported by WCS, to create the Makira Forest Protected Area and to finance it in part through carbon markets.

After a 12-year development effort, in 2013 the Makira Natural Park REDD+ Project became the first government-owned REDD+ project in Africa to sell carbon credits on the voluntary carbon market, after achieving verification under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and Climate, and Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standards.

The project suspended its participation under the VCS from 2020-2024, during which time Madagascar participated in a jurisdictional emissions reduction program under the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility of the World Bank. Activities in Makira continued to reduce deforestation under that jurisdictional program. Between 2005 and 2013, the project resulted in 6,000 hectares and 31,000 hectares of avoided deforestation within the project area and leakage belt respectively, and 400 hectares of degraded forest land restored.

Rio Tinto's commitment provides sustainable finance to the project, so that it can continue to deliver positive outcomes for climate, nature and the local communities in and around the Makira Natural Park REDD+ Project. This investment is part of Rio Tinto's broader support for the protection, restoration and sustainable management of Madagascar's biodiverse forests, through projects that can generate high-integrity carbon credits.

The Makira Forest Protected Area REDD+ Project's impact will be assessed for its value to people, climate and nature - using the most recent and robust methodologies - and the resulting monitoring reports and results of third-party audits will be publicly available.

About Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

WCS combines the power of its zoos and an aquarium in New York City and a Global Conservation Program in more than 50 countries to achieve its mission to save wildlife and wild places. WCS runs the world's largest conservation field program, protecting more than 50 percent of Earth's known biodiversity; in partnership with governments, Indigenous People, Local Communities, and the private sector. Its four zoos and aquarium (the Bronx Zoo, Central Park Zoo, Queens Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and the New York Aquarium) welcome more than 3.5 million visitors each year, inspiring generations to care for nature.

About Everland

Everland is a specialised conservation marketing organisation in the climate change mitigation business that exclusively represents the Voluntary Carbon Market's largest portfolio of high-impact, community-centered, forest conservation (REDD+) projects. Through these projects, Everland brings together communities and corporations in common cause to protect some of the world's most important and vulnerable forests. www.everland.earth

¹ United Nations Climate Change: 'REDD' stands for 'Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries'. The '+' stands for additional forest-related activities that protect the climate, namely sustainable management of forests and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

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Contact

Please direct all enquiries to media.enquiries@riotinto.com

Rio Tinto
David Outhwaite
M: +44 7787 597493
Media.enquiries@riotinto.com

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Mary Dixon
M +1 347 840 1242
mdixon@wcs.org

Everland
Will Richard
Media@everland.earth

[Rio Tinto Plc](#)
6 St James's Square
London SW1Y 4AD
United Kingdom
T +44 20 7781 2000
Registered in England
No. 719885

riotinto.com

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