

PEATLANDS

Carbon
STORE
or *SOURCE*



YOU
decide

Pristine peatlands in Ruoceng, China

Burning peat swamp forest in Kalimantan, Indonesia

STORES AND SINKS

- Peatlands are wetlands that store carbon from dead plants to form organic soil or peat
- Peatlands are one of the world's largest carbon stores (more than 550 billion tonnes), equivalent to 100 years emissions from fossil fuels or 75% of atmospheric carbon
- One hectare of tropical peat swamp forest stores up to 5,000 tonnes of carbon or 15 times more than any other forest type
- Peatlands cover 400 million ha or 3% of the land and freshwater surface of the earth and occur in 150 countries from tropical to polar zones

ACT NOW

Action is needed to maintain peatland carbon stores by:

- **Protecting pristine peatlands**
- **Restoring natural water levels and controlling drainage**
- **Preventing fires**
- **Restoring peatland ecosystems**
- **Reducing global climate change**

SOURCES

- Degradation of peatlands worldwide through drainage, mining, land clearing and fire is turning peatlands from carbon stores to emission sources
- Drained peatlands release between 15 and 50 tonnes of carbon/ha/year as well as being more vulnerable to fires
- Peatland fires release 100-600 tonnes of carbon/ha – Fires in Indonesia released an estimated 1-2 billion tonnes of carbon in 1997-98
- Climate change is predicted to induce drying and fires in many peatlands – eg, 60 million ha (with 75 billion tonnes of stored carbon) in Canada is likely to be seriously affected.