



## FAO FORESTRY



FAO/19766G; BIZZARI

### Mountain Partnership, launched in 2002, becomes operational

Working in partnership – to consider ways to better protect biodiversity, to develop laws and policies in support of community-based property rights or to implement strategies that support sustainable farming practices – can make a real difference to mountain environments and mountain people.

This spirit of working together on shared concerns is behind the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions, commonly known as the “Mountain Partnership”. Launched at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa in September 2002, the Mountain Partnership is an umbrella alliance of countries, organizations and major groups that aims to encourage and promote linkages among local, national and global initiatives for sustainable mountain development through concrete programmes and projects.

Global collaboration among individuals and organizations

has been growing steadily since 1992, when mountains drew attention at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) with Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 – the blueprint for sustainable mountain development. The support for greater cooperation among partners for mountain development gained further impetus during the International Year of Mountains (IYM) in 2002, which created awareness about mountains through events at the local, regional and international levels and initiated concrete action at the country level.

The Mountain Partnership promises to build on these successes and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of Chapter 13 and the WSSD Plan of Implementation regarding mountains. The partnership will function at the global, regional, national and local levels, with the flexibility to address a wide range of thematic, institutional and regionally specific concerns.

Throughout 2003, the initiators of the partnership – the Government of Switzerland, FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – together with the Government of Italy and the Mountain Forum have collaborated in building and expanding the partnership. By November 2003, its members included 40 countries, 15 intergovernmental organizations and 38 major groups.

The first global meeting of the members of the Mountain Partnership was held in Merano, Italy from 5 to 6 October 2003. Hosted by the Government of Italy, this high-level ministerial event attracted 150 participants from national governments, intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and major groups. Members not only reiterated their commitment to the goals of the partnership, but also identified common needs, priorities and concerns. Decisions were taken on key issues related to the structure, membership and governance of the partnership. At the close of the conference, delegates endorsed a Guiding Principles document, which includes the decision that FAO will host the international secretariat to support the Mountain Partnership. The conference also produced a set of Conclusions, which set out key steps for the future direction and operation of the partnership.

For further information about the Mountain Partnership, visit its Web site: [www.mountains2002.org](http://www.mountains2002.org)

### FAO officer wins Asia Pacific medal of excellence

FAO officer Tang Hon Tat has been awarded the Commonwealth Forestry Association Asia Pacific Regional Medal of Excellence for 2002. The award, bestowed for excellence in the development of national capacities for the sustainable use and management



of forests, was presented in September 2003 at the XII World Forestry Congress in Quebec, Canada.

Mr Tang, a native of Malaysia, is currently half-time Project Coordinator for the FAO/International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS) Regional Model Forest Bridging Initiative. He was formerly Chief Technical Adviser of the FAO/Japan Trust Fund regional project "Assistance for the Implementation of the Model Forest Approach for Sustainable Forest Management in the Asia Pacific Region" and Programme Coordinator of the Pacific Islands Forests and Trees Support Programme.

At the award presentation, Mr Tang was cited for his outstanding contribution to the profession of forestry over a long period of solid commitment. He was recognized for his leadership in dealing with the interests of 22 Pacific Island developing countries and territories, for his ability to advance the development of the sustainable use and management of forests, and for assisting people associated with the forests to make their own contribution to their particular environments.

Mr Tang had previously received FAO's 1996 B.R. Sen Award (given annually for outstanding fieldwork) in recognition of his work with the Pacific Islands Forests and Trees Support Programme.

### Meeting of leaders of forest certification schemes

At the invitation of the FAO Forestry Department, leaders of international and national forest certification schemes met from 17 to 18 June 2003 in Borgo Spante, Italy to discuss the future of forest certification in support of sustainable forest management. The meeting "Forest Certification – the Way Ahead" included not only high-level representatives of certification schemes from both the northern and southern hemispheres, but also the heads of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the African Timber Organization (ATO).

Participants reviewed the process of setting standards for sustainable forest management and the process of forest certification itself. They reviewed the effectiveness of certification schemes as fora for contributing to national, regional and international policy processes, including criteria and indicator processes. The need for a phased approach to forest certification was stressed, as currently only a small percentage of forests are managed in a sustainable manner. Participants briefly discussed the impact of certification on global trade and the international trade regime.

Participants emphasized the need for information exchange among the various schemes and the importance of meeting more frequently to discuss visions, standards, approaches and procedures in standard setting and certification. It was

put forward that more proactive activities on the part of forest certification schemes to raise the awareness of the public about sustainable forest management could perhaps help change consumer behaviour and thus assist the schemes in the application of standards.

### World's largest environmental law database launched on the Web

A database providing access to over 100 000 legal references related to the environment is now online. ECOLEX, "a gateway to environmental law", is the product of many years of collaboration between FAO, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). It provides texts and information on multilateral environmental treaties, national legislation (including legislation from the state or provincial level), judicial decisions, soft law and other non-binding policies, as well as literature (monographs, articles and grey literature) concerning environmental law and policies.

Simple searches can be carried out by subject (e.g. forestry), keyword, country and/or time period. The advanced search function permits even narrower searches, for example for specific territorial subdivisions. The search interface is available in English, French and Spanish; texts are presented in their original language. Abstracts and indexing information are provided for all documents, and in many cases the full text is provided as well.

The partners are committed to the maintenance and further development of ECOLEX in order to respond to the ever-increasing demand for information about environmental law. The database will be valuable for a wide range of users, from decision-makers, policy advisors and advocacy groups to students and the general public.

ECOLEX is found on the Web at: [www.ecolex.org](http://www.ecolex.org)