

# International forest policy dialogue

Countries have been engaging in international forest policy dialogue in a number of fora since before UNCED. In some instances, forest issues are not arising from the discussions as a formal part of the agenda, yet decisions directly affect forest management and practices around the world. The Millennium Development Goals and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), for example, recognize that forests are critical to achieving overall sustainable development, reducing poverty, improving the environment, halting the loss of biodiversity and reversing land and resource degradation. These significant contributions argue strongly for all sectors to adopt more comprehensive approaches in their search for lasting solutions. Any future international arrangements on forests, therefore, may need to reach out to experts in other fields to help shed light on issues of global concern that have been with the sector for some time. This chapter presents a historical perspective and the current status of the international forest policy dialogue; summarizes the results of the fourth session of UNFF; describes progress in the work of CPF; and gives an update on international conventions and agreements related to forests.

## A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Countries have been discussing international forest policy issues within the United Nations system since the end of the Second World War. Since its establishment in 1945, FAO has incorporated forestry as one of its major programmes to address concerns that have gradually shifted from timber supply in post-War Europe to broader development and conservation issues. Since the late 1940s, six

Regional Forestry Commissions have been bringing the heads of national forest agencies together on a regular basis to discuss policy and technical matters. The Committee on Forestry (COFO) – the most important of the FAO statutory bodies in forestry – first met in 1972. Forestry is also discussed every two years at the Conference of FAO.

Concerned with the increasing rate of deforestation in tropical regions, the FAO Committee on Forest Development in the Tropics (1967–1991) brought worldwide attention to the problem. In 1983, this intergovernmental forum called for the development of a plan to reverse trends. In response, FAO, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Resources Institute (WRI) launched the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) (later Tropical Forestry Action Programme) in 1985. However, TFAP became mired in controversy and was replaced with the National Forestry Action Plan (NFAP) (later National Forestry Action Programme), which then evolved into national forest programmes in the 1990s.

Other milestones in the global forest policy dialogue were the adoption of the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) in 1983 and the establishment of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) in 1986 to promote international trade in tropical timber, the sustainable management of tropical forests and the development of forest industries. Many regional initiatives to protect forests and promote their sustainable management have emerged as well: the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, established in 1978, and the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), established in 1990, for example.

### From UNCED to IPF/IFF/UNFF

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, marked a turning point in the international forest policy dialogue when countries affirmed their commitment to sustainable forest management by adopting the Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (the “Forest Principles”). This agreement provided, for the first time, a common basis for action at the national, regional and international levels. It was also significant for the compromise it represented at a time when countries could not reach consensus on whether to launch negotiations for a global forest convention.

To follow up the UNCED forest-related outcomes, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) established the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) (1995–1997) and subsequently the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) (1997–2000). Their mandates were to promote and facilitate implementation of the Forest Principles; to review progress towards sustainable forest management; and to seek consensus on future international arrangements. The dialogue resulted in nearly 300 Proposals for Action. However, in addition to the question of a legally binding instrument, thorny issues related to finance, transfer of technology and trade remained unresolved. The importance of these matters and the desire to keep forests on the global policy agenda led to the establishment of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in 2000 for an initial five-year period.

UNFF not only provides a forum for sharing experiences and lessons on implementing sustainable forest management, including IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, but has also hosted a ministerial segment and organized multistakeholder dialogues. Several country-led initiatives have facilitated more in-depth deliberation on key issues, resulting in more informed discussions during formal sessions. Indications to date are that the dialogue seems

### International Year of Freshwater

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2003 the International Year of Freshwater to raise awareness of the need to use and manage this resource in a sustainable manner. It called upon governments, national and international organizations, NGOs and the private sector to make voluntary contributions and to lend other forms of support to the initiative and its messages. The designation provided an opportunity to accelerate implementation of the principles of integrated water resources management and to spearhead new initiatives at the international, regional and national levels.

Throughout the year, FAO highlighted the critical links between mountains, forests and freshwater. The Organization remains actively engaged in assisting countries around the world to address related issues, for example, by developing guidelines and approaches. As the agency mandated to lead observation of the first International Mountain Day, celebrated on 11 December 2003, FAO chose “Mountains – source of freshwater” as its theme.

to be effective and meaningful at the regional level and has served to strengthen political commitment among countries sharing similar conditions, such as those that are members of criteria and indicators processes and Regional Forestry Commissions.

Policy deliberations relevant to forests are also under way in a myriad of other international fora, mainly the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) – all of which arose from UNCED. Efforts are being made to enhance cooperation on forest issues among these entities as well as other processes and organizations, particularly through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

## UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS

UNFF held its fourth session in May 2004 in Geneva, Switzerland. Governments discussed social and cultural aspects of forests; traditional and scientific forest-related knowledge; and progress in achieving sustainable forest management, through *inter alia* implementing the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action and criteria and indicators. Delegates also addressed the need to enhance cooperation among international organizations and, in this regard, expressed appreciation to CPF for its work. In addition, governments established procedures for reviewing the international arrangement on forests, including UNFF and CPF, in 2005. Panel discussions also took place on the role of forests in rural development and poverty eradication in Africa and SIDS, and in achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Among the outcomes of UNFF-4 were the acknowledgement of seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management (see Box on page 3) and the need to strengthen linkages between forests and internationally agreed development goals. Member countries,

however, were not able to reach consensus on a resolution pertaining to traditional forest-related knowledge, notably because of different views on indigenous rights. Neither did they pass a resolution on enhanced cooperation because they considered that UNFF had provided sufficient guidance on this item in previous sessions. Notwithstanding this latter decision, delegates stressed the importance of continued cooperation between UNFF and the UNCED conventions on biological diversity, climate change and desertification. Another outcome of UNFF-4 was the increased participation of major groups in an interactive multistakeholder dialogue that addressed issues pertaining to intellectual property rights, clear land-tenure systems, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the sustainable management and use of forests.

Several country-led intersessional activities, organized in cooperation with organizations, helped forest experts prepare for the session on topics that included the transfer of environmentally sound technologies; monitoring, assessment and reporting; decentralization in the forest sector; and forest landscape restoration.

### UNFF ad hoc expert group meets in New York

Sixty-eight experts, acting in their personal capacities, met in New York from 7 to 10 September 2004 to formulate advice to give to UNFF when it considers the future international arrangement on forests at its fifth session in May 2005.

Participants generally agreed that the international arrangement on forests needed strengthening and proposed different ways to achieve this objective – ranging from making UNFF into more of a high-level policy forum that would meet less frequently to developing a framework convention with either regional or thematic protocols. Despite lack of consensus

on future modalities, experts clearly stated that maintaining the status quo was not an option. They praised CPF for its accomplishments, including improved cooperation on forest issues and strong support to country implementation of sustainable forest management.

Since UNCED, the IPF/IFF/UNFF dialogue has raised awareness of the significant contributions that forests make to the health of the planet and its inhabitants. Annual sessions of UNFF have provided a forum for continued policy development and dialogue on ways to achieve sustainable management of all types of forests, with a focus on financial and technological support as well as on monitoring progress.

Based on a review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at UNFF-5, delegates will decide on how best to continue to develop solutions, generate strong political commitment to sustainable forest management and strengthen cooperation and partnerships. Participation of all countries and advice from forestry experts are critical for a meaningful decision on – and subsequent dialogue within – the future international arrangement.

The fifth session of UNFF, including a ministerial segment and a multistakeholder dialogue, will be held from 16 to 27 May 2005 in New York, United States. High-level discussions will also take place between ministers and CPF members. In addition to making recommendations to the United Nations General Assembly on future institutional arrangements for forests, the session will address enhanced cooperation and linkages with internationally agreed development goals, especially the Millennium Development Goals.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP ON FORESTS

CPF and its 14 members (see Box on page 60) continue to enhance cooperation and coordination on forest issues to assist countries in implementing sustainable forest management and to support UNFF. Chaired by FAO and supported by the UNFF Secretariat, CPF provides expertise and information through a focal agency system that allows for the sharing of responsibilities and builds on the comparative advantages of each member.

In collaboration with a wide range of partners, CPF helps to catalyse national, regional and

international action related to forests, including the mobilization of financial resources, and helps to strengthen political commitment. Members contribute to UNFF sessions and to country-led initiatives by assisting with the preparation of documents and offering technical advice on issues within their respective mandates. Many have also seconded staff to the UNFF Secretariat.

Other international processes and bodies besides UNFF – including the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD – are taking note of CPF achievements and its success in bringing key organizations together.

Since its establishment in 2001, CPF has undertaken a number of joint initiatives: the online database on funding sources for sustainable forest management, streamlining reporting on forests and harmonizing forest-related definitions, among others. After the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) joined the partnership, CPF also became involved in the Global Forest Information Service (GFIS), an Internet gateway to forest information from around the world where users can locate maps, data sets, articles, books and other material.

### CPF Sourcebook

The CPF Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management makes information on foreign and domestic funds accessible through an online searchable database. It contains information on some 400 potential sources of funding for forest activities and on how to develop project proposals. CPF collaborates with the National Forest Programme Facility and members of the CPF Network (see page 60) to improve and disseminate the sourcebook (available at [www.fao.org/forestry/CPF-sourcebook](http://www.fao.org/forestry/CPF-sourcebook)).

### Streamlining forest reporting

As part of CPF efforts to streamline reporting on forests, an Internet portal was established to provide easy access to information that countries submit to key forest-related international



## WHAT THE POLICY DIALOGUE HAS YIELDED

Over the past 15 years there have been many positive changes in forest policy issues, although it is not possible to ascribe them all to the international dialogue on forests. They include:

- better recognition of the contributions that forests make to sustainable development;
- increased international cooperation and consensus building on complex issues;
- a greater degree of participation of civil society in decision-making;
- acknowledgement of the importance of forests to sustainable livelihoods, food security and poverty alleviation, including their relevance to the Millennium Development Goals;
- revised forest policies of multinational and bilateral donors and funding agencies;
- new financing mechanisms to capture the value of environmental services from forests, such as carbon sequestration;
- the development and implementation of national forest programmes and criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management around the world;
- new efforts to improve governance and forest law enforcement;
- the establishment of innovative partnerships at all levels.

National forest programmes have been widely embraced as a framework for developing and implementing forest policies in a participatory manner. In many countries, these programmes are proving to be effective tools for putting international forest-related commitments into practice (see Box on page 47). The use of criteria and indicators to monitor progress towards sustainable forest management is helping to improve policies, practices, information and stakeholder involvement; enhancing collaboration among countries, especially within regional processes; and contributing to the continuous improvement of FRA (see page 1). However, the degree to which countries are implementing both mechanisms varies considerably, pointing to the need for more capacity building.

CPF is recognized as a particularly useful result of the IPF/IFF/UNFF process. Increasingly, its 14 members are undertaking joint projects, cosponsoring meetings and workshops, supporting country-led initiatives and sharing information – all with a view to assisting countries to achieve sustainable forest management.

### Ongoing challenges

While the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action represent a significant agreement by governments, understanding and implementing them remain a challenge. Solutions to improve financing and technology transfer continue to be elusive, with some countries and stakeholders displeased with the lack of progress.

Discussions in the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions in 2002 and 2004 confirmed that implementation efforts are increasing, mostly through national forest programmes, but pointed out that the growing number of international calls for action is overwhelming implementing agencies and many developing countries. Other problems include low levels of stakeholder participation; a lack of communication between those who attend meetings and those who should implement proposals; the absence of material in national languages; and the high cost of international meetings at the expense, some would say, of providing more direct support to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Many countries are also concerned with the number and duplication of requests for reporting to international processes, given that many find it difficult to collect even basic information at the national level. In response, CPF members are working to streamline reporting on forests, but it will take time and resources to find practical solutions. Meanwhile, intergovernmental fora do not appear to be reducing either the number or the length of country reports they require. On the contrary, many processes seek extensive information on an annual basis through complex and overlapping questionnaires and guidelines.

The forest sector does not fare well in the face of competing demands for scarce funds, given that it contributes a relatively small share of employment and national income in most countries. While international dialogue has heightened awareness of the importance of forests for the range of benefits they provide, in most countries decision-makers have not yet taken sufficient action within their national borders – a situation that seriously hinders the implementation of sustainable

forest management. In addition, other sectors often ignore the benefits of integrating forests into their policy and planning and often fail to consider forestry as an integral part of interdisciplinary natural resource management.

Some countries have expressed concern about the continued fragmentation and wasteful duplication in the work of organizations and processes despite the progress CPF is making to enhance coordination and collaboration. Processes such as CBD and UNFF attempt to

## XII World Forestry Congress

In cosponsorship with FAO, the Government of Canada hosted and organized the XII World Forestry Congress in Québec City from 21 to 28 September 2003. As did previous congresses, this event served as a forum for governments, universities, civil society, the private sector and NGOs with an interest in forests to exchange views and experiences and formulate recommendations to address major forest issues at the national, regional and global levels. Some 4 000 participants from approximately 140 countries attended in their personal capacity.

Topics were considered under the theme “Forests, source of life”, which was divided into three programme areas:

- forests for people – what people need from forests, ways to perceive, evaluate and use the resource, capabilities required to meet demands and the roles and responsibilities of parties concerned;
- forests for the planet – current status, trends and future outlook, and the capacity of forests to supply goods and services and to fulfil essential functions;
- people and forests in harmony – models for managing forests that take into account a number of considerations, including institutional capacity to conduct research, develop technology and enhance education.

Participants drafted a Final Statement that includes a vision, strategies and actions to



achieve sustainable forest management worldwide. Recognizing that all societies depend on forests and trees for their survival and convinced that the needs of the planet and its inhabitants can be harmonized to achieve sustainable development, the congress noted the importance of building bridges with other sectors and called for continuing commitment throughout the process. Those who attended the event envisioned a future characterized by:

- social justice;
- economic benefits;
- healthy forests;
- responsible use of the resource;
- participatory, transparent and accountable governance;
- movement from dialogue to action;
- improved research, education and capacity building.

Among other prerequisites for realizing this vision, the congress identified sustained

deal with the breadth of forest issues yet are often driven by one or two key concerns without giving much attention to multiple benefits, challenges, cross-sectoral dimensions or capacity building. Inconsistent messages and conflict over which body has the lead on particular issues are hindering progress in some instances.

### Future of the dialogue

Over the decades, the international forest policy dialogue has contributed to bringing about

many positive changes. Increasingly, however, it has become fragmented, and some processes have not lived up to the expectations of the countries that established and participate in them. With the five-year mandate of UNFF coming to a close, members will be deciding on the future international arrangement for forests in May 2005, taking into account progress that has been made, including that in other international bodies dealing with forests.

Despite developments, deforestation and

political commitment; adequate financing; close linkages with partners and other sectors; effective international cooperation; policies based on best available science and information; recognition of the culture, knowledge and good practices of indigenous peoples and local communities; and the management of forests and trees in a manner that includes interfacing with human settlements and with agroforestry, as well as other natural resource systems. Furthermore, participants agreed to promote specific strategies and actions to

ensure that forests make a strong contribution to the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed targets.

In adopting the Final Statement, the congress called on countries to pursue its objectives and to promote them in other sectors. It also requested that FAO publicize the statement in relevant fora and that it report to the XIII World Forestry Congress on progress in its implementation.



*The XII World Forestry Congress served as a forum for governments, universities, civil society, the private sector and NGOs to exchange views and experiences*

forest degradation are continuing, and illegal forest activities remain problematic. It is not enough for forest practitioners and policy-makers to reach out to other sectors to inform them of the benefits of dealing with issues in a holistic manner. Other sectors must be receptive and responsive to change. Therefore, any future international dialogue on forests should look beyond traditional forestry and establish a broader base of experts on which to draw, including those in agriculture, infrastructure development and the energy, mining and transportation sectors.

Countries should now determine why, 13 years after UNCED, worrisome trends in the forest sector are continuing, despite the many high-level commitments made. Governments and stakeholders must now ask themselves how best to support implementation efforts and bring about lasting solutions. At UNFF-5, countries must either decide to give the process a new mandate and working modalities or decide that the IPF/IFF/UNFF dialogue has yielded all it can and that it is time for other fora, instruments and processes to fill the void.

### **NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMME FACILITY – A GROWING PARTNERSHIP**

As reported in *State of the World's Forests 2003*, the National Forest Programme Facility is a partnership between developing countries, donors, FAO and other international organizations to stimulate the participation of stakeholders in national forest programme processes through knowledge sharing and capacity building. Hosted by FAO, the Facility operates through a multidonor trust fund under the authority of a steering committee. It began operations in 2002 and provides direct support to countries and information services worldwide. As of April 2004, it had obtained commitments from seven partners for up to US\$15 million over a five-year period and was active in 36 countries: 20 in Africa, 8 in Asia and the Pacific and 8 in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Facility also supports two subregional entities in Central America.

In addition to funding workshops, training,

policy analysis and studies, the Facility supports information collection and management. It also helps to establish communities of practice where experts from institutions tackle complex issues such as stakeholder participation, funding mechanisms for sustainable forest management and payment for environmental services. Further information on communities of practices can be found at [www.fao.org/forestry/site/14690/en](http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/14690/en).

After just two years of operation, the Facility had received applications from more than 60 countries and 5 subregional organizations to become partners. In addition, it is responding to an ever-growing demand for services related to national forest programmes, including the following:

- development and implementation of regional or subregional forest strategies (Central America);
- development or updating of national forest policies and programmes (Georgia, Lesotho, the Niger, Nigeria, Thailand, Tunisia);
- integration of international commitments and IPF/IFF Proposals for Action in national policy development (Lesotho, Morocco);
- integration of national forest programmes into broader national strategies (poverty reduction in Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda; combating desertification in Mongolia) and intersectoral coordination in national forest programme implementation (Ecuador, Honduras, United Republic of Tanzania);
- development of subnational forest programmes (China, Senegal) and subsector strategies (South Africa);
- development and adoption of new forest legislation and dissemination of forest-related laws and regulations (Congo, Mali, Nigeria);
- development of fiscal policies (Senegal), concession systems (Mozambique), mechanisms to fund forestry (payment for environmental services in Central America), and enabling environments for private investment in the forest sector (Kenya,

## The Mountain Partnership

The International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions (the Mountain Partnership) is a voluntary alliance dedicated to improving the lives of mountain people and protecting mountain environments around the world. Launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), which was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, the partnership taps the knowledge, expertise and vast resources of its members to support positive change in mountain areas. By mid-2004, 39 countries, 15 intergovernmental organizations and 44 groups from civil society and the private sector had joined. FAO is hosting the interim secretariat with financial support from the Governments of Italy and Switzerland and assistance from UNEP.

Building on the successes of the International Year of Mountains – 2002, enhancing the implementation of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 and following up relevant aspects of the WSSD Plan of Implementation, the Mountain Partnership is facilitating action on the ground and working at the policy, programme and project levels. Consistent with priority concerns, members have identified initiatives pertaining to such areas as policy and law, sustainable livelihoods, watershed management, research, gender balance, education, sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountains. Activities are taking place across the Andes, Central Asia, East Africa and the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. In addition, efforts are being made to encourage linkages at the local, national, regional and global levels.



FAO/MOUNTAIN PARTNERSHIP/A. MIHICH

*The Mountain Partnership promotes initiatives for sustainable livelihoods, sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountains – for example, the Andes*

- Malawi, Mozambique, United Republic of Tanzania);
- decentralization in the forest sector (Ecuador, Indonesia, Mali, Morocco, Mongolia, Rwanda, Uganda) and empowering local governments in forest management (Chile);
- raising stakeholder awareness of the national forest programme process (Mongolia, Namibia, Rwanda) and establishing consultation mechanisms (Colombia, Ghana, Mali, Paraguay, South Africa, Tunisia);
- participatory forestry (Central America) and community-based forest management (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, the Philippines);
- development and application of criteria and indicators to monitor implementation of national forest programmes (Morocco);

## Global Environment Facility – Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management

GEF was established in 1991 to help developing countries and countries with economies in transition fund incremental initiatives to protect the global environment. In October 2002, the GEF Assembly added land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation, to its other focal areas – biological diversity, international waters, climate change, ozone depletion and persistent organic pollutants. Since its inception, GEF has grown from a pilot programme to the largest single source of financing for the global environment.

The Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management (OP#15) provides a framework for developing eligible activities to address the root causes and negative impact of land degradation on ecosystems, livelihoods and people's well-being. In the context of sustainable development, countries are expected to use participatory, integrated and cross-sectoral

approaches to deal with land degradation issues. OP#15 aims to:

- strengthen institutional and human resource capacity for planning and implementing sustainable land management;
- improve policies, regulations and incentives to facilitate wider adoption of sustainable land management practices across sectors;
- enhance the economic productivity of the land under sustainable management;
- preserve or restore the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems.

- development of forest information and monitoring systems and Web-based initiatives (China, Cuba, Honduras, Mali, Mongolia, Namibia, Paraguay, United Republic of Tanzania).

### UPDATE ON FOREST-RELATED INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND AGREEMENTS

#### Convention on Biological Diversity

More than 2 300 participants attended the seventh Conference of the Parties (COP-7) to CBD, which was held from 9 to 20 February 2004 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Priority issues included the biological diversity of mountain ecosystems, the role of protected areas in the conservation of biological diversity, technology transfer and cooperation, and progress in achieving a significant reduction in the loss of biological diversity by 2010.

With regard to forest-related issues, delegates discussed implementation of the expanded Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity and requested that the Executive Secretary propose targets and develop indicators, taking into account the criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management developed by regional and international processes. The Executive Secretary was also asked to continue collaborating with other members of CPF to harmonize and streamline forest-related reporting. Decision VII/11 noted that sustainable forest management, as defined in the Forest Principles, could be considered as a means of applying the ecosystem approach to forests, and that tools developed in the context of sustainable forest management, such as criteria and indicators, national forest programmes, model forests and certification schemes, could

help to implement the ecosystem approach (see page 20).

Building on outcomes of the International Year of Mountains – 2002, COP-7 adopted a programme of work on mountain biological diversity, which makes several references to forest biological diversity. After considerable debate, COP-7 also agreed on a programme of work on protected areas that has, as one of its goals, the establishment of ecologically representative national and regional systems by 2010 for terrestrial areas and by 2012 for marine areas. Both decisions invite Parties to base implementation on national and subnational needs and to identify priorities according to their specific circumstances and conditions.

During the high-level segment, ministers reconfirmed their commitment to implement the three objectives of the convention: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources. They also reiterated their pledge to work towards achieving a significant reduction in the rate of biological diversity loss by 2010.

### **Convention to Combat Desertification**

UNCCD was adopted as a follow-up to UNCED to address threats posed by drought and desertification to the livelihoods of an estimated one billion people in more than 110 countries. The agreement came into force in 1996.

COP-6 to UNCCD took place in Havana, Cuba, from 25 August to 5 September 2003. More than 2 000 delegates participated, including some 150 NGOs and 40 international organizations from 173 countries. Among other decisions, COP-6 accepted the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the convention's financial mechanism. Although this development is expected to further implementation efforts, much remains to be done in such areas as cooperation among developing countries and between developed and developing countries.

Delegates emphasized the convention as an

important tool to eradicate poverty and called on development partners to use it in strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. COP-6 also endorsed recommendations of UNCCD's Committee on Science and Technology, which encouraged institutions and NGOs to develop and test benchmarks and indicators; invited Parties to carry out pilot studies on early warning systems; and proposed the collection of case studies on traditional knowledge from local and indigenous communities.

### **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

In December 2003, COP-9 to UNFCCC in Milan, Italy, determined that only afforestation and reforestation qualify for carbon sink projects under CDM. It also defined small-scale afforestation and reforestation projects for low-income communities and individuals. These schemes are characterized by an annual carbon sequestration of less than 8 000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and benefit from simpler rules and lower fixed costs. Contrary to projects in the energy sector, those in forestry may last up to 60 years. Carbon credits must either be renewed every five years or replaced when forests re-emit carbon into the atmosphere.

COP-9 also endorsed the 2003 Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (IPCC, 2004) for assessing and reporting carbon stock changes and greenhouse gas flows in forests in the context of UNFCCC (see page 4).

Failing to reach consensus on many forestry issues in Milan, delegates resumed discussions at COP-10 to UNFCCC in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in December 2004. Issues they addressed included small-scale afforestation and reforestation projects and the use of GPG for reporting supplementary information under the Kyoto Protocol. COP-10 also addressed carbon in harvested wood products; definitions and methodologies to account for forest degradation; and methods for factoring out direct human-induced changes on forest carbon stocks from indirect and natural effects.

### Developments related to climate change

By 2005, average global concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), the main greenhouse gas, will have reached 380 parts per million – an increase of 36 percent since industrialization and an accumulation of 25 percent in excess of the peak concentration during the past 400 000 years (UNEP/GRID-Arendal, 2000).

In Europe, the summer of 2003 was warmer than any in the past five centuries, and precipitation has decreased 2 to 5 percent since 1900. Rainfall in the same period has decreased by between 5 and 20 percent in the Mediterranean region and northern Africa, foreshadowing the risks associated with climate change, particularly for developing countries of those regions (Bernes, 2003).

Global emissions currently amount to approximately 26.5 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year (UNEP/GRID-Arendal, 2004). Aggregate emissions of all greenhouse gases since 1990 in all industrial countries have declined by 6.6 percent, masking an actual increase of 7.5 percent in developed nations other than those with economies in transition, where emissions declined by 40 percent as a result of the collapse of many industries (UNFCCC, 2002).

### Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

International trade in wildlife involves more than 350 million plant and animal species and is estimated to be worth billions of dollars annually. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was adopted in 1973 to address unsustainable international trade of wild animal and plant species, of which more than 33 000 are listed in the treaty's three appendixes.

At COP-13 to CITES, held in Bangkok, Thailand, in October 2004, governments

discussed proposals to amend Appendix II (the list of species at risk whose import and export are controlled through a permit system) and Appendix I (the list of endangered species whose commercial trade is forbidden). Plants discussed included Asia's agarwood trees (*Aquilaria* spp.), which contain valuable oil for making incense, perfumes and medicines; ramin (*Gonystylus* spp.), one of Southeast Asia's major export timbers; and yew trees (*Taxus* spp.), whose leaves are used to produce paclitaxel – a key ingredient in one of the biggest-selling cancer drugs.

### Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Islamic Republic of Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. Unlike most environmental treaties, it is not part of the UN system, although it collaborates extensively with other secretariats and partners.

As of August 2004, 1 374 sites totalling more than 121.4 million hectares were designated for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance. Since mangrove forests are underrepresented on this list, COP-8 to the Ramsar Convention in November 2002 (Valencia, Spain) adopted three resolutions emphasizing their ecological and socio-economic importance.

COP-9 to the convention will take place in Kampala, Uganda, in November 2005 under the theme "Wetlands and water: supporting life, sustaining livelihoods". Among other technical items, the management of wetlands to alleviate poverty and promote human well-being will be discussed. ♦

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