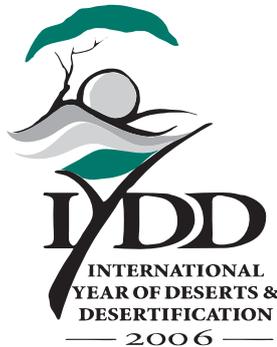




WORLD OF FORESTRY



2006 – International Year of Deserts and Desertification

Desertification is one of the world's most alarming processes of environmental degradation. It is not simply a problem of naturally advancing deserts; it is a question of land degradation and loss of productivity, often related to climate change and often caused by humans. Desertification affects one-third of the earth's surface and over a billion people. The social and economic costs can be devastating. At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, combating desertification was singled out as a key to poverty eradication in dryland rural areas. Yet there is too little public awareness of the problem.

In view of this situation, the United Nations General Assembly, at its fifty-eighth session in 2003, declared 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD). In doing so, the General Assembly underlined its deep concern for the exacerbation of desertification, particularly in Africa, and noted the threat to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The IYDD provides an impulse to spread the message that desertification is a global problem, and to strengthen the place of dryland issues on the international environmental agenda. IYDD also celebrates the fragile beauty and unique heritage of the world's deserts – home to unique and diverse fauna and flora as well as to some of the world's oldest civilizations – and their worthiness to be protected.

The celebration of IYDD is led by an interagency committee of partners active in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and FAO. Awareness – raising efforts will be supported by honorary spokespersons Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace laureate 2004, Cherif Rahmani, Minister of Environment of Algeria, and Bulgarian international football star Hristo Stoitchkov. All countries and civil society organizations are encouraged to undertake special initiatives to mark the year.

Further information is available at: www.iydd.org

UNFF mandate extended

From 13 to 24 February 2006, nearly 600 participants met at United Nations headquarters in New York to reconsider the future of the international arrangement on forests. The sixth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-6) took up where UNFF-5 left off in May 2005, with delegates again locking horns over the draft negotiating text from the previous session. Contentious issues continued to be environmental services of forests, financial resources, illegal logging, the need for a legally versus non-legally binding instrument on forests and the expectations for the future work of UNFF. Consensus was finally reached shortly before midnight on the closing day of the meeting. Subject to approval of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the mandate of UNFF will be extended to 2015.

The delegates reached agreement on four “global objectives” on forests, for which countries are to make progress by 2015 and report voluntarily to UNFF:

- reversing the loss of forest cover and increasing efforts to prevent forest degradation;
- enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits and their contribution to international development goals;
- increasing the area of protected forests and other areas of sustainably managed forests, and increasing the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests;
- reversing the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management.

On working modalities of UNFF, it was agreed that a multi-year programme of work would be decided at UNFF-7, after which the forum would meet every two years. Forest-related regional bodies were invited to provide input to the work of UNFF, to strengthen the relation between global and regional activities.

To the disappointment of a number of countries in favour of a legally binding instrument, UNFF-6 agreed to conclude a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, to be adopted at UNFF-7. An open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc working group will be convened towards the end of 2006 to prepare its content. Despite this conclusion, many substantive issues on a forest instrument remain undecided, and the diluted language of the resolution dampened the enthusiasm of many delegates.

UNFF-7 is scheduled to be held from 16 to 27 April 2007, again at UN headquarters in New York.

The outcome of UNFF-6 is available at www.un.org/esa/forests

New International Tropical Timber Agreement agreed in round four

A new International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) – the treaty that steers the work of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) – was agreed in negotiations held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, from 16 to 27 January



2006, under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The first ITTA, under which ITTO was created, was adopted in November 1983 and entered into force in April 1985. It was originally negotiated:

- to provide an effective framework for cooperation and consultation between countries producing and consuming tropical timber;
- to promote the expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical timber and the improvement of structural conditions in the tropical timber market;
- to promote and support research and development to improve forest management and wood utilization;
- to encourage development of national policies for sustainable utilization and conservation of tropical forests and their genetic resources and for maintaining ecological balance.

It remained in force for an initial period of five years and was extended twice for three-year periods. A successor agreement, ITTA, 1994, was adopted in January 1994 and entered into force at the beginning of 1997. Initially concluded for three years, ITTA, 1994 was extended twice for three-year periods and will expire at the end of 2006.

The negotiations for a successor agreement to ITTA, 1994 began in July 2004, but negotiators had to convene three more times (February 2005, June/July 2005 and January 2006) before consensus could be reached on difficult issues. At the opening of the January round, outstanding issues included distribution of votes, illegal logging and requirements for the future agreement to enter into force.

The two key objectives of the new agreement are to promote the expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested forests; and to promote the sustainable management of tropical timber-producing forests.

The new document includes explicit acknowledgment of the need to grapple with controversial topics such as illegal logging, certification and the concept of sustainable forest management itself. It acknowledges the role of ITTO in assisting countries to pursue sustainable development, alleviate poverty and encourage forest-dependent indigenous and local communities to achieve sustainable forest management.

The agreement also proposes new financing mechanisms aimed at boosting voluntary contributions and making funding more predictable. The creation of a subaccount for thematic subprogrammes will allow donors to earmark funds for projects of particular interest and will cut transaction costs. Recurrent operational costs will be covered from assessed contributions, and despite some controversy, producers agreed to an increase in their assessed contributions for this purpose.

Many of the more than 180 delegates to the negotiating conference noted a new spirit of cooperation between consumers

and producers, as witnessed by the compromises and sacrifices made.

The agreement was opened for signature in April 2006 and is expected to come into force in 2008. It will operate for ten years, with the possibility of extensions of up to eight years. ITTO will continue to function under the ITTA, 1994, until the new agreement is ratified.

More information is available at: www.itto.or.jp

Negotiations on forest biological diversity

Forest biodiversity was among the substantive issues discussed at the eighth Conference of the Parties (COP-8) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which convened from 20 to 31 March 2006 in Curitiba, Brazil. Approximately 3 900 delegates attended – a record participation in the history of the convention.

Decisions were taken on such subjects as small island biodiversity, biodiversity of dry and subhumid lands, access and benefit-sharing, traditional knowledge and communication, education and public awareness. Protected areas, invasive alien species, and biodiversity and climate change were other important agenda items.

Participants also addressed strategies and processes for monitoring, evaluating and reporting progress in implementing the convention, including the integration of targets into thematic work programmes. Under the CBD 2010 target (to “achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss”), subtargets and indicators are being integrated in many CBD work programmes, including that on forest biological diversity. Parties were encouraged to access existing information on forest-related reporting when completing their national reports.

The decision on access and benefit sharing focused on possible future steps towards negotiating an international regime in this area. A legally binding instrument on access and benefit sharing could have significant impacts on the forest sector in many countries.

With regard to the work programme on forest biodiversity, the main areas of debate were forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG) and related trade processes (FLEGT), and genetically modified trees.

Delegates disagreed over whether CBD should explicitly invite collaboration with FLEG and FLEGT processes being led by the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), FAO, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and regional initiatives. The final decision invites parties to strengthen their efforts to promote sustainable forest management to improve forest law enforcement and address related trade. Specific reference to FLEG was placed in a footnote listing processes for possible collaboration.

Although some countries opposed the use of genetically modified trees completely, the final decision on the subject represents a compromise; it recommends parties to take a precautionary approach in their regard and requests the Executive Secretary to



assemble information to allow the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to consider the impacts of genetically modified trees on forest biodiversity.

The decisions of COP-8 indicate that the current priorities in the CBD programme of work on forest biological diversity include cross-sectoral approaches and further integration of the ecosystem approach and sustainable forest management in policies and practices. Implementation of the work programme will be reviewed at COP-9 in 2008.

Further information is available at: www.biodiv.org

New Executive Secretary for CBD

In January 2006, Ahmed Djoghlaif of Algeria was appointed Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Djoghlaif, formerly Assistant Executive Director of UNEP, began his term with a call for the engagement of the men, women and youth of the world in reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. "During the past 50 years we have squandered one-fourth of the world's topsoil, one-fifth of its agricultural land and one-third of its forests, while at the same time increasing our population from 2.5 billion to over 6.1 billion. We simply cannot sustain life on earth if we proceed at this rate", he said.

Prior to joining the United Nations Djoghlaif was an adviser on environmental issues first to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria and then to the Prime Minister. He has a long history of working within the CBD process and also had important roles in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and on the negotiating committees of the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

New "Who's Who" of female environmentalists

On International Women's Day, 8 March 2006, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) unveiled the beginnings of the first Who's Who of leading female environmentalists.

The Who's Who project, building on UNEP's Women as the Voice for the Environment (WAVE) initiative, recognizes that women are important stewards of a healthy and stable environment. The compendium initially includes profiles of women decision-makers in the field of the environment and sustainable development, drawn from around the world. The goal is eventually to include women who have made significant contributions at all levels, from activists and grassroots workers to scientists and politicians.

In the field of forestry, the impressive roll call currently includes:

- Julia Butterfly Hill of the United States, founder of the Circle of Life Foundation, who led a courageous vigil to protest the logging of a magnificent 600-year old redwood tree in Humboldt County, California;

- Biruté Galdikas of Indonesia, the world's leading expert on orangutan behaviour and ecology, whose research showing that illegal logging is causing the disappearance of habitat for orangutans and other wildlife even in protected areas led her to get involved in conservation, forest restoration and the creation of national parks in Borneo;
- Primatologist Jane Goodall of the United States, a global leader in the effort to protect chimpanzees and their habitats, whose Jane Goodall Institute is widely recognized for establishing innovative, community-centred conservation and development programmes in Africa and the Roots and Shoots education programme in more than 70 countries;
- Georgette Koko, Vice Prime Minister and Minister in Charge of the Environment, Nature Protection, Research and Technologies in Gabon, who is especially active in environmental networking and climate change issues;
- Wangari Maathai of Kenya, Africa's foremost environmental campaigner and winner of the 2004 Nobel peace prize, internationally recognized for her grassroots tree-planting activities with women's groups and her campaign against deforestation as well as for her persistent struggle for democracy and human rights;
- Mabudafhasi Rejoice Thizwilondi, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in South Africa, who co-chairs the Network of Women Ministers for the Environment with Lena Sommestad, Minister for the Environment in Sweden;
- Elizabeth May, environmentalist, writer, activist and lawyer, Executive Director of the Sierra Club of Canada since 1989 and author of *At the cutting edge: the crisis in Canada's forests*;
- Canadian environmentalist Colleen McCrory, Executive Director of the Valhalla Wilderness Society, founder of Canada's Future Forest Alliance (a network of grassroots forest protection groups, including native communities and labour unions, dedicated to promoting improved forest management) and an organizer of the Taiga Rescue Network (an international effort to protect the world's boreal forests) – as well as a leader of a citizens' campaign to prevent logging on fragile slopes in her native province of British Columbia;
- Marina Silva of Brazil, co-founder with Chico Mendes of the independent trade union movement in the state of Acre and of the *empates* – peaceful demonstrations by forest-dwelling rubber tappers against wanton deforestation and the expulsion of forest communities from their traditional holdings – which resulted in the protection of thousands of hectares of tropical forest and the livelihoods of hundreds of families, and helped lead to the establishment of 2 million hectares of community-managed sustainable extractive reserves in Acre. She was elected to Brazil's federal senate in 1994.

Profiles honouring these and other influential women are



available in an online database at www.unep.org/women_env. Individuals and organizations are invited to add to the list by nominating women who they feel have made a significant and recognized contribution. As of May 2006, the database contained nearly 100 profiles.

New UNEP Executive Director

The United Nations General Assembly has elected Achim Steiner of Germany to a four-year term as Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), effective 15 June 2006. At the time of his election, Mr Steiner was Director-General of the World Conservation Union (IUCN). He succeeds Klaus Toepfer to become UNEP's fifth Executive Director since the organization was established in the early 1970s.

He has broad experience with intergovernmental organizations and negotiations, civil society, scientists and private business. A German national, Steiner was born in Brazil and educated in the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States.

Rights and Resources Initiative targets poverty in forested areas

In May 2006, an international coalition coordinated by the Rights and Resources Group, a non-profit organization in the United States, launched a global initiative to advocate stronger community forest ownership and use rights to assist in meeting global goals of poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation and forest-based economic growth. The Rights and Resources Initiative aims to assist communities and governments to double the global forest area under community ownership and management by 2015. The initiative also seeks to reduce by half the proportion of people in forest areas who live in extreme poverty by 2015. This can only be done, the group argues, if these people have clear rights to own and use forest resources.

Partners in the Rights and Resources Initiative include the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR); the Coordinating Association of Indigenous and Community Agroforestry in Central America (ACICAFOC); Forest Trends, United States; the Foundation for People and Community Development, Papua New Guinea; InterCooperation, Switzerland; the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC); the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF); and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Most of the world's tropical forests are government-owned and managed, despite legitimate local claims to the forest and the limited ability of governments to protect these vast resources. Rural people are increasingly asserting their rights to control forested areas, and governments are beginning to recognize the benefits of local control. The initiative aims to support communities and governments in addressing legal and other barriers to forest tenure reform.

The initiative also focuses on market reforms, noting that forests can significantly help boost living standards only if poor rural people can overcome barriers to the use and sale of their forest products and services.

The Rights and Resources Initiative has assembled a global network of organizations around the world, including community groups, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, government officials and market analysts in Africa, Asia and the Americas. The initiative will also gather and disseminate comprehensive data on forest ownership, poverty levels in forest areas and existing policies, laws and regulations.

Further information is available at: www.rightsandresources.org