



FAO FORESTRY

Asia-Pacific Forestry Week: Forestry in a changing world

The first Asia-Pacific Forestry Week, organized in Hanoi, Viet Nam from 21 to 26 April 2008, was the region's largest forest-related event of the year. An expanded setting for the twenty-second session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC), the week was organized with local, regional and international partner institutions for wider participation. It was open to governments, multilateral institutions and the public and attracted more than 600 participants. The meeting identified and addressed the imminent challenges of protecting and managing the region's forest resources in a rapidly changing global environment. It was hosted jointly by the Vietnamese Government and FAO.

Plenary sessions focused on the three pillars of sustainable development: social, environmental and economic. The first, organized by the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia-Pacific, explored challenges and opportunities for poor forest-dependent people. "Environment day", prepared jointly by FAO and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), focused on climate change and forests. It considered forest's role in climate change adaptation and mitigation, institutional arrangements and international agreements.

The session on economic aspects addressed trade, forest law compliance and governance, highlighting the changing role of forestry agencies. This session was led by the Asia Forest Partnership, with support provided by the Nature Conservancy and East Asia Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (Asia FLEG).

Special activities during the forest week included an essay contest for young professionals, a photo contest and an "information market" presenting forestry-related organizations, projects and activities in the region and allowing organizations to showcase their work through posters and displays. A daily newsletter introduced key participants, highlighted major events and shared ideas generated during the conference.

APFC is one of six FAO Regional Forestry Commissions. It offers a forum for member countries to share experiences in dealing with forestry challenges, advise FAO on regional forestry priorities and initiate joint action on key forestry issues. With 33 member countries, it is the region's most inclusive intergovernmental body dealing with forestry.

Joint meeting of regional commissions for Africa and the Near East

In 2008, for the first time, the Near East Forestry Commission (NEFC) and the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC) held their biennial sessions jointly. Around 160 participants including ministers, heads of national forestry and wildlife agencies and representatives from non-governmental organizations and the private sector from over 50 countries met in Khartoum, the Sudan from 18 to 21 February to discuss urgent forest issues related to climate change, bioenergy, water resources and wildfires.



Asia-Pacific photo contest winner: "My forest, my home" by Eko Bambang Subiyantoro, Indonesia

Several African and some Near East countries have high but unrealized potential to benefit financially from climate change mitigation activities. The commissions recommended increasing sharing of experiences from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in the region and engagement of the private sector in climate change mitigation projects in forestry. They noted the importance of addressing adaptation and mitigation opportunities in a holistic way, recommending that countries incorporate them into national forest programmes and link them with human development needs.

In the Near East, fossil fuels comprise the main energy source. In Africa, more than 80 percent of wood is used for energy, primarily for cooking and heating. The strategic role of forests in setting the energy agendas for the two regions was addressed during the course of the week. The commissions urged member countries to evaluate with care the costs and benefits of investing in bioenergy, as such investments may compete with food production and increase deforestation.



Clean water is increasingly scarce in many parts of both regions. The commissions recognized the important linkages between forests and water resources and the urgent need to use these to address many of the problems in both the forestry and water sectors. Relevant initiatives were recognized, such as the Green Wall of the Sahara and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) supported integrated natural resources management project in the Fouta Djallon Highlands, the great “water tower” of West Africa.

Africa and the Near East are fire-prone regions, where human causes of fire are amplified by climatic conditions. Africa accounts for about half of the area burned by wildfires throughout the world, and as global temperatures rise, the need to manage wildfires increases. Many countries in the regions lack adequate capacity and policy measures to manage fire effectively through monitoring, early warning, preparedness, prevention and restoration. Recommendations focused on training of local communities in fire management, intersectoral approaches and enhanced regional cooperation.

AFWC reviewed the role of wildlife and protected areas in the sustainable development of Africa. Issues addressed included human-wildlife conflict, the role of wildlife resources in food security and poverty alleviation, multilateral environmental agreements, partnerships and communication and information exchange.

The Near East Forestry Commission reviewed progress in ongoing efforts to develop Guidelines for Good Forestry Practices in Arid and Semi-arid Zones, expected to be an important policy tool in the region.

Special events included a tree planting ceremony and a study tour.

Launch of the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010

The Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 (FRA 2010) was launched during a technical meeting of the FRA national correspondents held from 3 to 7 March at FAO headquarters in Rome. FRA 2010 will be the most comprehensive global forest resource assessment ever undertaken, with several new initiatives including a remote sensing survey in which new and archival satellite data will be used to produce global and regional tree-cover maps and improved estimates of forest area and forest area change.

Some 265 forest assessment specialists attended the technical meeting, including representatives from 154 countries and 14 key forest-related organizations. The meeting presented the specifications for the FRA process, which will consist of country reporting, special studies and the remote sensing survey. National correspondents thoroughly reviewed the FRA 2010 reporting tables, discussed technical issues and provided feedback to the FRA secretariat on the support needed to meet the FRA 2010 national reporting requirements. The gathering helped strengthen

the national correspondent network as a dynamic meeting point for specialists in monitoring, assessment and reporting on forest resources.

Ten proposed special studies were presented at the meeting, and a Remote Sensing Task Force was convened with representation from about 20 major forest countries.

The linkages between FRA and other international reporting processes were underlined through statements and presentations by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Jena University, Germany.

Regional follow-up meetings with countries will take place over the subsequent 12 months to build capacity and review country data.

XIII World Forestry Congress: update

The XIII World Forestry Congress, to be held from 18 to 25 October 2009 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was officially presented at a high-level ceremony held in Buenos Aires on 8 October 2008. The launching event was organized both to draw attention to the congress at the national level and to call for the cooperation of the international community in providing financial support for countries that need it.

The World Forestry Congress is the most important forestry meeting worldwide. The 2009 congress will have the theme “Forests in development – a vital balance”. It will offer representatives of the public and private sectors, the scientific community, foresters, professionals and other interested parties an opportunity to address sustainable forest management from a global and integrated perspective.

The deadline for submission of voluntary papers, originally set for June 2008, has been extended to 31 December 2008. Papers must not exceed 3 000 words and must include an abstract of not longer than 300 words. Three to five keywords should be chosen to identify the paper’s placement within one of the congress’s seven thematic areas (Forests and biodiversity; Producing for development; Forests in the service of people; Caring for our forests; Forest sector: development opportunities; Organizing forest development; People and forest in harmony).

Partners are welcomed to organize side events. The deadline for proposals for side events is 30 November 2008. These events will offer participants a unique opportunity for wider discussion and reflection, dissemination of messages, networking and personal contact. Side events will be scheduled for a maximum of two hours. Only one application per organizer will be considered.

For complete guidelines on submission of papers and details about the organization of side events (including costs and optional



services), please see the congress Web site (www.wfc2009.org) or request information by e-mail, mail or fax to:

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Urban forestry experts gather to promote sustainable urban development

The International Meeting on Urban Forestry "Trees Connecting People: In Action Together", co-organized by FAO and Promoción del Desarrollo Sostenible (IPES), Peru, brought together experts and institutions from the whole world to build alliances to support the optimized role of trees and forests for livable cities. Held in Bogotá, Colombia from 29 July to 1 August 2008, the meeting shared experiences related to best practices, decision-making processes, lessons learned and opportunities for action, with specific attention to developing countries and countries in transition. The discussions will also assist FAO in establishing priority actions for its work programme on urban and peri-urban forestry.

Participants represented government institutions, local authorities and municipalities from all regions, non-governmental organizations, universities and research centres, the private sector and bilateral agencies. International institutions participating included the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD); the Danish Centre for Forest, Landscape and Planning (KLV); the European Urban Forestry Research and Information Centre (EUFORIC); the Forest Survey of India (FSI); the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada; Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food Security (RUAF); UN-Habitat; and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

Major themes discussed included synergy between agriculture, forestry and greening in urban and peri-urban areas; wood energy; tree and forest inventory; watershed management and payments for environmental services; carbon sequestration for climate change mitigation, and adaptation to climate change; and guidelines for municipal policy, participatory decision-making and urban forestry. The meeting also presented strategies for elevating the profile of trees and forests within national, regional and global urban agendas.

The conference identified priority areas to address in order to optimize benefits from sustainable management of urban trees and forests: strategic processes and tools, innovative research,

knowledge transfer and information flow, people's involvement and empowerment, and a design, planning and management continuum.

In addition to international issues, the agenda included a special focus on issues of the host region, with case studies presented from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Uruguay. The meeting pointed out small-grant funding opportunities existing for those countries that have entered into partnership with the National Forest Programme Facility, which could provide support for policy development, planning, participatory processes, knowledge exchange and capacity building.

The Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), with the support of FAO, will co-host a second international meeting on urban and peri-urban forestry in 2009 in parallel with the next National Malaysian Conference on Urban Forestry.