the forest and water resolution, structured into five clusters: cross-sectoral cooperation, promotion of forest benefits for water, preservation of forest benefits for water, economic valuation of forest benefits for water/payment for environmental services (PES), research. In early January 2007, the Government of Cyprus convened a meeting of the "Friends of the Liaison Unit Warsaw", during which a solid draft of the resolution on forests and water was put together. FAO Forests and Water Programme actively participated in this meeting and was even asked to chair the session. In the course of the year 2007, the draft resolution will go through several additional rounds of formulation and will be ready to be discussed and hopefully approved by the Ministerial Conference in November 20007. *For more info see: http://www.mcpfe.org/*

The first meeting of the International Consortium on Landslides Global Promotion Committee

The International Consortium on Landslides is an International non-governmental and non-profit scientific organization, which is supported by UNESCO, WMO, FAO, UN/ISDR, and intergovernmental programmes such as the International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO; the Government of Japan; and other governmental bodies.

So far, landslide issues have been looked at by ICL almost purely from a physical-engineering perspective. FAO's Forests and Water Programme staff, through the cross-departmental entity on disaster preparedness and mitigation and support to relief operations, is assisting ICL to widening its scope into more integrated and applied aspects of landslide risks, including watershed management, forest conservation, and impact on local livelihoods.

Future trends of ICL activities will include:

- promotion of landslide research in the context of watershed management and overall landuse planning;
- Integration of earth sciences, water sciences, geophysical and geotechnical sciences, social sciences, technology and disaster management within the appropriate cultural and social contexts in order to evaluate landslide risk in urban and rural areas including watershed areas, agriculture and forest lands;
- strengthening institutional capacity for disaster (including landslide) risk preparedness, rehabilitation and management.

In the context of the first meeting of the Global Promotion Committee in January 2007, FAO agreed to organise a parallel session tentatively entitled "the role of integrated watershed management and forest conservation in landslide risk management" in the First World Landslide Forum which will be held from 18 to 21 November 2008 in Tokyo. *For more info see: http://icl.dpri.kyoto-u.ac.jp/*

Forests and Water web site

The official web site of the FAO Forests and Water programme entity is *coming soon at:* ***http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/36255/en***

This site will replace the existing "Watershed management and mountain development" site. Content of the latter will be incorporated in the new site.

The site will have two major communication objectives:

1. inform the development officers community about the activities and achievements of FOMC's Forests and Water programme entity; and
2. provide field practitioners and local level administrators with updated information on subjects dealt with by the Forests and Water programme.

Main blocks related to objective one will include:

- **our programme**, general information about the origin, development, current activities and achievements of the programme entity;
- **internal linkages and collaborations**, it will include links to web sites of FAO collaborating units; e.g. AGLW, Mountain Partnership Secretariat, etc;
- **international processes and networks**, description of activities carried out by the Forests and Water programme in support to relevant policy and networking processes;
- **field projects**, brief presentations of recent, ongoing and forthcoming field programmes backstopped by Forests and Water staff;
- the **publications** issued by the programme and sister initiatives;
- a number of **case studies** on forests, water, watershed management and sustainable mountain development;
- an **archive** from which it will be possible to download a selection of papers and documents related to the programme and the core issues at stake.

Main blocks related to objective two will include:

- **the new generation of watershed management**;
- **forest hydrology**;
- **upstream/downstream linkages**;
- **mountain ecosystems**.

Most content of these briefings will be drawn from research and consultation activities carried out by the programme during the last years.

This site will also host the web page of the EFC Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds.

Newsletter prepared in collaboration with FAO and Austrian Forest Engineering Service in Torrent and Avalanche Control
Contacts: thomas.hofer@fao.org; maria.patek@lebensministerium.at

EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 1 - March 2007

In this issue:

The Working Party Steering Commitee meeting

FAO hosted the last Working Party Steering Commitee meeting, that was held in Rome on 12 December 2006. This newsletter is the first visible output of the decisions taken during the meeting that focused on the importance to enhance the visibility, the technical role and the collaboration of the Working Party with the European Forestry Commission. Other important issues discussed on the occasion included the impact of the Working Party at country and EU-level, its Importance beyond Europe, the reactivation of countries for the next Working Party session and its organization (it will be hosted in Oulu, Finland, on August 2008), the next Resolution on Forests and Water of MCPFE and the preparation of the EFC Working Party web page inside the FAO Forests and Water web site.

Want to know more? *Request the complete report to Thomas Hofer (thomas.hofer@fao.org).*

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe

The MCPFE is a high level political initiative aimed at promoting the protection and sustainable management of forests. It involves 45 European countries and the European Community and cooperates with other countries as well as international organizations.

The MCPFE is a platform of dialogue for the signatory states, the European Community, the observer countries and organisations, as well as for other national and international stakeholders of forests and forestry. It is also a platform for the cooperation of policy and science.

It works as a continuing process, based on a chain of Ministerial Conferences and follow-up experts meetings and linked to global and other regional processes and initiatives dealing with issues on forests and forestry.

From 1990 to 2003, four Ministerial Conferences have been conducted so far leading to important policy statements. In addition, in 2006, MCPFE has organized one Workshop on "Pan-European Understanding of Forest Classification" and a Conference on Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Forest Management.

The link between forests and water was repeatedly discussed at several recent meetings held by MCPFE. There was an overall agreement that the forests and water related issues were of utmost importance and that this topic should be prepared for discussion at the next Ministerial Conference to be held in November 2007. This issue is obviously of great relevance to FAO's Forests and Water Programme and accordingly the Forestry Department is significantly involved in the shaping of this process.

In September 2006, the conference on "Water in Mountains for Integrated Management of Upper Basins" (Megève II) gave the opportunity to hold an expert level meeting on forests and water in order to discuss elements to be included in a draft resolution. This meeting was jointly organised by the Liaison Unit Warsaw of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and the European Observatory of Mountain Forests (EOMF). The meeting was attended by 15 participants representing European countries and FAO. Discussions during the day were structured into three sessions and each session was introduced by brief technical presentations.

The technical meeting resulted in a two-page document which was directly fed into the discussions of the following Expert Level Meeting (Warsaw, October 2006). This document includes a draft of the possible objectives of

p.4

Natural Hazard Management in Austria

die.wildbach und lawinenverbauung

lebensministerium.at

In Austria, **alpine natural hazards** constitute a security risk in many regions. Floods, mudflows, avalanches, slope movements and rock fall are threatening people, their settlements and economic areas, transport routes, supply lines, and infrastructure. The increasing settlement pressure, the opening up of transport routes in the Alps as well as strong growth rates in tourism have brought about a considerable spatial extension of endangered areas. With the rising demands on welfare and quality of life, the need for safety and protection of the population increased as well.

The protection against alpine natural hazards constitutes a national task of providing basic services for the public. The protection against torrents and avalanches is laid down in the Austrian Constitution as a competence of the Federal Government (Art. 10) both with respect to legislation and execution.

On the basis of the Forest Act of 1975, the Federal Government attends to this task via a decentralised agency immediately subordinated to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (Ministry of Life), the **Forest Engineering Service in Torrent and Avalanche Control**.

In the Forest Act all tasks of its offices are laid down, among them the drawing up of hazard zone maps, the planning and implementation of technical and forest-biological control measures, the consulting services and expert activities, the care for the torrent and avalanche catchment areas, the administration of the subsidies allocated, and the representation of the public interest concerning the protection against alpine natural hazards.

Also the legal foundations of the hazard zone map, which is one of the forest landuse plans, are laid down in the Forest Act and its Regulation. As far as its legal effect is concerned, the hazard zone map is only an expert opinion, but it is binding due to its being laid down in the local land-use planning.

The provincial laws regulating landuse and building contain building restrictions for areas exposed to natural hazards. The identification of the hazard zones in the zoning and development plans makes it possible for the authorities to assess the risk for each individual parcel and, if necessary, to determine provisions for making a site apt for development.

Torrent, avalanche and erosion control measures are financed from the Disaster Relief Fund of the Federal State (Disaster Relief Fund Act). The Hydraulic Engineering Assistance Act defines the terms and conditions under which subsidies are provided as well as the principles of the planning and implementation of control measures.

However, comprehensive protection against alpine natural hazards includes also organisational measures (emergency alert, alarm, evacuation) and civil disaster control, tasks which are mostly implemented by the Federal Provinces. Modern natural hazard management can best be explained by means of the principle of the **risk cycle**, which begins with the event (disaster) and comprises disaster intervention, repair, reconstruction, prevention, and measures of disaster preparedness.

The objective is to improve and enhance society's preparedness for future natural disasters. Provision of these security services requires the cooperation of experts of numerous technical disciplines and many public and private organisations. A task of natural hazard management is also to harmonise all relevant technical plans to serve the goal of protecting against natural hazards.

To coordinate this task, the **political business unit "Protection against Natural Hazards"** has been established at the Ministry of Life, which is to attend to the task beyond the specific competences of the individual ministries, regional units and technical fields.

The protection against alpine natural hazards has become a comprehensive task which cannot be managed by the state with its agencies and authorities alone.

Also stakeholders – communities, carriers and utilities, the economy and, in particular, the individual citizen – must participate intensively in the precautionary measures and make an appropriate contribution thereto.

The management of disaster events (like the flood of the year 2002) requires the coordinated

control, who get a training at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, which is unique world-wide, also geologists, forest experts, hydrologists, ecologists, and civil engineers assist in the protective measures.

Moreover, many fundamental scientists and surveying experts as well as universities, research institutes and private engineering offices devote their work to the task of enhancing people's security with respect to natural hazards.

Communicating the risk associated with the natural hazards of alpine areas is an essential contribution towards improved hazard awareness of the population.

The goal pursued is first to create social acceptance of the impending hazards and the necessary preventive measures and, in a second step, to make citizens participants in the process of preparing for cases of natural hazards.

action of all players.

Right after the event local or regional crisis management committees guide the intervention of the disaster relief team and the execution of the necessary immediate measures such as the closing of roads, the evacuation of areas subject to acute risk or the leading back of rivers and torrents which overflowed their banks to their beds.

The crisis management committees bring together the experts and decision-makers needed from the different fields of competence. However, in order to reach the protection targets, all plans and measures must be coordinated between territorial authorities, public and private bodies, also in the subsequent phases of reconstruction and development of precautionary measures (preventive protection).

Knowledge and technological development in the field of the protection against natural hazards constitute a task which involves a large number of technical disciplines. Today, research and development as well as the planning and implementation of concrete measures are carried out by expert teams. Apart from the professional engineers of torrent and avalanche