

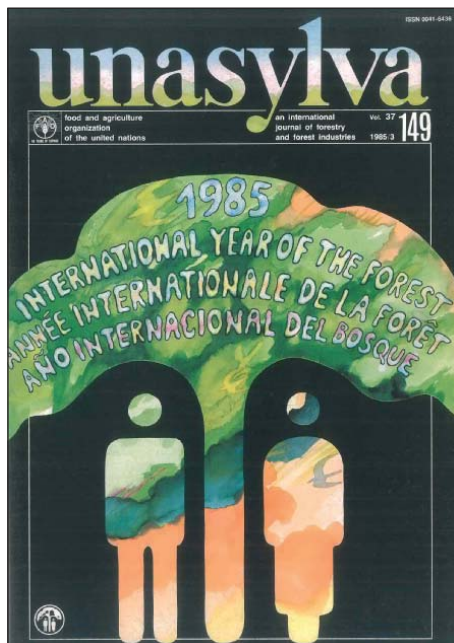
2011 declared International Year of Forests

On 20 December 2006, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution declaring 2011 as the International Year of Forests. The International Year of Forests will raise awareness that the world's forests are an integral part of global sustainable development, providing crucial economic, socio-cultural and environmental benefits. It will promote global action for the sustainable management, conservation and development of all types of forests, including trees outside forests.

To celebrate the year, activities will be organized to foster knowledge exchange on practical strategies to promote sustainable forest management and reverse deforestation and forest degradation. To help facilitate organization of these activities, governments are encouraged to create national committees and designate focal points in their respective countries, joining hands with regional and international organizations and civil society organizations. The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat has been tasked as the focal point for the implementation of the International Year of Forests.

This is the second time that forests will have their own "international year". The first was 1985, when the Council of FAO requested all member countries to give special recognition to forests during the year to focus world attention on the need for forest conservation and protection, to raise the political and public awareness of forest resources, to identify and draw attention to the factors threatening these forest resources and to mobilize people, and especially youth, to participate in forest-oriented activities (see *Unasylva* No. 149).

For more information, see the Web site for the International Year of Forests: www.un.org/esa/forests/2011/2011.html



First forestry project registered under the Clean Development Mechanism

The first afforestation/reforestation project under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol was registered in November 2006: Facilitating Reforestation for Guangxi Watershed Management in Pearl River Basin, China. While more than 400 projects have been registered to date under the CDM, until now there had been no registered afforestation/reforestation projects.

The project proposes to establish 4 000 ha of multiple-use forests in two counties of Guangxi Province, including approximately 830 ha on sites neighbouring two national nature reserves.

The newly registered project will generate income to poor farming communities by enabling the carbon sequestered by plantation forests to act as a "virtual cash crop" for local project beneficiaries, who will gain direct benefits from harvesting the trees as well as from the sale of carbon credits. While sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, forest restoration in this area also has a vital role in biodiversity conservation, soil and water conservation and poverty alleviation.

In order to ensure appropriate management measures, homogeneous tree growth, effective monitoring, maintenance of the carbon sequestered and reduction of risks from natural disasters during the crediting period, the project will largely be implemented through cooperative arrangements between farming communities and companies. The project activity arrangements are decided through a participatory process carried out at the village level. Local forestry agencies will provide the farming communities with training on plantation establishment and management and other technical services to ensure quality and reduce management risks. Income from the forest products and the certified emission reduction (CER) transactions will belong to the local farmers.

This project will be linked with a larger umbrella project, the Guangxi Integrated Forestry Development and Conservation Project (GIFDCP), which will help monitor the project's implementation and impacts, particularly the environmental and social impacts.

UNEP campaign to plant a billion trees

In November 2006, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched an appeal to the international community to plant a billion trees around the world in 2007 as part of a project to mitigate climate change and save the planet.

The "Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign" emphasizes that action to combat climate change does not have to be confined to the negotiating table. It urges all sectors of society – individuals, children, youth and community groups, schools, non-governmental organizations, business and industry, farmers, local authorities and



national governments – to plant trees as a small but practical step to combat what is probably the key challenge of the twenty-first century. Over 100 million tree planting pledges have already been received.

The campaign, inspired by Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Green Belt Movement activist Wangari Maathai and backed by Prince Albert II of Monaco and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), is increasingly attracting the support of partners around the world, including FAO.

UNEP stated that to make up for the loss of trees in the past decade, 130 million hectares, an area as large as Peru, would have to be reforested, amounting to planting some 14 billion trees every year for ten consecutive years. In that context the Billion Tree Campaign may be only a drop in the bucket, but it is intended as a symbolic yet practical expression of the determination to make a difference in developing and developed countries alike.

The campaign identifies four key areas for planting – degraded natural forests and wilderness areas; farms and rural landscapes; sustainably managed plantations; and urban environments – but even a single tree in a back garden is a start.

UNEP welcomes pledges of any magnitude, from a single tree to 10 million trees. Pledges can be entered on the campaign's Web site, where advice on tree planting is also available: www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign

United Nations begins drafting new international agreement on forests

Government experts, delegates, and representatives of intergovernmental organizations and civil society began drafting a new international agreement for the management of the world's forests at a United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Expert Meeting held in New York from 11 to 15 December 2006.

The creation of a new agreement could be an important step towards unblocking international forest policy efforts after years of deadlocked discussions. Countries agreed, at the sixth session of UNFF in February 2006, to adopt a voluntary instrument that would deliver an overarching and comprehensive framework for sustainable forest management and focus global attention on the importance of forests in the broader development agenda.

The agreement will touch on such issues as international trade and illegal harvesting of forest products, domestic forest law enforcement and governance. The main area of contention at the drafting table in December was the issue of financing sustainable forest management.

Although the agreement will not be legally binding, UNFF hopes that it will help harmonize efforts to monitor the state of the world's forests and ensure that forest resources are managed sustainably. It will recognize that States have sovereignty over their forest resources, while highlighting the importance of voluntary national measures, policies, actions and partnerships.

New Director General at IUCN

Julia Marton-Lefèvre, a global expert and leader in development and conservation, has been appointed Director General of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) beginning 1 January 2007. She replaces Achim Steiner, who has taken up leadership of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Marton-Lefèvre has been the Rector of the University of Peace in Costa Rica, mandated by the United Nations, which provides education, training and research on issues related to peace and conflict. Previously she was Executive Director of Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) International, a programme established by the Rockefeller Foundation. She has also held the posts of Executive Director of the International Council for Science (ICSU). She has been Vice Chair of the World Resources Institute, a member of the board of directors of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and a founding member of the China Council for Environment and Development.

The new Director General has stated that she is dedicated to "demonstrate the importance of conservation to a fairer and greener planet, as a continuation of my life-long dedication to the inter-related issues of conservation, environment, development, and peace and security".

Desertification and international policy

A joint international conference "Desertification and the International Policy Imperative", held from 17 to 19 December 2006 in Algiers, Algeria, focused on policies needed for successful dryland management. Organized within the framework of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD), this conference gathered over 250 representatives from governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The conference built on outcomes from other IYDD events and addressed:

- improving the policy focus on desertification;
- mobilization of resources and capacity;
- new initiatives to mainstream desertification issues into national and international policy processes;
- improved knowledge management initiatives;
- improved political viability, design and implementation of national initiatives;
- linkages among desertification, climate change, biodiversity and other global environmental issues.

The conference was organized into six sessions of expert presentations, followed by brief panel discussions. Representatives of Algeria, China and Morocco discussed the challenges faced at the regional and national levels in combating desertification, and the various approaches implemented.

The conference closed with a ceremony in which high-level representatives signed a proposal initiated by Algeria and Arab



ministers requesting that 2010–2020 be named as the decade of deserts and desertification at the next session of the United Nations General Assembly. In addition, six partner research institutes signed a commitment to support an international master's degree programme for drylands at the United Nations University (UNU).

New initiative for sustainable land management in Central Asia

Representatives of five Central Asian countries and more than a dozen development cooperation partners met in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 16 November 2006 to launch the Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM) – a ten-year

programme with envisaged financing of US\$1.4 billion, designed to restore, maintain and enhance the productivity of degraded land and improve the livelihoods of local communities.

With the instrumental role of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as lead agency and financing from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) among others, CACILM will aim to reduce land degradation through integrated, sustainable land management in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – where the livelihoods of nearly 20 million people living in rural areas are threatened by overgrazing, soil erosion, salt damage to irrigated land and desertification. CACILM is firmly rooted in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD), to which all the Central Asian countries are parties.

For more information, see: adb.org/Projects/CACILM