Role of forests in climate management

Enhancing the role of the forest sector in national and international climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes was the subject of the conference Role of Forests in Climate Management: Research – Innovations – Investments – Capacity Building, held in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation from 4 to 7 October 2008. With 22 percent of the world's forests and more than 70 percent of boreal forests, including half of the terrestrial carbon in the northern hemisphere, the Russian Federation was a particularly fitting setting for discussions on the role of temperate and boreal forest management in the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

This was the third time in 2008 that the international community convened to focus on the vital role of the forest sector in the global response to climate change. The conference complemented two previous international conferences: the conference on Adaptation of Forests and Forest Management to Changing Climate with Emphasis on Forest Health: A Review of Science, Policies and Practices (Umea, Sweden, August 2008), covered in detail in this issue of *Unasylva*; and The Roles of Boreal Forests in a Global Context (Harbin, China, September 2008), which emphasized the role of boreal forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The Saint Petersburg conference was co-organized by the Federal Forestry Agency of the Russian Federation, the World Bank and FAO. Over 150 representatives from 30 countries participated in plenary, poster and panel sessions dedicated to research, innovations and technologies, human capacity building and investments.

Conclusions reached included the need for:

- awareness and strengthening of the role of boreal forest management at the national and international levels in the context of future climate agreements;
- quantitative assessments, forecasts and related research, particularly on the role of forests in regional carbon cycles;
- innovation in financial mechanisms and investment partnerships, such as green investment schemes;
- removal of existing barriers for developing and implementing joint implementation projects in the forest sector under the Kyoto Protocol.

Climate change meetings in Poland

The fourteenth Conference of the Parties (COP-14) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) marked the halfway point to the December 2009 deadline for agreeing on a framework for action after expiration of the Kyoto Protocol, as set in the Bali Action Plan in 2007.

COP-14 and the fourth Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP 4) were the central meetings of United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Poznań, Poland from 1 to 12 December 2008. Four subsidiary bodies convened in support of these two main bodies, including the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA). A key event was a ministerial round-table. The events drew over 9 250 participants, including more than 800 accredited members of the media.

The main focus in Poznań was on long-term cooperation after 2012. Important decisions addressed the Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol, technology transfer, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), means available to industrialized countries to achieve their emission reduction commitments (including those in the forest sector), capacity building, national communications and methodological issues.

Progress was also made on reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries (REDD), which was

Forest Day 2

In parallel with COP-14, the second Forest Day was held at the University of Adam Mickiewicz, in Poznań, Poland, on 6 December 2008. The focus was on the incorporation of forests into climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies at both the global and national levels.

Forest Day 2 was co-hosted by the Government of Poland, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). Following the positive response to the first Forest Day held during the Climate Change Conference held in December 2007 in Bali, Indonesia, Forest Day 2 brought together nearly 900 participants to study cross-cutting issues including adaptation of forests to climate change; addressing forest degradation through sustainable forest management; capacity building for reducing emissions from REDD; and options for integrating REDD into the global climate regime.

The event also included a poster exhibition and nearly 40 side events with themes including REDD for rural development; indigenous and local community perspectives on forests and climate change; the business case for REDD mechanisms for biodiversity conservation and human well-being; REDD and peatland conservation and restoration; and improving global forest monitoring using accurate satellite imagery.

A summary of Forest Day 2, including points of consensus as well as points of disagreement, was delivered to the Executive Secretary of UNFCCC and made available to negotiators at COP-14. The summary highlighted the need to:

- include forests in climate mitigation and adaptation mechanisms and strategies;
- ensure full inclusion and participation of civil society in international, regional, national and local decision-making processes;
- recognize and respect the rights of women, poor people and indigenous peoples.

addressed both in SBSTA plenary and in numerous contact groups and informal consultations. SBSTA recommendations included a request to the Chair to organize an expert meeting to focus on methodological issues relating to reference emission levels for deforestation and degradation; and methodological guidance to promote readiness of developing countries and further mobilization of resources in relation to REDD, including effective participation of indigenous people and local communities.

Towards a coordinated forest-sector response to climate change

Recognizing the important contribution that forests can make to mitigating climate change, the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) have drawn up a strategic framework to guide the forest sector's response. The document, launched at the December 2008 climate change meetings in Poznań, Poland, is a voluntary action plan for the global forest sector at large. It supports the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, particularly the Bali Action Plan, as well as the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). The framework lays the groundwork for a coordinated forest-sector response to climate change, notably through the widespread adoption of sustainable forest management and its integration into broader development strategies.

CPF is a voluntary alliance of 14 international organizations with substantial programmes on forests. Its objectives are to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political support for these goals. CPF is chaired by FAO; its other members include the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and the World Bank.

With their broad experience in the promotion of sustainable forest management, forest conservation, poverty alleviation and forest governance, CPF members can facilitate comprehensive approaches to the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation. CPF itself is a mechanism through which members can coordinate their climate-related actions. Bringing together their collective experience in the field of forestry, CPF members will assist countries in preparing for the post-2012 climate regime.

The document highlights six main messages:

- Sustainable forest management provides an effective framework for forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation measures should proceed concurrently.
- Intersectoral collaboration, economic incentives and provision of alternative livelihood opportunities are essential for reducing deforestation and forest degradation.
- Capacity building and governance reforms are urgently required.
- Accurate forest monitoring and assessment help informed decision-making but require greater coordination at all levels.
- CPF members are committed to a collaborative and comprehensive approach to forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation.

An executive summary and the full text of the CPF Strategic Framework for Climate Change are available at: www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-climatechange

IUCN sets its environment action agenda

Biodiversity underpins the well-being of human societies and their economies. The 2008 World Conservation Congress cautioned that the cost of biodiversity loss is greater than that of the world's current financial problems. The congress, held every four years to plan the work of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), was held in Barcelona, Spain from 5 to 14 October 2008 and had more than 8 000 participants.

IUCN is the world's oldest conservation organization, uniting under its umbrella more than 1 000 member organizations and some 10 000 volunteer scientists in more than 150 countries. During the Barcelona meeting, the Members' Assembly elected a new president and council and voted on IUCN's programme of work for 2009 to 2012. The new president is Ashok Khosla, Chairman of Development Alternatives, a social enterprise based in Delhi, India, devoted to promoting commercially viable, environmentally friendly technologies for rural communities in developing countries.

Biofuels were a major focus as members called on governments to develop guidelines and standards for the evaluation of biofuel projects and to regulate and manage the production and use of biofuels to limit negative impacts on people and nature.

The congress endorsed reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) to mitigate climate change, as long as it remains just and equitable. A "cast your vote live" workshop was held in which participants were asked several questions relating to REDD. Respondents acknowledged that one REDD recipe does not fit all situations and that different approaches are needed in different contexts.

The rights of vulnerable and indigenous communities also received much attention. The congress initiated an ethical

framework to guide conservation activities, applying poverty reduction, rights-based approaches and "do no harm" principles. Members called on governments to take into account human rights implications in all conservation-related activities.

The following are some of the high-profile commitments made at the congress.

- The MacArthur Foundation pledged to invest US$50 million in climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- The Mohammad Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund will invest €25 million for worldwide biodiversity.
- Russia pledged to protect an additional 80 million hectares.
- Paraguay pledged to achieve zero net deforestation by 2020.
- A group of donors launched the second phase of the Water and Nature Initiative to improve river basin management.

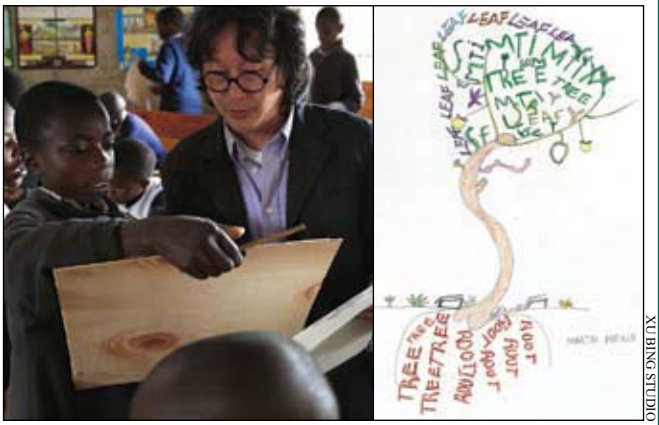
The Indonesian ministries of forestry, environment, interior and public works, ten provincial governors and the global conservation organization WWF announced a commitment to protect the remaining forests and critical ecosystems of the Indonesian island of Sumatra. These forests shelter some of the world's rarest species and provide livelihoods for millions of people. The island has lost 48 percent of its natural forest cover since 1985. More than 13 percent of Sumatra's remaining forests are peat forests, sitting on the deepest peat soils in the world. These soils degrade when cleared and drained, emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

For more information on the Congress, see: www.iucn.org/congress_08

A Chinese artist and Kenyan children auction artwork to plant trees

A project created by a Chinese contemporary artist is bringing together children, art and the Internet to plant trees in Kenya.

The award-winning art of Xu Bing focuses on the relation between art and the written word. In the Forest Project, the artist leads workshops in Mount Kenya National Park for children from local primary schools. Students combine calligraphy and art



XU BING STUDIO

to make drawings of trees using forms of writing from a variety of cultures and historical periods, including ancient Chinese pictographs, Egyptian hieroglyphs, Cuneiform script, Arabic, English and more.

The children's work is then displayed for auction on the Project's Web site. Currently, all proceeds from the sale of student artwork go to the Bill Woodley Mount Kenya Trust, a Kenya-based organization dedicated to preserving the Mount Kenya ecosystem. Xu Bing conceived the Forest Project during a residency at Mount Kenya National Park in 2005.

The income and price disparities between more developed nations and Kenya form the basis for the success of the project. For the cost of a one-way ride on a bus in a developed country, a piece of art created by a student in Kenya can lead to the planting of ten seedlings. The project thus creates a steady flow of funds earmarked for the planting of new trees from developed countries to Kenya.

In addition, selected artwork by the Kenyan students and a large-scale landscape drawing created by Xu Bing are being shown in the exhibit "Human/Nature: Artists Respond to a Changing Planet" at museums in San Diego and Berkeley, California, United States through June 2009.

For more information see: www.forestproject.net