

2. Introduction

The land area of Asia and the Pacific region occupies about 19% of the world. In addition, forests and other wooded land together cover about one third of Asia and the Pacific region. Excluding the Russian Federation, the forest area in 2005 was estimated at 734 million hectares, accounting for about 19% of global forest area. The region as a whole experienced a net increase in forest area of about 633,000 ha annually during 2000-2005 due largely to an increase of more than 4 million ha per year in China.

However, most other countries experienced a net loss. In particular, Southeast Asia experienced the largest decline in forest areas, with an annual net loss of forests of more than 2.8 million ha per year. The greatest forest loss occurred in Indonesia, almost 1.9 million ha per year, followed by Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, PNG and DPR Korea.

During the first 5 years of the 21st century, several countries lost forests at rates exceeding 1.5% per year (Indonesia, Cambodia, Philippines, DPR Korea, Pakistan, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka), which are among the highest rates of loss in the world. The net loss of forest area actually accelerated in the Southeast Asia region.

We can think about the possible strategies to reduce deforestation and degradation in developing countries as follows.

- Strengthening forest policies
- Providing adequate financial resources
- Supporting institutional and technical capacity-building
- Strengthening the information and databases on forest and tree resources etc.

What is common to all these strategies? It may be the need for better and regular information both for developing strategies, planning, implementation and monitoring. Therefore, National Forest Inventory (NFI) is one of the ways to satisfy this information need.

The importance of NFI has gained widespread attention in the international forest community. In December 2007, UNFCCC COP-13 in Bali confirmed their commitment to address the global climate challenge through the *Bali Action Plan* and the *Bali Road Map* for an agreement to be completed at UNFCCC COP-15. One of the important outcomes from Copenhagen COP 15 last year is the decision on methodological outcomes for REDD+. Parties have to use most recent IPCC guidance and guidelines for estimating forest-related GHG emissions. All countries in a position to do so are encouraged to support and strengthen the capacities of developing countries in collecting, accessing and interpreting data and in using the IPCC guidelines.

In response to the COP-13 decision, requests from countries, and encouragement from donors, FAO, UNDP and UNEP have developed a collaborative REDD programme in which forest monitoring and assessment are major activities.

Until now, steady progress has been made in strengthening the capability of countries to carry out the NFI, but it has been hindered by a shortage of resources. The estimated cost of carrying out a one-time national forest inventory varies from US\$500,000 to US\$3 million, depending on the country.

The Regional Workshop “*Promoting and Strengthening Multi-purpose National Forest Inventory System in the Asia Pacific Region in Connection with Climate Change*” was planned to review the current situation in deforestation and degradation, and status of NFI policy to mitigate climate change in Asia and the Pacific region, and then discuss the future strategy for the NFI implementation in this region.

This workshop was held from 23 to 25 February 2010 in Seoul, hosted by the Korea Forest Service (KFS) and Korea Forest Research Institute (KFRI), Republic of Korea and was organized by FAO in collaboration with related international organizations (UNFCCC, IUFRO, ITTO, IPCC), and funded by the FAO Project GCP/GLO/194/MUL (baby 3), kindly supported by the Government of Korea.

The main objectives of the workshop were: a) to create consensus around NFI as the main tool for providing the basic information for national policy-making system and for reporting to the international processes including on carbon emissions from deforestation and degradation and; b) to propose a common strategy for supporting the earliest implementation of NFI systems in the partner countries with emphasis on the mobilization of financial resources for this program. The three main parties of the strategy on NFI in the Asia Pacific region were the participating countries, represented donors and FAO.

The event targeted, in particular, the directors responsible for NFI and REDD activities in the Asia-Pacific Region, experts on Climate Change, REDD and NFI, as well as the major international organisations and donor representatives. Thirteen Asia-Pacific countries were represented at the workshop: China, India, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Thailand and Vietnam. The international donor community was represented by JICA (Japan) and KOICA (Republic of Korea), and international organizations were represented by ITTO.

Also, key note speakers were participated, including the Director of French National Forest Inventory and a representative of the US Forest Service.