



WORLD OF FORESTRY

Forest issues at the Johannesburg summit

The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August to 4 September 2002) recognizes sustainable forest management as essential to achieving sustainable development. Although forests were not a main focus of the summit, the Plan of Implementation acknowledges their critical role in eradicating poverty, conserving biological diversity, improving food security and increasing access to safe drinking-water and to affordable energy. It calls for action:

- to support the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), with the assistance of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF);
- to accelerate implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF);
- to improve domestic forest law enforcement and efforts to combat illegal international trade in forest products;
- to promote sustainable timber harvesting;
- to address the needs of the poorest regions, which suffer the highest rates of deforestation;
- to support capacity-building for sustainable forest management;
- to support indigenous and community-based forest management systems;
- to implement the Expanded Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Agreements reached at WSSD in other sectors such as water, agriculture, energy and biological diversity will also affect forests, particularly with regard to calls for integrated land management.

A number of international partnerships for sustainable management of forests were launched at WSSD. The Governments of South Africa and the United States, along with Conservation International, the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF), the Wildlife Conservation Society and many others, announced the establishment of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership to promote economic development, alleviate poverty, improve governance and enhance conservation of natural resources in one of the world's largest blocks of intact and interconnected tropical forest. These goals will be pursued through a network of national parks and protected areas, well-managed forestry concessions and assistance to communities that depend on forest and wildlife resources in 11 key landscapes in six Central African countries: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.

The Government of Japan and its partners, including several other governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), launched the Asia Forest

Partnership to promote sustainable forest management in the region. The collaborative arrangement will provide a framework for conducting research, exchanging information and experiences, and identifying and implementing new bilateral and multilateral programmes to address issues related to good governance and law enforcement, capacity building, illegal logging, forest fires and degraded lands.

The Amazon Region Protected Areas Programme was presented by the Government of Brazil, the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank and WWF. It aims to expand and consolidate the protected areas system in the Amazon region of Brazil. Over a ten-year period, the project is expected to create 18 million hectares of new protected areas; consolidate 7 million hectares of existing ones; establish and operate an endowment fund; and set up a system for monitoring and evaluating biological diversity.

At a side event on forest law enforcement, governance and trade, presented by the European Commission (EC), it was pointed out that developed and developing countries have a shared responsibility to address illegal logging and related trade. Moreover, partnerships among all stakeholders, including civil society, governments, industry and NGOs, will be necessary to confront these problems. The EC confirmed its commitment to combat illegal logging and trade through a plan to propose EU legislation that would only allow import of legally sourced timber. Other participants called for regional cooperation on law enforcement, while the need for countries to adopt domestic measures to address corruption was also stressed.

Culmination of the International Year of Mountains – Bishkek Global Mountain Summit

Throughout 2002, a wide array of local, national and global events have taken place in celebration of the International Year of Mountains (IYM). The Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, the culminating global event of the IYM, proved to be the largest-ever gathering of governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and individuals concerned with mountain issues, with over 600 people from 60 countries in attendance. Participants met in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan from 29 October to 1 November 2002 to agree on concrete actions to ensure the sustainable development and management of mountain regions in the twenty-first century. The summit was hosted by the Government of Kyrgyzstan, the country that first brought to the United Nations the proposal to dedicate a year to mountains.

Covering 26 percent of the Earth's land surface and hosting 12 percent of its people, mountain areas provide essential resources for both mountain and lowland people, including freshwater, food, forests, biodiversity reserves and minerals. The IYM, for which



FAO is the lead agency, is dedicated to protecting fragile mountain ecosystems and improving the well-being of mountain people.

The major achievement of the Summit was the unanimous adoption of the Bishkek Mountain Platform. Designed to provide guidance to governments and others involved with mountain issues, the ultimate goal is to improve the livelihoods of mountain people, protect mountain ecosystems and use mountain resources more wisely.

The platform supports the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions, launched by FAO, together with the United Nations Environment Programme and the Government of Switzerland, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa in September 2002. Thirty countries, 15 intergovernmental organizations and 14 major groups have already signed on to the partnership.

At Bishkek, the governments of Italy and Switzerland committed support to enable FAO's IYM Coordination Unit to continue its work on sustainable mountain development in 2003. These contributions will also facilitate FAO's work in support of the International Partnership.

Other highlights of the Bishkek summit include:

- the signing of the Central Asian Mountain Charter by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, aimed at promoting sustainable mountain development in the region;
- an announcement that Norway would help clean up dangerous nuclear waste dumps in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan in order to prevent a potentially devastating environmental disaster in one of the most densely populated areas of Central Asia.

Committee to review implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification meets at FAO

Combating desertification is essential to ensuring the long-term productivity of inhabited drylands. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), which came into force in 1996, is the only legally binding international instrument to address the issue of desertification and recurring droughts. The convention aims to promote effective action through innovative local programmes and supportive international partnerships. Currently, there are 185 Parties to the Convention.

Over 400 government representatives attended the first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), held at FAO headquarters in Rome from 11 to 22 November 2002. The Committee was established to review the implementation of the convention by considering experiences gained at the national, regional and international levels; to facilitate the exchange of information; and to propose concrete recommendations on further steps in implementation.

The committee's recommendations for national-level action by delegates, the convention secretariat and other stakeholders covered the following areas:

- participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental and community-based organizations;
- legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements;
- linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions;
- resource mobilization and coordination;
- rehabilitation of degraded land;
- drought and desertification monitoring and assessment;
- access to, and ways and means to promote, appropriate technology, knowledge and expertise;
- efficiency and effectiveness of measures in reaching natural resource users;
- synthesis of best practices, experiences and lessons learned and ways and means to promote experience sharing and information exchange among parties, institutions and organizations;
- emerging and challenging issues deriving from implementation;
- recommendations on financing CCD implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions.

Conclusions and recommendations adopted at this conference will be considered during the sixth Conference of the Parties, to be held in September 2003 in Havana, Cuba.

More information on CRIC is available on the CCD Web site: www.unccd.int