

Addressing substantive forest management issues at UNFF-3

The third session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), held from 26 May to 6 June 2003 in Geneva, Switzerland, focused particularly on three thematic areas – economic aspects of forests (outcomes highlighted in *Unasylva* 212); forest health and productivity; and maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs.

UNFF-3 discussed means of implementing the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF) proposals for action relating to these thematic areas. Means considered included finance, transfer of environmentally sound technologies and capacity building for sustainable forest management.

The session adopted six resolutions on:

- enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination;
- forest health and productivity;
- economic aspects of forests;
- maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs;
- the UNFF trust fund;
- strengthening the secretariat.

Continuing the debate that began at UNFF-2, delegates considered and finalized the terms of reference for three ad hoc expert groups on: monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR); finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies; and the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests. A decision on the format for voluntary reporting to UNFF was also approved.

A multistakeholder dialogue gave representatives of the scientific and technological community, women, indigenous people, business and industry, farmers and small forest landowners, children and youth and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) an opportunity to question delegates about such issues as national forest programmes, the work of the member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF); sustainable livelihoods; positive examples of cross-sectoral policy development; land tenure; non-timber values; and capacity building.

The CPF was recognized for its work in enhancing collaboration and coordination and was invited to continue its joint initiatives on the Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management, streamlining forest-related reporting and harmonizing definitions.

The outcomes of the following intersessional initiatives were presented:

- Lessons Learned in Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting on Implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action;
- The Role of Planted Forests in Sustainable Forest Management;

- Regional Initiative on the Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Mangrove Ecosystems in Latin America and the Greater Caribbean.

A number of country-led initiatives were announced in support of UNFF, to be organized before UNFF-4. These include:

- Indonesia and Switzerland: decentralization, federal systems in forestry and national forest programmes;
- the Congo and other partners: transfer of environmentally sound technologies and capacity building for sustainable forest management;
- Sweden, the African Forestry Research Network (AFORNET) and FAO: lessons learned on sustainable forest management in Africa;
- Ecuador and other partners: traditional forest-related knowledge.

The fourth session of UNFF will be held in Geneva from 3 to 14 May 2004. Substantive items on the agenda include traditional forest-related knowledge; forest-related scientific knowledge; social and cultural aspects of forests; monitoring, assessment and reporting; concepts, terminology and definitions; and criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management.

Bonn conference on rural livelihoods, forests, and biodiversity

Hundreds of millions of rural people depend on forests for goods that they can use themselves or sell for cash income. Examples are timber, fuelwood, charcoal, rattan, game, fruit, medicinal herbs and many other products. Forests are often particularly important to the poor, providing them with a “safety net” – a source of emergency sustenance during times of hardship, crop failure, floods, economic crisis, war or conflict. Clearing forests, either for agriculture or timber harvesting, may provide some economic benefits, but deforestation and forest degradation frequently undermine the ability of rural people to make a living and to subsist during hard times. At the same time, forest loss threatens biodiversity and the environmental services that forests provide.

The International Conference on Rural Livelihoods, Forests, and Biodiversity was held to survey the current state of knowledge on the role of forests in sustaining and improving rural livelihoods, to examine relevant national and international policy, and to define an overall research strategy on rural livelihoods, forests and biodiversity. The event, held in Bonn, Germany from 19 to 23 May 2003, was organized by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Capacity Building International (InWent), Germany’s Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

The opening event was attended by 330 people from 40 countries. The technical sessions, held on days two through five, addressed four fundamental questions:

- How can the “safety net” functions of forests be preserved so that rural people do not fall deeper into poverty?
- How can forest resources be used as a means to lift rural people out of poverty?
- How can forest-based poverty alleviation strategies be made compatible with the preservation of biodiversity and other ecological functions of natural forests?
- How can the owners and managers of forests be encouraged to accommodate and protect the various social and ecological roles of forests?

The technical sessions, attended by 200 people (socio-economic researchers, foresters, specialists in the life sciences, non-governmental organization and community activists and policy-makers, among others) featured 42 papers and 30 posters covering seven conference topics: safety nets; non-wood forest products and small-scale logging; agroforestry and plantations; livelihoods and biodiversity; certification; international dimensions; and community forestry.

During the closing session, David Kaimowitz, Director General of CIFOR, made the following observations about the conference themes and what the conference did and did not achieve:

- Forested regions have intrinsic importance because they tend to be places where issues of poverty, poor governance, environmental services and biodiversity converge.
- Specialists in livelihood improvement do not easily grasp the concerns of forest and biodiversity specialists, and vice versa. Nonetheless it is important to build bridges between these and other stakeholder groups.
- Conference participants provided numerous examples and anecdotes, but few arguments and statistics that would convince government ministers. The problem is partly a lack of data, partly a lack of clear thinking and partly a lack of experience in influencing decision-makers.
- The world is changing rapidly, but much research does not reflect this.
- Rapid changes in forest tenure, markets, civil society and governance are creating major new opportunities (as well as threats), and research must look ahead to help find solutions.

The conference results will serve as an input to the 2004 meeting of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-4). Three publications will be produced based on the conference: two special issues of scientific journals, and the proceedings. The conference papers and posters are available on the CIFOR Web site (www.cifor.cgiar.org).

William D. Sunderlin, CIFOR

Fifth Central American Forestry Congress

Since its inception in 1993, the Central American Forestry Congress has been held every two or three years to review the forestry situation in the region and to provide foresters and professionals in related disciplines with a forum for discussion and analysis of important issues affecting forestry in the region.

The fifth Central American Forestry Congress, with the theme “Forestry and its contribution to sustainable human development”, was held in Panama City, Panama from 21 to 23 May 2003. More than 300 people attended the congress representing 17 countries, the private sector, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society. The meeting was organized by the Society of Foresters of Panama and the Central American Association of Forestry Professionals (ACAPROF) in collaboration with the National Authority for the Environment of Panama (ANAM). The following are some of the highlights of the discussions.

Considerable interest was shown in reforestation as an alternative for supply of future energy needs, and in small-scale rural forest management and development.

There was much talk about and interest in payment for the use of environmental services. Experiences in Costa Rica prove that collecting such payments can be a good way to finance conservation and management of forest resources.

The participants recognized that a considerable amount of work on genetic improvement of trees for reforestation programmes is being done in the region; however, they cautioned that this work requires care and expertise which may be missing in some Central American institutions.

The congress noted that certification is a good marketing tool which can help to achieve sustainable forest management, but that it has not yet fulfilled the economic expectations of forest owners in the region.

The congress also recognized the importance of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and urged continued support of the Lepaterique Process.

The congress concluded that one of the main reasons for slow progress towards sustainable forest management in Central America is the weak institutional capacity of the region’s forest services. The congress expressed its appreciation for the support from the international community to sectoral capacity building and requested that this support be maintained. The congress also recognized that the forestry sector in the region is highly fragmented, and invited ACAPROF to play a pragmatic role in support of sustainable forest management and sustainable development in the region.



UNDP considers forests in recommendations for achieving global environmental sustainability

Ensuring environmental sustainability is the seventh of the United Nations' eight Millennium Development Goals – a set of time-bound and quantifiable targets aimed at reducing poverty, improving health and promoting peace, human rights and environmental sustainability. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its recently released *Human Development Report 2003*, introduces a new plan of action, the Millennium Development Compact, to achieve these goals.

In its consideration of ways to attain environmental sustainability, UNDP recognizes the role of forests in several ways. The links among high infant mortality, high population growth and tropical deforestation are pointed out. The report notes the role of forests in reducing rural poverty, along with the role of poverty reduction in helping to protect the environment. It notes that scarce natural resources and ecosystem stresses often force poor communities to make unwanted trade-offs; communities may convert forest to farmland to obtain more food, but in this way they lose critical timber resources, biodiversity and environmental services such as freshwater protection, flood regulation and drought prevention. The weak property and land-use rights in many countries are recognized as a common cause of deforestation and other environmental problems. The discussion highlights the problem of large-scale subsidies to forest industries, particularly in the developed world, which are seen to accelerate forest loss in some countries.

One of the Compact's main recommendations is the adoption of widespread policy reforms in developing countries, together with improved trade access and greater aid commitments by wealthy nations. The following policy priorities are outlined, all relevant to the forest sector:

- strengthening institutions and governance;
- making environmental sustainability part of all sector policies;
- improving markets and removing environmentally damaging subsidies;
- bolstering international mechanisms for environmental management;
- investing in science and technology for the environment;
- increasing efforts to conserve critical ecosystems.

The report also stresses that environmental management cannot be treated separately from other development concerns. Therefore achieving Goal 7 is interlinked with achieving the other goals, which include halving extreme poverty, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and achieving universal primary education.

The *Human Development Report 2003* is accessible online (www.undp.org/hdr2003).

Commonwealth Forestry Association announces publication awards for young scientists

The Commonwealth Forestry Association has established the *International Forestry Review* Young Scientist Publication Awards, designed to help promote the careers of young forest scientists and managers through publication of their work.

Up to four awards will be given yearly and the selected articles will be published in the *International Forestry Review*. The winners will be offered a free membership in the Commonwealth Forestry Association (which includes a subscription to the *International Forestry Review*) for three years; a copy of the *Commonwealth Forestry Association Handbook*; the association's publication *The world's forests – Rio+8: policy, practice and progress towards sustainable forest management* (2001); and a CD-ROM of back issues of the *International Forestry Review* (due for publication in August 2003).

The eligibility criteria are as follows:

- the author should be under 30 years of age at the time of submission;
- the author should not have previously published any articles in peer-reviewed international technical journals (and should list any articles published in non-reviewed journals);
- the submission should be from one author.

Entries should be submitted in English.

All entries should meet the Commonwealth Forestry Association objectives: "To promote the well-being of the world's forests and all who benefit from them". In addition, the entries will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- quality of science: sound methods, inclusive discussion of results, sound conclusions, identification of relevance to forest policy, management or research;
- quality of presentation: contents matching title, logical presentation, good illustrations where relevant, clear objectives, conclusions related to objectives;
- originality: not a mere recycling of existing information;
- wide interest: wider applicability or value for discussion, even if dealing with a restricted area or topic;
- overall impression: at the discretion of the peer reviewer.

For more information visit the Commonwealth Forestry Association Web site (www.cfa-international.org) or contact the editor of the *International Forestry Review* (alan.pottinger@cfa-international.org).