

Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management: strengthening implementation

Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management serve as a reference for monitoring and assessing progress towards sustainable forest management and are important as a policy tool. To further progress in their development and implementation, an Expert Consultation on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management was organized by the Forest Management Bureau of the Philippines, FAO and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) from 2 to 4 March 2004 in Cebu City, the Philippines. The participants included 45 technical and policy experts from 27 countries and seven international organizations involved in the ongoing processes on criteria and indicators. The meeting addressed the following themes:

- communication and information management for enhancing the implementation of criteria and indicators;
- concepts, terms and definitions;
- strengthening criteria and indicators processes for better implementation.

The experts drew up 42 observations and 48 recommendations for national and international action. To single out a few, they recommended:

- that countries adopt the seven common thematic areas as criteria of sustainable forest management, i.e. extent of forest resources, biological diversity, forest health and vitality, productive functions of forest resources, protective functions of forest resources, socio-economic functions, and legal, policy and institutional framework;
- that the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and its partners develop a framework (interactive and searchable) for sharing information on criteria and indicators;
- that FAO, ITTO and other international and national organizations support the establishment of an international technical advisory group to address issues of common interest to criteria and indicators processes, including those of a technical and policy nature.

The report was presented to the fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests in May 2004.

Fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

The fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-4), held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 3 to 14 May 2004, covered a diverse set of issues. Over 600 delegates representing governments, intergovernmental organizations and major groups were in attendance.

UNFF-4 delegates adopted five resolutions on the following subjects:

- social and cultural aspects of forests – focusing on country efforts and donor support to strengthen countries' capacity to address social and cultural aspects of forests in their national policies and strategies for sustainable forest management; to improve stakeholder participation in decision-making and forest management, possibly through decentralization; and to integrate sustainable forest management into their national poverty eradication strategies;
- forest-related scientific knowledge – calling for support to enhancement of research capacity in developing countries, support for research networks and partnerships, and increased participation of relevant stakeholders and local communities to promote research based on the needs of its users;
- forest-related monitoring, assessment and reporting and criteria and indicators – calling for continued efforts to streamline forest-related reporting and to harmonize forest-related definitions; assistance to countries in capacity building for collection, management and use of forest-related information; and further development and implementation of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management; and acknowledging seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management drawn from existing criteria and indicators processes as a reference framework for sustainable forest management;
- finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies – encouraging member States, CPF members and other relevant bodies and processes to take action on the recommendations of UNFF's Ad Hoc Expert Group on Finance and Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies and to continue work on this issue in UNFF;
- review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests – requesting the UNFF Secretariat to prepare a synthesis report based on information provided by CPF members and other relevant organizations and processes for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at UNFF-5, and to prepare for that session a global overview of progress towards sustainable forest management.

Delegates to UNFF-4 spent two half-day sessions considering country experiences and lessons learned in sustainable forest management in African countries and in small island developing States (SIDS). The session dedicated to Africa examined the role of forests in rural development and poverty alleviation, means to strengthen partnerships in the region, decentralization and participatory processes, the need for capacity building and market access, and the strengthening of African participation in the UNFF process. In the session on SIDS, delegates

recommended developing partnerships with and among SIDS; mobilizing international support to SIDS initiatives on sustainable forest management; improving research on forests in SIDS; and promoting cooperation to identify key regional priorities and initiatives for sustainable forest management.

A multistakeholder dialogue was also convened which focused on four theme areas: social and cultural aspects of forests, traditional forest-related knowledge, capacity building, and partnerships.

UNFF-5 will be held in New York in May 2005.

Forests and forest ecosystems: promoting synergy in the implementation of UNCED conventions

Three international environmental conventions launched at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 have an influence on sustainable forest management: the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). To contribute to more effective implementation of the Rio conventions in the forest sector and to develop synergy among them, a workshop was held from 5 to 7 April 2004 in Viterbo, Italy.

The workshop was organized by the secretariats of UNCCD and CBD, in cooperation with the secretariat of UNFCCC. Approximately 150 participants representing 39 Parties to the three conventions, five United Nations organizations, five intergovernmental organizations and ten non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended.

The workshop had two themes. Under the theme "Potential for synergies through forest landscape management and soil conservation", working groups addressed synergies in the following areas:

- preventing and mitigating threats to forests and forest ecosystems;
- forest landscape restoration;
- sustainable forest management;
- enhancing the enabling environment.

Working groups under the theme "Ecosystem services and poverty reduction" addressed:

- sustainable livelihoods and forest resources;
- access and benefit-sharing of forests and genetic resources;
- applying appropriate technology;
- forest-related knowledge.

For each of these topics, the working groups discussed, *inter*

alia, the main elements on which effective synergy can be built and translated into concrete actions at the local level; the global impact of these actions; indicators for evaluating forest-related projects in terms of their synergetic potential; and mechanisms to facilitate implementation of policy options concerning forests and forest ecosystems at the local and international levels.

Delegates noted that additional resources are needed to make optimum use of synergies between the three Rio conventions, which would probably reduce the overall costs of implementation. As potential sources of financing for synergistic programmes, they identified: national development funding, markets for environmental services, including carbon funds, public-private partnerships, overseas development assistance, and funding from the private sector and philanthropic foundations.

Case studies from a number of countries (China, Cuba, Senegal) clearly demonstrated that joint field activities are already taking place, although there is still a need for awareness raising at the national level and especially at the local level. Some countries called for national fora to enhance understanding and coordination of synergistic programmes (especially of focal points in the country), including a focus on financing opportunities.

Conserving wildlife in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Congo and Gabon

The Central African World Heritage Forest Initiative, a project aimed at promoting the building of protected area management regimes in key forest protected areas in the Congo Basin, was launched in March 2004. This partnership project is funded by the United Nations Foundation and involves the Governments of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Congo and Gabon, as well as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), FAO and four international non-governmental organizations – Conservation International, the Jane Goodall Institute, the Wildlife Conservation Society and World Wildlife Fund-US.

The main objectives of the project are to upgrade protection and law enforcement activities in three transboundary clusters of protected areas; to work with local communities in and around these sites to facilitate sustainable use of wildlife resources; and to prepare sites for UNESCO World Heritage site nomination. The initial phase of the project will last four years, but all partners are committed to extending the project for at least a decade.