

## Keep Northeast Asia green: the Northeast Asian Forest Forum

Global attention to temperate and boreal forests in the Northeast Asian region – China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea – has been greatly raised in recent years because of disastrous climatic events such as forest fires, floods and sand storms. Problems of deteriorating forests and spreading desertification pose threats that can have a significant influence on the adjacent countries. For example, the expansion of desertification in western China and Mongolia has increased the frequency of dust and sand storms on the Korean Peninsula, resulting in closure of primary schools, the grounding of aircraft and respiratory problems among children and elderly people. Damage or mismanagement of one country's forest resources can likewise have great effects on other countries' development and environmental quality. Thus the stability and improvement of the forest ecosystem in Northeast Asia, which is critical for future generations, cannot be ensured by the actions of one country alone.

The Northeast Asian Forest Forum (NEAFF), a non-governmental organization for the restoration of degraded ecosystems and the conservation of forests in the region, was founded in 1998. Based in Seoul, Republic of Korea, it comprises a group of representatives from industries, environmental organizations, foresters' groups, academic communities and individuals in China, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea. National chapters have been established in Mongolia and China.

The objectives of NEAFF are to restore degraded forest lands, to combat desertification and deforestation, and to promote environmentally sound and sustainable management of forest ecosystems in the region by strengthening networking and exchanging information among the countries concerned. To accomplish these objectives, NEAFF is pursuing the following programmes:

- reforestation and afforestation to rehabilitate degraded land and combat desertification;
- research on forest conservation and rehabilitation of degraded forest lands;

*Tree planting by NEAFF in Mongolia*



NEAFF

- organization and support of international meetings on forest conservation and international conventions related to deforestation and desertification;
- review of current forest policy issues and recommendation on future forest policy formulation;
- conservation and protection of precious and endangered forests;
- development of environmental education for forest conservation and facilitation of scientific programmes at the national and regional levels;
- collaboration with international agencies and governments concerning policy-related issues for action at the international, regional and national levels.

Field projects focus on tree planting and combating desertification, and benefit from the experience accumulated by the Republic of Korea during its 40 years of national reforestation campaigns. NEAFF field activities have been strengthened by financial and technical support from national and local governments in the Republic of Korea (the Korea Forest Service and the Seoul Metropolitan City Government), private companies (Yuhan-Kimberly, Ltd. which initiated the "Keep Korea Green" campaign 20 years ago), a public fund (the Green Fund) and citizens. Project proposals are developed through detailed discussions with host-country officers, civil society representatives and experts.

A major short-term project, carried out jointly with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), aims to rehabilitate approximately 1.6 million hectares of forests in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that have been devastated by the expansion of agricultural land for increased food production and by overharvesting for fuelwood and for export timber to obtain foreign exchange. The project is assisting the recovery of degraded forest nurseries as well as the establishment of new ones.

Another important short-term project is combating desertification in China (on about

400 ha in inner-Mongolia and 30 ha in Shandong province) and Mongolia (on 400 ha in Selenge and 20 ha in the Gobi Desert). The project is supporting tree planting and sand fixation, exchange of personnel and information among the participating countries, and the organization of international workshops and seminars with the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), FAO and other international organizations.

Medium- and long-term projects include the development and joint implementation of policy alternatives for sustainable forest management; monitoring of desertification and deforestation; and programmes to develop sustainable forest management models for temperate and boreal forests.

For more information, please visit the NEAFF Web site ([www.neaff.org](http://www.neaff.org)) or contact:

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