



FAO FORESTRY

FAO responds to the tsunami

Immediately after South Asia was struck by a deadly tsunami on 26 December 2004, FAO moved into action to alleviate the suffering and restore the livelihoods of the affected populations. One aspect of the Organization's efforts has been assessment of the damage caused to mangroves and coastal forests. The extent of the damage is still not clear and it may take some time before the final impacts are known. In addition to the immediate damage to vegetation, the deposit of silt from the tsunami may clog the pores of aerial roots of mangroves, suffocating them. In the long term, changes in topography, soil salinity and upstream freshwater inflow may also adversely affect the mangroves and other coastal forests.

Mangroves and coastal forests contribute directly to rural livelihoods by providing wood and non-wood forest products and indirectly by providing spawning grounds and nutrient for fish and shellfish. Damage caused by the tsunami will exert further pressure on existing coastal forests, including mangroves, due to a high demand for fuelwood and wood to rebuild houses, fishing boats and infrastructure. Rehabilitation of severely affected coastal forests could thus assist the recovery process from the tsunami.

FAO is also gathering information on how and to what extent mangroves helped mitigate the effects of the tsunami.

FAO, however, cautions against large-scale planting of mangroves that may disturb other ecosystems such as turtle nesting grounds and sea-grass beds. FAO recommends that rehabilitation be undertaken within a framework of integrated coastal area management that takes into account appropriate development of fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture, roads and other infrastructure, industry, tourism and residential living areas. FAO has established an interdepartmental task force and is in direct contact with government officials in the affected countries, experts from other agencies, development banks and civil society organizations to ensure a coordinated approach to the relief and reconstruction efforts.

FAO is working with several other organizations to gather information on the impacts of the tsunami on mangroves and other coastal forests and to provide advice to countries in their rehabilitation efforts. FAO's assistance to affected countries will be an agenda item at the Ministerial Meeting on Forests and at the seventeenth session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) to be held in March 2005 in Rome.

FAO Deputy Director-General addresses climate change convention

FAO's Deputy Director-General, David Harcharik, addressing the high-level segment of the tenth Conference of the Parties (COP-10) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change (UNFCCC), registered FAO's deep concern about the anticipated impacts of climate change on global development and food security, and FAO's commitment to work with member countries to help develop and implement effective mitigation and adaptation strategies.

COP-10 was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 6 to 17 December 2004. The high-level segment, on 15 to 17 December, brought together ministers and heads of delegation to discuss "The Convention after ten years: accomplishments and future challenges", "Impacts of climate change, adaptation measures and sustainable development", "Technology and climate change" and "Mitigation of climate change: policies and their impacts". The high-level segment was opened by Argentinean President Carlos Kirchner. This was the first time that FAO was represented at the high-level segment.

The FAO Deputy Director-General noted that by compounding the effects of droughts, floods, storms and land degradation, climate change will particularly hurt the more than 840 million people worldwide who suffer from hunger, of which about 800 million live in developing countries. He noted that the world community must drastically increase its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel use and from deforestation. Moreover, agriculture, forestry and fisheries must adapt to climate change that is already taking place.

In regard to forests, FAO, with its international partners, will help countries adapt their forestry practices. It will continue to provide global data and information, for example on anticipated climate change impacts and vulnerability. It will include biomass and carbon in future global forest resources assessments. Since climate change negotiations will not stop with ratification of the Kyoto Protocol or the first commitment period, FAO will continue to collaborate with the UNFCCC Secretariat, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other partners in assessing climate change, developing good practice guidelines and harmonizing forest and climate change related definitions.

African network on invasive species

At a task force meeting organized by the Forest Research Institute of Malawi (FRIM), the Forestry Department of Malawi and FAO from 15 to 17 December 2004, the dormant Tree Pest Management Network for Central, Eastern and Southern Africa was reborn as the Forest Invasive Species Network for Africa (FISNA). The task force meeting was held in Zomba, Malawi and attended by participants from seven countries – Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia – as well as the African Forest Research Network (AFORNET), CAB International and FAO.



The task force meeting was organized as the result of serious concerns expressed by a team of African forest protection scientists at a side meeting during the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) Working Party Meeting on Tropical Forest Protection in Kumasi, Ghana in July 2004. The scientists were particularly worried about the increasing number and rate of spread of invasive species across Africa. They also noted the absence of a suitable platform to enable scientists who are dealing with these pest problems to share information, experiences and benefits from activities in and beyond Africa.

The existing network, founded in 1995, was never fully operational because it lacked the means to communicate and share information effectively. Electronic communications now make it possible to connect countries in a timely and cost-effective way. The primary act in revitalizing the network was the creation on the spot of a Web site dedicated to forest health issues in Africa, hosted by FAO, with input from African experts. The site will provide information on forest health and phytosanitary issues, pest data, listings of events and links to relevant organizations and institutions, including the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

FISNA's mandate is to coordinate the collation and dissemination of information relating to forest invasive species in sub-Saharan Africa for sustainable forest management and conservation of biodiversity. For the purposes of the network, invasive species are defined as biotic agents, not native to a specific forest ecosystem, whose introduction does, or is likely to cause harm to the forest ecosystem. By unanimous agreement, the geographic coverage will include all countries in sub-Saharan Africa that wish to participate, without distinction for language or forest type. Initially the language of communication will be English.

FRIM was elected as Secretariat with support from the Interim Executive Committee comprising task force members from Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. It is anticipated that within one year the committee will be superseded by selected country coordinators representing each of the four regions, i.e. Western, Southern, Eastern and Central Africa.

The network and its objectives will be presented at COFO 2005 during the FAO-led side event on invasive species and their impact on forest health.

Partnering for change in the world's mountains

The Mountain Partnership is gathering momentum as a force for real and lasting change in the world's mountains. Since its launch at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg, September 2002), commitment to the

Mountain Partnership has increased rapidly at the country, regional and international levels and concrete action is now under way to improve the lives of mountain people and protect mountain environments around the world. As of December 2004, 43 countries, 14 intergovernmental organizations and 55 major groups have become members of the Mountain Partnership. FAO hosts the secretariat that supports it.

The former Inca capital of Cusco in the Peruvian Andes was a dramatic backdrop for the second Global Meeting of the Mountain Partnership, held from 28 to 29 October 2004. The event attracted 126 participants from national governments, intergovernmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and major groups from as far afield as Kenya, Switzerland, the Philippines and Nepal.

The two-day conference gave partnership members the opportunity to exchange experiences, to review progress made in the year since the first global meeting of members (held in Merano, Italy in October 2003) and to chart the future course of the Mountain Partnership and its dynamic core – the Partnership Initiatives.

Each Partnership Initiative is an umbrella for joint projects, programmes and areas for action, predicated on working together on shared needs, priorities and concerns. The 12 existing Partnership Initiatives have either a thematic focus (education, gender, policy and law, research, sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountains, sustainable livelihoods, watershed management) or a regional focus (Andes, Central Asia, East Africa, Europe, Hindu Kush Himalaya). Working group sessions on each initiative gave members the opportunity to generate programme and project ideas, map out work plans and assign roles and responsibilities in their joint activities. In addition, a new Partnership Initiative with a focus on Central America and the Caribbean was launched at the request of members.

The Cusco Conference adopted three key documents which will provide a solid and dynamic framework in which members can move ahead on collaborative activities: *Organization, membership and governance of the Mountain Partnership*; the *Cusco Framework for Action* and the *Declaration of the Andes*.

These documents and further information about the Mountain Partnership are available online: www.mountainpartnership.org

FAO project leads to partnership between Mongolian and American parks

Khan Khentii Protected Area in Mongolia, the reputed birthplace of Ghengis Khan, and Glacier National Park in Montana, United States, have become sister parks as an offshoot of an FAO forestry project.

Under the FAO project "Strengthening Capacity for Disaster



Reduction and Forest Fire Prevention in Mongolia”, three persons from Mongolia’s Ministry of Nature and Environment visited Glacier National Park on a study tour in September 2002. The participants visited the sites of wildfires and prescribed fires in the park and received an overview of the park’s fire management programme, including activities in prevention, suppression, logistics, training, firefighter safety, risk rating, communication systems and fire weather forecasting.

The relationship between Mongolia and the United States begun under the FAO project led to an unforeseen catalytic effect: the signing of a sister park agreement in October 2004. The sister park agreement pledges that the two parks will work to their common benefit, without implying any change to the official designations or sovereignty of either park. The arrangement raises opportunities for future cooperative projects and information exchange in areas such as sustainable park management, fire management, law enforcement, tourism, culture and education.

Although located on opposite sides of the world, the two parks are at the same latitude and share remarkably similar climate and topography, providing a unique setting for future cooperation.

Chilli pepper used to deter elephants from crops in Ghana

Kakum National Park in Ghana is home to some 250 to 300 elephants. They are recognized as a globally endangered species and are a conservation target, but they have also been a source of problems for nearby farmers, raiding crops and thus threatening household livelihoods and food security. About 40 farming communities (600 households) live within a 5 km radius of the park.

Crop raiding is especially severe just before harvesting, and

crops can be devastated in one night. The loss of crops makes farmers hostile both to the elephants and to protecting the national park, and sometimes pushes them to killing the animals.

A partnership project between FAO and Conservation International has transferred a simple and inexpensive technology to prevent elephants from raiding the farms adjacent to the park. Under the project, a consultant from Zimbabwe’s Elephant Pepper Development Trust introduced the technique of impregnating cloths with hot chilli pepper and hanging them on clothes-lines around the farms. The elephants dislike the smell of the chilli and keep away from the farms.

Project consultants have trained local people in ten communities in the use of this simple but effective method. Although the elephants may eventually get wise and circumvent the barrier, this small success has won the project time to investigate other methods for protecting the crops and the elephants.

FAO briefs UN Sanctions Committee on renewal of Liberian timber sanctions

Following a briefing of the United Nations Sanctions Committee by a delegation representing FAO and other agencies, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution renewing sanctions on the export of timber from Liberia for another year (Resolution 1579) on 21 December 2004.

As part of the delegation, an FAO expert was invited to brief the Sanctions Committee about the current status of the forestry sector in Liberia. The expert presented the results of two assessment missions to Liberia which FAO had undertaken within the framework of the Liberia Forestry Initiative (LFI), which is a multi-donor partnership to support the reform and reconstruction of the Liberian forestry sector. LFI, which includes agencies from the United States Government, non-governmental organizations, the World Bank and FAO, has prepared a plan of activities for the forthcoming year that should assist the transitional Liberian government in meeting the concerns expressed by the Sanctions Committee. The sanctions are not seen as a long-term solution for Liberia.

In its resolution, the Security Council noted with concern that the National Transitional Government of Liberia (which has been in place since October 2003) has made only limited progress towards establishing full authority and control over the timber-producing areas and towards ensuring that government revenues from the Liberian timber industry are not used to fuel conflict.