



FAO FORESTRY

High-level panel emphasizes forests' contribution to MDGs

A high-level panel of six forestry experts invited to advise FAO on its programmes and priorities in forestry focused its guidance on how FAO can support efforts to meet the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly the goals of ensuring environmental sustainability and of reducing extreme poverty and hunger. In drawing attention to these contributions, they emphasized the linkages between sustainable forest management and sustainable development, as recognized at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002.

The panel, which met on 10 and 11 January 2005, identified several ways in which FAO can assist countries' efforts to achieve the MDGs. It recommended that FAO assist countries to carry out analyses of the links between forests and poverty in their national context, to increase the visibility of the forest sector in their poverty reduction strategy papers and other sustainable development plans, and to highlight poverty reduction and food security adequately in their national forest programmes. The panel recognized the key role that FAO can play in raising awareness of the MDGs and their links with forests and in enhancing regional and subregional cooperation in this area.

The expert panel further recommended that in promoting achievement of the MDGs, FAO should continue to support countries' efforts to enhance participatory processes in the forest sector as well as to encourage corporate social responsibility in the private forestry sector.

The panel's advice came at a time when international attention and national efforts are focused on efforts to achieve these

goals. FAO is currently carrying out a major review of its activities aimed at ensuring maximum support to achieving the MDGs. The Ministerial Meeting on Forests and the seventeenth session of the FAO Committee on Forestry, both held in Rome in March, raised additional international awareness of the role of forests in sustainable development and forests' potential contribution to the realization of the MDGs. Heads of State and other high-level government officials will gather at the United Nations in New York in September 2005 in a high-level segment of the General Assembly to review progress in implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration and the MDGs.

The panel also recommended that one way to highlight the importance of forests would be to arrange for an International Year of Forests to be observed throughout the UN system. The year 2009 was suggested, to coincide with the next World Forestry Congress.

Infosylva – forestry news from FAO and the world

FAO has recently launched a new free electronic information service offering subscribers forestry news and information on a periodic basis. *Infosylva* will include news from FAO as well as links to selected forestry-related news clippings from newspapers and journals published around the world and available online in English, French or Spanish. The aim of this e-bulletin is to keep readers informed of forestry events reported by the media around the world and to encourage discussion.

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Continuing the process of harmonizing forest-related definitions

Establishing a common terminology for talking about forests is critical for international forest policy processes. Mutually agreed forest definitions will facilitate reporting, reduce costs related to international agreements, ease communication and negotiation among stakeholders and assist in relations with the media and the public at large.

With this in mind, FAO convened the third Expert Meeting on Forest-Related Definitions in Rome from 17 to 19 January 2005. More than 60 forestry experts from 30 countries and many international organizations participated in the meeting, which was jointly organized with the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) under the umbrella of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

Continuing a process begun with two previous experts meetings held in 2002, the consultation aimed to take stock of developments in forest-related reporting processes since the second meeting and

to harmonize, to the extent possible, definitions related to forest resources and human interventions to manage forests for various purposes. The key terms discussed were natural forests, planted forests, forest plantations, trees outside forests and managed and unmanaged forests. The meeting was conducted on the premise that harmonization is not standardization, i.e. the purpose is not necessarily to achieve common definitions but to improve consistency, compatibility and comparability.

The meeting reached general, although not unanimous, agreement on the working definitions of natural forest, planted forest and forest plantation, which is a subset of planted forest. It also reached a general agreement on the working definition of forest management. The experts recognized, however, that the concept of managed and unmanaged forest adopted in climate change negotiations is broader than the one traditionally used in the forestry community.

In addition to discussing the above core terms, several groups addressed multilingual aspects of forest-related definitions; they identified typical problems and stressed the need for continued work. The group that discussed the term "trees outside forests" proposed further efforts for harmonization, including the involvement of experts from agriculture and other relevant sectors.