



WORLD OF FORESTRY



FAO/CIF000706R, FAO/DTTI

Defining forests' role in climate change mitigation

On 16 February 2005, the Kyoto Protocol entered into force. With firm emission reduction commitments for most industrial countries in place, much has now been achieved. However, many details still remain to be elaborated regarding how forests' contributions to climate change mitigation will be quantified.

Two months earlier, from 6 to 17 December 2004, more than 6 000 participants assembled in Buenos Aires, Argentina for the tenth Conference of the Parties (COP-10) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). At COP-10, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) dealt with the following issues of particular relevance for forests:

- **Small-scale afforestation and reforestation projects under the Clean Development Mechanism:** SBSTA agreed on cost-saving, simplified modalities and reduced fees for these forestry and agroforestry projects geared at low-income people and communities. Small-scale projects, possibly bundled among many owners, can deliver credits for up to 8 000 tonnes of fixed CO₂ annually. Depending on tree crown cover, this translates into an area of roughly 100 to 4 000 ha. The decision specifically invited organizations such as FAO to facilitate such projects.
- **Good Practice Guidance for land use and forestry:** SBSTA accepted the 2003 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Good Practice Guidance, which provides instructions for greenhouse gas, biomass and carbon measurement and reporting in land use and forestry.
- **Impacts of, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change:** SBSTA agreed on a five-year work programme on data and methods, vulnerability assessments, adaptation planning and integration into sustainable development.
- **Reporting under UNFCCC:** The meeting failed to agree on funding for and frequency of National Communications

by developing countries, covering mitigation and adaptation measures as well as greenhouse gas inventories, including for forests. In contrast, Annex I countries have reported net emissions from land use and forestry annually. These have increased since 1990 by more than 10 percent in one-third of the countries, but have decreased by at least that amount in the others.

SBSTA postponed decisions on harvested wood products to November 2005 and decisions on biome-specific forest definitions and natural and human-induced carbon sequestration to an unspecified future session.

In 2005, Parties to the Kyoto Protocol must start deliberating about future emission reduction commitments for industrialized countries and must show demonstrable progress in achieving their commitments. At present, only informal deliberations are under way on the future role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation. These efforts will gain momentum at COP-11, which will also be the first meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. COP-11 will be held from 7 to 18 November 2005 at a location to be decided in May 2005.

Supporting sustainable development in Small Island Developing States

The sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has come into the international spotlight in the past decade. Following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the international community convened in Barbados in May 1994 to produce a Programme of Action for SIDS, outlining 14 agreed priority areas related to environmental and development planning.

A decade later, more than 2 000 participants representing 114 countries gathered in Mauritius to review progress in achieving the Barbados Programme of Action. Held from 10 to 14 January



2005, the Mauritius International Meeting on Small Island Developing States addressed key issues related to the sustainable development of SIDS: environmental vulnerabilities, challenges in trade and economic development, the role of culture in sustainable development, building resilience, and resource mobilization and capacity building.

The meeting adopted the Mauritius Declaration and the Mauritius Strategy, affirming the world's commitment to supporting the sustainable development of SIDS and building an action plan based on the Barbados priorities.

As a group SIDS possess extensive forests, which have an important economic, social and environmental role in the lives of their populations. With regard to forests, the meeting recommended *inter alia*:

- safeguarding the rights of forest resource owners and legitimate or licensed users through increased awareness, partnerships, stakeholder participation and adherence to national forest policies and legislation;
- encouraging the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and other international programmes to propose actions for sustainable forest management, including rotational logging practices and replanting initiatives.

FAO will hold a Special Ministerial Event on Food Security and Sustainable Development of SIDS in Rome on 21 November 2005 with the participation of member SIDS and concerned intergovernmental organizations. The event will identify implementation needs and put forward concrete action plans to fulfil the commitments outlined in the Mauritius Strategy.

Agreements signed for Congo Basin forest conservation

Important steps have recently been taken to safeguard the Congo Basin forests, the world's second largest rain forest. National leaders from across Central Africa met in Brazzaville, the Congo for the Second Heads of State Forest Summit from 4 to 5 February 2005 and, in a historic display of unity, endorsed the first regional conservation treaty for Central Africa.

The Congo Basin forests are home to more than half of Africa's animal species and provide food, shelter and livelihoods to over 20 million people. However, acute deforestation is devastating wildlife and plant resources.

The agreement – signed by Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe – legally recognizes the Central African Forests Commission as the only decision-making body on forests for the Central African region. The treaty will assist transnational management of forest resources, including tackling poaching, illegal bushmeat trade and illegal logging.

In addition, a trilateral agreement was signed by Cameroon,

Gabon and the Congo to protect 14.6 million hectares of forests, which amount to 7.5 percent of the Congo Basin forests.

International commitment to funding these agreements is needed to support the process of sustainable forest management in the region.

Paris conference addresses biodiversity challenges

The world's biodiversity faces growing challenges from increasing exploitation of natural resources as a result of population growth and increased consumption. The conference "Biodiversity: Science and Governance", held in Paris, France from 24 to 28 January 2005, was part of the ongoing global effort to reverse the current rate of biodiversity loss and ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of plant and animal species. More than 1 000 participants representing governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector attended the event which was organized by the French Government and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Plenary discussions focused on four main themes:

- the challenges of biodiversity, science and governance;
- status and trends of the world's biodiversity;
- social and ecological benefits of biodiversity;
- biodiversity and the management of living resources.

Many workshops were held, including one focusing on "Sustainable management of tropical and subtropical biodiversity – islands and forests" which addressed key issues regarding forest biodiversity. Presentations were made on international negotiations and the French vision; the ecological impact of the international demand for tropical timber; the ecosystem approach and sustainable forest management; and the challenge of governance for managing tropical forest biodiversity.

Participants noted that forests hold a major proportion of terrestrial biodiversity and are subject to intergovernmental negotiating processes. The alarming global rate of deforestation was especially highlighted. A number of responses were proposed, including recognizing forest biodiversity outside protected areas; recognizing the role of forests in poverty reduction; integrating the ecosystem approach in forest policies; learning from successes and failures regarding the conservation and sustainable use of forests; and encouraging research to improve forest governance tools at different levels.

The conference produced the Paris Declaration on Biodiversity and a Conference Statement recalling governments' commitments to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, as pledged by the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) in the Strategic Plan adopted in 2002, and supporting the assessment of scientific information and policy options for decision-making. More information is available online: www.recherche.gouv.fr/biodiv2005paris/en



Commonwealth foresters focus on poverty alleviation

The crucial role that forestry plays in contributing to poverty reduction was the theme of the seventeenth Commonwealth Forestry Conference, held from 28 February to 5 March 2005. More than 120 participants from 30 countries convened in Colombo, Sri Lanka to discuss strategies and identify recommendations to strengthen forests' contribution to alleviating poverty. Sessions were structured around four cross-cutting themes: the changing world, governance, forest goods and services, and stakeholders.

At the conclusion of the conference, participants adopted eight concrete resolutions calling for action by Commonwealth governments, summarized as follows:

- to support post-tsunami recovery by restoring coastal forest resources and ensuring reconstruction timber comes from sustainable sources;
- to increase the focus of forestry programmes on poverty reduction;
- to involve all stakeholders in forestry programmes and ensure national forest programmes are linked to national poverty reduction strategies;
- to ensure civil society involvement in monitoring and evaluation of forest resources to encourage transparency;
- to prioritize capacity building for forestry departments and their partners;
- to develop national governance strategies that foster legal, sustainable and socially just forest use;
- to create and expand markets for products and services from sustainably managed forests;
- to give political commitment to these actions to realize the potential of forests to alleviate poverty.