



Rio+20

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development was convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 20–22 June 2012 to discuss sustainability and agree to common actions in seven major areas. The conference, known as Rio+20, reviewed the progress that has been made towards sustainable development in the 20 years since the 1992 Earth Summit, which was also held in Rio de Janeiro. The two main themes of Rio+20 were green economy, and the institutional framework for sustainable development. The seven main areas discussed were jobs, energy, sustainable cities, food security and sustainable agriculture, water, oceans and disaster readiness. Although forests were not a key focus of Rio+20, delegates had an opportunity to reinforce the message that forests and forest products can help address challenges in each of these seven main areas.

In its submission to Rio+20, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), of which FAO is a member and the Chair, stressed the importance of taking a “landscape approach” to

the management of natural resources. Such an approach works across sectors and institutions to ensure that the environmental, economic and social aspects of forests are taken into account in decision-making. The CPF members noted how forests can help countries to alleviate poverty, meet the Millennium Development Goals, develop rural areas, reduce the risks posed by climate change, ensure food security, boost agricultural productivity, improve energy availability and maximize trade. They suggested that countries can benefit if they move to greener economies, and forests can provide bioenergy, ecosystem services, materials for sustainable and energy-efficient buildings and improved livelihoods for people living in remote rural areas. Maximizing the benefits of forests, suggested the CPF members, requires strengthened forest-related institutions; greater capacity for forest management; improved education and institutions; payments for ecosystem services; the decentralization of forest management rights; the adoption of coherent and coordinated policies; and the improvement of value chains.

The outcome document of Rio+20, called *The Future We Want*, was a product of “the heads of State and Government and high level representatives, ... with full participation of civil society”. It contains four paragraphs specifically on forests, stressing that the forest sector has a role to play in a variety of areas, including through the provision of sustainable products and services; reforestation, restoration and afforestation to reverse deforestation; sustainable forest management; the reduction of risks from climate change; and the strengthening of cooperation, capacity building and governance. The paragraphs dedicated to forests also note the importance of the CPF and its role in working with international processes such as the United Nations Forum on Forests to promote international forest policy and with countries to promote sustainable forest management. The document reaffirmed “the necessity to promote, enhance and support more sustainable agriculture, including crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, that improves food security, eradicates hunger, and is economically viable, while conserving land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, and enhancing resilience to climate change and natural disasters” and recognized “the need to maintain natural ecological processes that support food production systems”.

The 68th United Nations General Assembly, to be convened in late 2012, will discuss follow-up actions to Rio+20. FAO and the CPF are involved in these discussions and, in particular, are interested in seeing how forests might be included in future Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that could address topics such as halting forest loss and reversing forest degradation and other issue areas included in *The Future We Want*.

Above: Eduardo Rojas-Briales, Assistant Director-General, FAO Forestry Department, speaks during an event at Rio+20 to highlight the role of forests in fostering local livelihoods.



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Narayan Kaji Shrestha accepts the Wangari Maathai Award at FAO headquarters

Inaugural Wangari Maathai Award winner

Narayan Kaji Shrestha, of Nepal, has won the first-ever CPF Wangari Maathai Award for his outstanding contribution to forests. The award was established this year to honour the life and work of the late Kenyan environmentalist Wangari Maathai, a champion of forest issues worldwide and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Dr Shrestha is recognized as one of main architects of the community forestry movement in Nepal, which he has been encouraging for three decades and which has contributed significantly to restoring forests in the country. He guided early attempts to create a more participatory approach to community decision-making, reaching out to women and low-caste villagers and initiating the country's first user-managed community forestry group.

More than one-quarter of Nepal's forests are now protected and managed by community forest user groups. In addition to influencing legislation, Dr Shrestha provided leadership to the national organization that later became the Federation of Community Forest Users in Nepal, and he continues to guide and mentor many practitioners and leaders involved in participatory resource management.

"Dr Shrestha's work captures the spirit of Wangari Maathai," said FAO Assistant Director-General, Forestry, Eduardo Rojas Briales, a member of the jury that selected the award-winner. "His vision,

courage, commitment, intelligence and praxis is recognized through this award."

Dr Shrestha received the US\$20 000 award at a ceremony at FAO headquarters in Rome during the Twenty-first Session of the Committee on Forestry and the third World Forest Week.

The jury also awarded Kurshida Begum, of Bangladesh, an Honourable Mention prize, including US\$2 000, for her work helping women in her village to form a community patrol group alongside forest department guards to protect the forests and biodiversity of the Tenkaf Wildlife Sanctuary from illegal logging and poaching. Her work has helped women gain an effective voice in their community and provided them with a steady source of income. It has also helped to communicate the importance of forest and natural resource issues to sanctuary visitors.