



## WORLD OF FORESTRY

### UN agencies unite with Norway to combat climate change from deforestation

The forest sector (mostly deforestation and forest degradation) accounts for around 17 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions – the second largest source after the energy sector. By 2100 clearing of tropical forests could release 87 to 130 gigatonnes of carbon to the atmosphere.

The Bali Action Plan, agreed at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali, Indonesia in 2007, gave Parties a mandate to negotiate a post-2012 instrument that would include possible financial incentives for forest-based climate change mitigation actions in developing countries. The Bali meeting also adopted a decision on “Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries”, encouraging parties to explore a range of actions in this field.

On 24 September 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Norwegian Prime Jens Stoltenberg unveiled the new UN Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) Programme, which will provide support to countries as part of an international move to include REDD in post-2012 climate change arrangements. The programme will be jointly carried out by FAO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the spirit of the UN “delivering as one”. The Government of Norway will finance the initial phase in the amount of US\$35 million.

Nine countries have already expressed formal interest in receiving assistance through the UN-REDD Programme. Four of these, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the United Republic of Tanzania, will “quick start” their efforts by developing national strategies, establishing robust systems for monitoring, assessment, reporting and verification

of forest cover and carbon stocks, and building necessary capabilities. The other five countries are Bolivia, Panama, Paraguay, Viet Nam and Zambia.

In subsequent phases, pilot projects will be rolled out to test ways of managing existing forests to maintain their ecosystem services and maximize their carbon stocks while delivering community and livelihood benefits. The programme will also look at how payments could be structured under a climate convention instrument and the various financial and insurance options needed to cover forest losses from events such as fire and pest attack. International standards for measuring, reporting and verifying emissions from deforestation and degradation will also need to be developed.

The UN-REDD initiative is an immediate-action programme intended to demonstrate that early results are possible in some of the major forests of the world. It is aimed at tipping the economic balance in favour of sustainable management of forests so that their formidable economic, environmental and social goods and services can benefit countries, communities and forest users while also contributing to important reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

### CBD meetings focus on forest biological diversity

A review of the programme of work on forest biodiversity was one of the main agenda items at the thirteenth meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), held at FAO headquarters in Rome from 18 to 22 February 2008. The Rome meeting also focused on the implementation of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity, the impacts of climate change on biodiversity (options for mutually supportive actions addressing climate change within the three Rio conventions) and invasive alien species.

FAO and other partners organized numerous side events related to forest biodiversity, covering a range of topics such as meeting the growing demand for forest products and services while conserving biodiversity; assessing and monitoring biodiversity through national forest resources assessments to enable wise decision-making; and status and trends in conservation of forest genetic resources. A poster session addressed the theme “Mainstreaming biodiversity issues into forestry and agriculture”.

SBSTTA drafted a long list of recommendations which were considered at the ninth Conference of the Parties in Bonn, Germany (19 to 30 May 2008). Among those incorporated in Decision IX/5 on forest biodiversity in Bonn were recommendations related to strengthening:

- forest biodiversity monitoring, inventorying and reporting;
- national and regional forest protected area networks and ecological connectivity;
- multidisciplinary scientific research on impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on forest biodiversity and eco-



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system resilience, in particular for vulnerable forest ecosystems such as low-lying forests in coastal areas (including small island States), arid and semi-arid regions and high mountain forests in least developed countries;

- understanding of the potential of forest genetic diversity to address climate change, maintain forest ecosystem resilience and provide new sources of wood and non-wood forest products;
- forest governance for the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity.

The decision on forest biodiversity taken at Bonn urged Parties to “address as a matter of priority major human-induced threats to forest biodiversity, including unregulated and unsustainable use of forest products and resources (including unsustainable hunting and trade of bushmeat, and their impacts on non-target species), climate change, desertification and desert creep, illegal land conversion, habitat fragmentation, environmental degradation, forest fires, and invasive alien species”.

Decision IX/5 also embraced SBSTTA recommendations on ensuring that possible actions for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries provide benefits for forest biodiversity; ensuring that programmes and measures taken for the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity support efforts to eradicate poverty and improve livelihoods; addressing direct and indirect negative impacts that biomass production and consumption for energy might have on forest biodiversity; taking a precautionary approach to genetically modified trees; and building knowledge on forest ecosystem services and tools for securing them, such as payments for ecosystem services.

### **MCPFE secretariat moves to Norway**

Norway has assumed the chair of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE). Following the fifth ministerial conference, held in Warsaw, Poland in November 2007, the secretariat moved from Poland to Norway. Norway will retain the chair until after the next ministerial conference, probably within four to five years.

MCPFE is a policy process for intergovernmental cooperation towards sustainable management of forests in Europe. At ministerial conferences the ministers responsible for forests in Europe take decisions on common aspects of the highest political relevance regarding forests and forestry. The first conference was held in Strasbourg, France in 1990. Subsequent chairs have been Finland, Portugal, Austria and Poland.

The MCPFE Liaison Unit, now located in Oslo, is the coordinating secretariat of MCPFE. It is a service-oriented office to support the cooperation of the ministers responsible for forests in Europe. An Expert Level Meeting was held 7 to 8 May 2008 in Oslo with a focus on the work programme for implementation

of the commitments of the Warsaw Conference. The work programme has the following programme elements:

- Sustainable forest management and climate change;
- Wood mobilization and sound use of wood;
- Multiple forest ecosystem services, including forests and water;
- Regional–global cooperation and partnership;
- Cross-cutting activities.

The expert meeting was attended by 88 delegates representing 31 European countries and the European Commission and 20 observer countries and organizations.

### **IUFRO workshops on science–policy interface**

In many countries, the recent shift in research priorities from biophysical to environmental and social research, with a focus on poverty reduction, livelihoods and climate change issues, has been accompanied by attempts to improve interaction between the science community and relevant policy-makers and stakeholders. However, researchers continue to have difficulty reaching policy-makers effectively, especially in developing countries, because of constraints related to governance structures, timing of information, communication skills and resources for professional staff of science institutions such as science communicators and policy specialists.

For several years, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) Special Programme for Developing Countries (SPDC) has been organizing regular training workshops on the science–policy interface for forest scientists from developing countries. In 2007, for example, three such events entitled “Working effectively at the interface of forest science and forest policy” were held in Malaysia, Ecuador and Kenya. From 31 March to 1 April 2008, such a workshop was held specific to mountain forestry development, in conjunction with the International Conference “Mountain Forests in a Changing World” in Vienna, Austria (see below).

The overall objective of these workshops is to help researchers plan, conduct and organize research activities so that results can more quickly and easily be transformed into usable information for problem-solving and policy-making. To this end, they aim to improve the understanding of policy- and decision-making processes and the roles scientists can play in informing such processes.

The workshops elaborate on best practices for science-policy interactions published by IUFRO in 2005 (see [www.iufro.org/publications/series/occasional-papers](http://www.iufro.org/publications/series/occasional-papers) [No. 17]), exploring their adaptation to various backgrounds and contexts such as international policy processes, national forest programmes and pro-poor policies at the local level.

Owing to keen interest from the forest science community in developing countries, additional workshops will be offered in the future.



### **International conference on mountain forests informs special masters programme**

The effects of climate change, wars, migration and overexploitation of natural resources and changes of land-use patterns are particularly severe in mountain regions. Today the sustainable production of wood in mountain forests needs to be balanced with society's demands for clean drinking-water, biodiversity, tourism and livelihoods. Air pollution and climate change present additional challenges. Increased demand for biomass for energy may increase the potential for land-use conflicts, and the consequences may be severe for people living in mountainous areas, which are home to a disproportionate number of the world's poorest people.

The International Conference "Mountain Forests in a Changing World", held in Vienna, Austria from 2 to 4 April 2008 by the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (Universität für Bodenkultur Wien [BOKU]) explored mountain forest research in the broad context of sustainable management of mountain areas. Main themes included:

- conservation and environmental services;
- production and the role of mountain forests for people's livelihoods;

- mountain forests under pressure – risks and hazards;
- education and capacity building.

For the past five years BOKU has offered a unique International Masters Programme in Mountain Forestry – defined as the sustainable, science-based management of forests and woodlands in mountain areas, taking specific ecological, ethical, technical, social, economical and political conditions of complex mountain systems into consideration.

The conference was intended not only to present the latest advances in mountain forest research, but also to highlight the role of academic education for sustainable resource management and to stimulate new ideas that could be integrated in the university's curricula. The conference was also conceived to stimulate collaborative action on mountain forest research and education in the context of the Mountain Partnership – a voluntary alliance of partners (48 countries, 16 intergovernmental organizations and 89 civil society, non-governmental and private-sector groups) dedicated to improving the lives of mountain people and protecting mountain environments around the world, whose central secretariat is hosted by FAO.

For more information on the masters programme at BOKU, see: [www.boku.ac.at/mf.html](http://www.boku.ac.at/mf.html)