PART III INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE AND INITIATIVES RELATED TO FORESTS

International dialogue and global, regional and national initiatives

An international commitment to work towards sustainable development was made almost a decade ago at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Rio Conference, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992. Preparations are now being made for the Rio +10 Conference, which will be held in 2002. Rio +10 will take stock of the progress made over the past ten years towards meeting the commitments made at UNCED. The review will focus on the implementation of Agenda 21, the plan of action produced by UNCED, and identify measures for its further implementation.

Forests were among the many subjects addressed at UNCED, and the Conference served as a catalyst for the intense discussions and wideranging initiatives on forests that followed. This chapter highlights major initiatives – international and regional, governmental and nongovernmental – to promote sustainable forest management. Although the focus is on developments over the past two years, many of these efforts were initiated at, or were later offshoots of, UNCED.

The countries of the world were much divided on forest issues at UNCED. In order to advance beyond the agreements contained in the "Forest Principles" and Chapter 11 (Combating deforestation) of Agenda 21, intergovernmental discussion and debate continued, first under the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and

The terms for three international conventions were agreed on at UNCED: the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification,² all of which are relevant to, but not solely concerned with, forests. The past few years have brought further progress in their implementation as well as strengthened links with one another, with IPF and IFF, and with longer-standing conventions, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Ramsar Convention.³

While international discussions and agreements on forests have intensified since UNCED, regional cooperation in forest issues also increased and strengthened. Among the existing regional intergovernmental initiatives related to forests, recent developments have occurred in the Congo basin/central Africa, southern Africa, Central America, the Amazon basin, Asia and Europe. Increased cooperation is also occurring at the ecoregional level; initiatives for countries with a low forest cover and for mountain forests are

then under the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). IFF recently completed its work and has put forth a proposal for an international arrangement on forests, including the establishment of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF).

¹ The full name is the Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forest.

 $^{^2{\}rm The}$ full name is the Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.

 $^{^3}$ The full name is the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (also known as the Wetlands Convention).

most notable. Cutting across geographic regions, such initiatives serve to increase intercountry collaboration based on ecological similarities.

In agreeing to the Forest Principles of UNCED's Agenda 21, countries committed themselves to working towards the sustainable management of all types of forests to ensure the continued availability of the goods and environmental and social services that they provide. The need to define what sustainable forest management actually means in practice and to provide tools to measure progress gave rise to the development of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. Model and demonstration forest programmes have been established to illustrate what sustainable forest management looks like in practice as well as the processes that may be employed to work towards it.

Recognition of the fact that sustainable forest management cannot be achieved in the absence of an enabling institutional framework has led to increased international support for national forest programmes. The results of a recent review of national forest programmes are reported in the section, National-level efforts to support sustainable forest management, p. 114.

Integral to the concept of sustainability are social development and equity, which necessitate widespread participation in decision-making so that stakeholders can represent their own interests. NGOs (including those representing the interests of various civil society sectors) have become major recognized voices in international discussions on this topic and are key catalysts for action at the local level.

THE IFF AND UNFF PROCESSES

IFF achieved notable progress in building consensus on international forest policy issues through the intensive deliberations carried out during its term, from July 1997 until April 2000. As a result, the wide gap that existed between North and South at the UNCED Conference in 1992 and at the Rio+5 Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 1997 has narrowed considerably. Although a number of issues

related to forests remain controversial, complex and politically sensitive, countries agree that the main priority for the next few years is the implementation of the proposals for action adopted between 1995 and 2000 by IFF and its predecessor, IPF. (The topics of the proposals for action are listed in Table 13.) Contributing to this enhanced international dialogue has been the active participation of non-governmental and indigenous peoples' organizations, which have taken a leading role in a number of regional and global initiatives and international meetings of experts.

IFF recognized that increased financial resources, the transfer of environmentally sound technology, and capacity building to support national forest programmes were essential elements in the implementation of the IPF and IFF proposals for action. The continued coordination of the forest-related activities of international organizations and instruments was also recognized as important. The informal Interagency Task Force on Forests (ITFF), set up in 1995 as a coordination mechanism for support to IPF by international organizations, was acknowledged as one of the main institutional legacies of the IPF/IFF process.

One of the most controversial issues facing IFF was how to establish an international arrangement and mechanism on forests, including the question of a legally binding instrument on all types of forests. After long and intense deliberations, IFF reached an agreement on the establishment of a new intergovernmental body, which should be built on existing forest-related arrangements. More specifically, IFF's recommendations⁴ were for the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly to:

- (a) "Establish a new intergovernmental body which may be called the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF);
- (b) Invite the executive heads of relevant organizations of the United Nations system

⁴ See the Report of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests on its fourth session (E/CN.17/2000/14).

TABLE 13 Topics of the IPF and IFF proposals for action

Programme element		Description
IPF	IFF	
I.A		Progress through national forest and land use programmes
I.B	II.D.1	Underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation
I.C	II.D.2	Traditional forest-related knowledge
I.D		Fragile ecosystems affected by desertification and drought
I.E		Impact of airborne pollution on forests
I.F		Needs and requirements of countries with low forest cover
II.A	II.A	Financial resources
II.B	II.C	Transfer of environmentally sound technology to promote sustainable forest management
III.A		Assessment of the multiple benefits of all types of forests
	II.D.8	Assessment, monitoring and rehabilitation of forest cover in environmentally critical areas
	II.D.3	Forest conservation and protected areas
III.B	II.D.4	Forest research
III.C	II.D.5	Valuation of forest goods and services
	II.D.6	Economic instruments, tax policies and land tenure
	II.D.7	Future supply and demand for wood and non-wood forest products and services
III.D		Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management
IV	II.B	Trade and environment
V		International organizations and multilateral institutions and instruments, including appropriate legal mechanisms
	II.E	Forest-related work by international and regional organizations and under existing instruments
	III	International arrangements and mechanisms to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests
	I.A	Promotion and facilitation of the implementation of the IPF proposals for action
	I.B	Monitoring of progress in implementing the IPF proposals for action

and heads of other relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments to form a collaborative partnership on forests to support the work of UNFF and to enhance cooperation and coordination among participants;

- (c) Within five years, ... consider with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests ...;
- (d) Take steps to devise approaches towards appropriate financial and technology transfer

support to enable the implementation of sustainable forest management, as recommended under the IPF and IFF processes."

IFF also reached a consensus on the proposed working modalities for UNFF, stating that it "should be open to all states" and "would initially meet annually.... UNFF would have a high-level ministerial segment, for two to three days, as required. The high-level segment could include a one-day policy dialogue with the heads of organizations participating in the collaborative partnership.... UNFF would work on the basis of a multi-year programme of work, drawing on the elements reflected in the Rio Declaration, the Forest Principles, Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the IPF/IFF proposals for action. At its first meeting on Environment and Development, UNFF will adopt its multi-year programme of work and develop a plan of action ... which would address financial provisions."

IFF stated that the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) - the official name for the partnership referred to in (b) above - "could build on a high-level, informal group, such as the Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests [ITFF], which would receive guidance from UNFF; facilitate and promote coordinated and cooperative action, including joint programming and submissions of coordinated proposals to the respective governing bodies; and facilitate donor coordination". It said that a compact secretariat should be established to service UNFF. "constituted in accordance with established rules and procedures of the United Nations and strengthened through staff from secretariats of international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments".

At its eighth session in April-May 2000, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) endorsed IFF's conclusions and proposals for action. CSD invited ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly, as appropriate, to take action on the proposed terms of reference for an international arrangement on forests, as recommended by IFF. It invited the President of

ECOSOC to initiate, before the Council's substantive session in July 2000, informal consultations on where to place UNFF within the UN system. These consultations commenced in early June and continued through the ECOSOC session, but without a conclusion being reached on the location of UNFF. Other unresolved issues regarded membership and voting rights. In its resumed session in October 2000, ECOSOC created an international arrangement on forests, including UNFF, which was established as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC. At the organizational meeting of UNFF, held in February 2001, it was decided, among other things, to base the UNFF Secretariat in New York. The CPF was established in April 2001. UNFF's first substantive session was held in June 2001.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND AGREEMENTS RELATED TO FORESTS

Convention on Biological Diversity The fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-5) to the Conference on Biological Diversity, which was held in Nairobi, Kenya in May 2000, highlighted the need to expand the focus of the Convention's programme of work in forest biological diversity⁵ from research to actionoriented activities. COP-5 called on Parties, governments and organizations to take practical actions to do this within the scope of the existing work programme. Forest biological diversity will be the major thematic focus of the seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-7) in November 2001, for which a substantive report analysing the status, trends and options for action will be prepared. The conclusions will be discussed at COP-6, scheduled for April 2002. The aim will be to propose an action-based, integrated and holistic approach to the conservation and sustainable use of forest biological diversity.

⁵ Adopted at COP-4 in May 1998.

COP-5 stressed a number of other points of relevance to forests. Among others, it encouraged the application of the ecosystem approach and noted the importance of supporting work on taxonomic, ecological and socio-economic issues for the restoration of forest ecosystems and forest resources. COP-5 also made reference to the IPF and IFF proposals for action, in particular those concerning the valuation of forest goods and services, and it stressed the need to harmonize the Convention's work with the IPF and IFF proposals for action on traditional forest-related knowledge. It requested the SBSTTA to make recommendations on the development of a Global Strategy for Plant Conservation for consideration at COP-6. It also requested the SBSTTA to consider the impact of climate change on forest biological diversity in collaboration with the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC), and invited the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to strengthen cooperation with the FCCC.

Each contracting Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity commits itself to developing national strategies, plans and programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, or to adapt for this purpose existing strategies, plans or programmes that reflect the measures set out in the Convention. Forest biological diversity is a major component of some countries' strategies, plans and programmes. At COP-5, Parties were invited to submit thematic reports on the issues to be considered in depth at COP meetings. At COP-6, alien species, forest ecosystems and benefit sharing will be considered.

Convention to Combat Desertification Within the past two years, the Convention

Within the past two years, the Convention to Combat Desertification⁶ has held its second, third and fourth Conferences of the Parties (Dakar, Senegal, December 1998; Recife, Brazil, November 1999; and Bonn, Germany, December 2000).

Arrangements for the secretariat and for the implementation instruments have now been finalized. The Global Mechanism, set up to promote the mobilization and effective use of financial resources devoted to combating desertification, is now fully operational. The COP called for cooperation with other international conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the FCCC.

The Convention to Combat Desertification's major instruments for implementation are national action programmes, complemented by subregional and regional programmes. The strategies for implementation are described in the Convention's four regional annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the northern Mediterranean. Many countries have organized national awareness-raising seminars or embarked on the formulation of national action programmes, and 23 (including 14 in Africa) have submitted their programmes.7 Subregional programmes, however, have been launched for West Africa, southern Africa, the Maghreb countries, El Gran Chaco Americano (Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay) and La Hispaniola (Dominican Republic and Haiti). Regional programmes have been established for Africa and for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Regional cooperation is being further facilitated by the development of thematic programme networks, which focus on technical measures for desertification control and land rehabilitation.

Recent meetings to develop these were held for the African Regional Network on Agroforestry and Soil Conservation (Bamako, Mali, 1999), and the Asian Regional Thematic Network on Agroforestry and Soil Conservation in Arid, Semi-arid and Dry Sub-humid Areas (India, March 2000).

In an effort to promote interregional cooperation, the Convention to Combat Desertification convened a high-profile meeting, the African, Latin American and the Caribbean Forum, in Bamako, Mali in March 2000.

⁶ See footnote 2, p. 103.

⁷ As of end 2000.

The meeting approved a programme of technical training and scientific exchanges among the countries of these regions in all aspects of dryland degradation control (e.g. water management, soil conservation, agroforestry and sand-dune fixation).

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The FCCC, which was adopted in 1992 at UNCED, aims at stabilizing the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere so as to prevent dangerous human-induced changes to the global climate system. Parties to the Convention committed themselves to carrying out national inventories of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sinks. Industrialized countries and countries with economies in transition (FCCC Annex I Parties) committed themselves to working towards voluntary goals in the reduction of emissions. These obligations were intensified and specified in the Kyoto Protocol, which was adopted at COP-3 of the FCCC, held in Kyoto, Japan in December 1997.

The three years since then have been marked by continued discussions and negotiations on details regarding the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, of which the salient points are as follows.

- Thirty-nine developed countries and countries with economies in transition (i.e. FCCC Annex I Parties) committed themselves to reducing their aggregate greenhouse gas emissions to at least 5 percent below 1990 levels over the period 2008 through 2012.
- Quantified emission limitation or reduction commitments (QELRCs) for 2008-2012 were established for each developed and transition country; these countries and their QELRCs are listed in Annex B of the Kyoto Protocol.
- Three "flexibility mechanisms" for the mitigation of climate change through joint activities among countries were agreed on: emissions trading between Annex B countries; Joint Implementation (JI) projects, which entail the transfer of project-based emission reduction units from one Annex I country to

another; and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), by which project-based certified emission reductions achieved in non-Annex I countries are transferred to Annex I countries.

Issues under consideration that relate to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol include the development of a compliance system, methodologies for the estimation of emissions and sinks, and reporting and accounting. At COP-4, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in November 1998, Parties agreed to a two-year work programme (the Buenos Aires Plan of Action) to tackle these and other implementation issues.

Because a number of questions related to the treatment of land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF)8 in the Kyoto Protocol remained to be clarified, in 1998 the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) to the FCCC requested the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to examine the state of scientific and technical understanding of LULUCF issues. IPCC presented the Special Report on Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry at the 12th session of the SBSTA and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, in Bonn, Germany in June 2000. Although this report casts further light on the subject area, Parties still have to negotiate how to deal with forests and forestry aspects in the context of the Kyoto Protocol. Issues to be addressed include:

- what domestic land use, land use change and forestry activities may be included in meeting QELRCs;
- whether forestry activities that affect biotic carbon stocks and fluxes, for example forest conservation and reforestation, are to be included in the CDM;
- definitions, guidelines and standards for accounting for carbon stocks and fluxes;

⁸LULUCF is a term used to denote all human activities that can affect stocks of biotic carbon and thereby cause emissions and/or sinks of biotic carbon.

 monitoring, reporting, verification and certification of carbon stocks and fluxes.

Discussions on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol continued at COP-6 in November 2000.9 The Protocol will not enter into force until it has been ratified by at least 55 Parties to the Convention, including certain Parties in Annex I that, together, accounted for at least 55 percent of the total carbon dioxide emissions for 1990 by all Annex I Parties.

Convention on International Trade in **Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora** Several threatened and endangered tree species have been listed for many years in CITES appendices, which place various levels of control or restrictions on their trade.¹⁰ It was not until attempts were made to list some major commercial tree species in the appendices, however, that controversy arose. Considerable debate was generated by the listing in Appendix III of big-leaf mahogany (Swietenia macrophylla) by Costa Rica (effective 1995) and by Bolivia and Brazil (effective 1998), and by Bolivia's and the United States' subsequent proposals at COP-10 (June 1997) to have the species moved to Appendix II, which would impose stricter trade restrictions.

COP-10 agreed that further discussions were needed, and the issue was addressed at an intersessional meeting, held in June 1998 in Brasilia, Brazil. Scientific information on the degree to which trade was influencing the status of the species was found to be insufficient to warrant a proposal at COP-11 (in Nairobi, Kenya, April 2000) to move *S. macrophylla* to Appendix II. COP-11 did, however, adopt a resolution to establish a mahogany working group, which would review the effectiveness of the Appendix III listing of big-leaf mahogany, and analyse legal and illegal trade issues. The mahogany working group will report its findings at COP-12, scheduled to take place in Santiago, Chile in late 2002. Other proposals related to tree species that were adopted by COP-11 were the uplisting to Appendix I of the monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*) and lignum vitae (*Guaiacum sanctum*).

Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Convention,¹¹ which is concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources, includes in its mandate a range of forested wetland. As of November 1999, 306 of the 1 028 sites on the Convention's List of Wetlands of International Importance were forested wetlands. The Convention has set itself the short-term target of increasing the total number of sites on the list to 2 000 by the year 2005. Parties have agreed to give priority to designating under-represented wetland types, including mangroves and peatlands.

The Ramsar Convention's COP-7, held in May 1999, endorsed a draft global action plan for the wise use and management of peatlands (including forested peat swamps) and urged that work on it be taken forward. A revised version of the plan will be presented to COP-8 in 2002. A Joint Work Plan for 2000-2001 has been developed between the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity, reflecting an increased emphasis on the conservation of biological diversity in wetlands and continuing the collaboration that was formalized between the two conventions in 1996. Forest ecosystems are one of the thematic areas identified for collaboration.

⁹This publication was prepared before COP-6, so the results of the discussions could not be reported here.

¹⁰ CITES Appendix III includes all species that any Party identifies as being subject to regulation within its jurisdiction for the purpose of preventing or restricting exploitation, and as needing the cooperation of other Parties in the control of trade. Appendix II includes: i) all species that, while not threatened with extinction, may become so unless trade in specimens of the species is subject to strict regulation; and ii) other species that must be subject to regulation so that trade in specimens of species referred to in i) above may be brought under effective control. Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction that are, or may be, affected by trade; trade in specimens of these species must be subject to particularly strict regulation in order not to endanger their survival further, and it must only be authorized in exceptional cases.

¹¹ See footnote 3, p. 103.

International Tropical Timber Agreement
The International Tropical Timber Agreement
1994 came into force on 1 January 1997. It
remains in force for four years (up to
31 December 2000), with the possibility of two
three-year extensions, effectively giving it a tenyear life span. A mid-term review of the
International Tropical Timber Organization
(ITTO) and its operations was carried out in
early 2000, and members decided to extend the
Agreement for the first of these three-year
extensions (i.e. to 31 December 2003).

The year 2000 is of special significance to ITTO, since it is the focus year for its Year 2000 Objective, under which all ITTO member countries committed themselves to producing their exports of tropical timber from sustainably managed forests (see The Year 2000 Objective, p. 117). ITTO has played a catalytic role in supporting efforts in sustainable forest management through its criteria and indicators, which broke new ground when they were published in 1992. They have stimulated initiatives by producer countries at the national level as well as at the level of forest management units and have provided a focus for ITTO-funded fieldwork. In its upcoming work, ITTO will put emphasis on updating its Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests; preparing manuals on forest management; promoting increased efficiency in utilization and processing; encouraging further processing; and improving market access.

RECENT INITIATIVES OF REGIONAL GROUPS

Central Africa: Conference on the Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems and the Yaoundé Declaration

Two initiatives are under way to enhance cooperation in forestry among central African nations: the Conference on the Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems (CEFDHAC), a multistakeholder, governmental and non-governmental process; and the Yaoundé

Declaration and its related efforts, which are essentially governmental. These two processes are mutually reinforcing and have the potential to coalesce in the future.

CEFDHAC, also known as the Brazzaville Process, was launched in May 1996 as a forum for consultation, information exchange and the strengthening of subregional cooperation in matters concerning central African forests. The member countries are Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Sao Tomé and Principe. CEFDHAC, which was initially sponsored by the World Conservation Union (IUCN), is open to governments, NGOs, the private sector, research institutions and development agencies. The third CEFDHAC meeting, held in Bujumbura, Burundi from 5 to 7 June 2000, focused on governance and joint management of central African moist forest ecosystems. Also discussed were the Strategic Action Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the Congo Basin, which is being formulated; the need for further work to set in place a timber certification system for the Congo basin - based on the standards, criteria and indicators of ITTO and the African Timber Organization (ATO); and various options for institutionalizing CEFDHAC.

The Yaoundé Declaration was adopted by the Summit of Central African Heads of State on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests, held in March 1999 in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The following countries participated in the summit: Cameroon, Chad, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Among other activities and aims, the Yaoundé Declaration calls for action towards harmonized national policies; participation of the rural population and the private sector in decisions on forests; transboundary protected areas; the fight against poaching and other unsustainable exploitation; financial systems that support sustainable forest management; and international cooperation. An expert meeting was held in September 2000 to

prepare for the first ministerial conference, scheduled for December 2000, to follow up on the Yaoundé Summit.

Southern African Development Community The Southern African Development Community (SADC)¹² provides a framework for cooperation in forestry among its 14 member nations through its Forestry Sector Policy and Development Strategy of 1997. Issues addressed in the Community's Forestry Sector Policy are reflected in the SADC Forestry Programme of Action, which is aimed at developing and implementing regional projects. The six programme components include: forestry training and education; improved knowledge of the forest resource base (e.g. forest resources assessment and monitoring); forestry research; forest resources management (of "indigenous", or natural, forests and plantations); forest industries, markets and marketing; and environmental protection.

Major regional projects that are operational cover the management of indigenous forest ecosystems (through the promotion of local communities' participation); the strengthening of seed centres in many member countries; and support to forestry training.

Current SADC initiatives include:

- the establishment of the Forest Resource Data Bank:
- the development of a Forestry Protocol for SADC;
- support to a regional programme on biological diversity;
- the development of a regional project for the domestication and marketing of indigenous fruit-trees.

Coordination and support for SADC's forest activities are provided by the Forestry Sector Technical Coordination Unit, based in Malawi's Department of Forestry.

The Central American Council for Forests and Protected Areas

The Central American Council for Forests and Protected Areas (CCAB-AP) is an advisory body of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD). It is responsible for the implementation of CCAD policies and strategies on the sustainable use of forest resources and the conservation of biological diversity. CCAB-AP was established in response to the Central American Agreement on Biodiversity, which was signed by the presidents of the region in 1993. It is composed of the heads of forest departments and national parks departments of the seven Central American countries (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Nicaragua).

CCAB-AP's main strategic working areas at present are: research and inventory of species; economically sustainable uses of forests and wildlife; the valorization of environmental services; the strengthening and consolidation of Central America's national systems of protected areas; the economic valuation of forests; the promotion of comanagement within protected forests and wildlife areas; studies on the agricultural frontier and on agroforestry; and the promotion of a regional strategy for the prevention of forest fires.

The Council is currently emphasizing activities related to the economic valuation of environmental benefits of Central America's forest ecosystems, including carbon sequestration. In collaboration with FAO and the Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), it has trained more than 80 professionals from the region in related fields. The conservation of biological diversity is currently an important concern for CCAB-AP; together with its member countries, it is supporting an important project on the Meso-American Biological Corridor, which will strengthen linkages between national biological diversity activities and forest programmes.

Treaty for Amazonian Co-operation The Treaty for Amazonian Co-operation (TCA) fosters collaboration among member countries

 $^{^{\}rm 12}\,\text{See}$ Part IV, p. 134, for more information about SADC.

(Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela) with regard to policies and activities in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and the environment in the Amazon watershed. In 2000, the *pro tempore* Secretary of the Treaty was transferred from Venezuela to Bolivia, where it will stay until the Permanent Secretary begins operations in Brazil. The main forest activities carried out under the Treaty during the past few years have consisted in follow-up to the Tarapoto Process of criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of the region's forests (see discussion of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, p. 116); research and studies analysing the potential of secondary forests within the region; and the formulation of a common strategy for the valuation of the natural tropical forest as a carbon sink.

Recently, the Treaty has implemented activities concerned with the establishment and management of protected areas and wildlife in the Amazon, and it has actively pursued a common position among member countries regarding carbon sequestration within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol. As a result, a meeting was held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia to develop a common regional position. This was then presented at the 21st Session of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission, held in Colombia in September 2000. The Treaty has also promoted coordination meetings to harmonize the position of its member countries within IFE.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)¹³ is making some progress in implementing its Strategic Plan of Action on ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry 1999-2004, which was adopted at the Sixth ASEAN Summit in December 1998. The plan represents the first phase in the implementation of the Association's long-term

strategy for the food, agricultural and forest sector as outlined in the "ASEAN Vision 2020". The plan's objective is to formulate and implement regional cooperation activities to enhance the international competitiveness of ASEAN's food, agricultural and forestry projects and to strengthen the region's food security situation as well as its joint positions in international fora.

The plan outlines five strategic thrusts for forestry: i) sustainable forest management; ii) strengthening ASEAN cooperation and joint approaches in addressing international and regional forestry issues; iii) the promotion of intra- and extra-ASEAN trade in forest products, and private sector participation; iv) increasing productivity and efficient utilization of forest products; and v) capacity building and human resources development. ASEAN countries have been moving ahead in some of these areas and are seeking partnerships with other organizations to carry out the plan, which has taken on added importance as countries try to respond to the fire-related problems of 1997. In addition to activities related to the prevention of forest fires in the ASEAN region, the plan's "sustainable forestry management strategic thrust" defines activities in the following areas: criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management; the development of comprehensive forest information databases; the establishment of a network of demonstration forests; cooperation in the use of geographic information systems; the promotion of low-impact logging and modelling on growth and yield; and natural forest management.

Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe is a high-level political initiative involving about 40 European countries (including the Russian Federation). Its purpose is to address common opportunities and threats related to forests and forestry. The initiative, which was started in 1990, consists of a series of ministerial conferences at which resolutions are adopted, and of mechanisms for follow-up

 $^{^{13}}$ See Part IV, p. 123 for more information on ASEAN and its members' forest sectors.

activities. The third, and most recent, conference was held in 1998 in Lisbon, Portugal. Two resolutions were adopted: the first calls for further development of human resources through increased dialogue with the public; education and training; and the involvement of women in forest-related activities. This resolution also aims at enhancing the socio-economic functions of forests. With the second resolution, pan-European criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management were adopted and pan-European operational-level guidelines for sustainable forest management were endorsed.

The current work of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe focuses on putting into action the commitments made by ministers at the Lisbon Conference, and on the further implementation of commitments made at previous conferences. All activities are integrated into the Ministerial Conference's overall Work Programme, which was approved by the Second Expert-Level Meeting on the Follow-up to the Lisbon Conference, held in October 1999. The Work Programme covers four main areas: dialogue with society (public participation, public relations, education); socio-economic issues (rural development, renewable resources goods and services, training, education and gender issues, countries in transition); biological diversity and conservation (biological and landscape diversity, forests and climate change, management of mountain forests); and planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (national forest programmes, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management). Furthermore, a pan-European Work Programme on the Conservation and Enhancement of Biological and Landscape Diversity in Forest Ecosystems 1997-2000 is carried out in cooperation with the "Environment for Europe" ministerial process. The work of the Conference, including expert meetings, working groups and studies, is coordinated by a Liaison Unit in Vienna, but also through partner organizations and institutions, including UN-ECE and FAO.

EFFORTS AT THE ECOREGIONAL LEVEL

Initiatives by countries with low forest cover Only relatively recently have "low forest cover countries" been considered at the global level and their specific concerns addressed in international fora. There is no single definition of what constitutes a "low forest cover", but it generally relates to a low ratio of forest cover to a country's total land area (or the total for specific parts of a country), and hence to a limited availability of forest environmental services for society as well as to people's limited access to, and use of, forest resources. More than 70 developing countries and a number of developed countries are considered to have a low forest cover.

IFF focused attention on these countries through its programme element entitled Special Needs and Requirements of Developing Countries with Low Forest Cover and Unique Types of Forests. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in collaboration with Egypt and the Sudan, took the lead in supporting this programme element and, with the collaboration of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Norway, it convened a meeting of experts to discuss the topic in Teheran in October 1999. This meeting laid a foundation for developing the concept, characterizing the needs and devising focused responses to challenges posed by inadequate forest cover. The meeting produced the Teheran Declaration and launched the so-called Teheran Process. The Government of Iran is taking the lead in promoting follow-up action. The goals for the coming years are to place the issue of low forest cover on the agenda of international forest policy deliberations; promote and facilitate the preparation and implementation of national forest programmes in all countries with a low forest cover and encourage cooperation among them; and create synergies between low forest cover-related initiatives and other international frameworks, in particular the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the FCCC.

International initiatives related to mountains and mountain forests

Mountain communities and ecosystems have received increasing attention in recent years, largely owing to ongoing efforts to implement Chapter 13 (Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development) of UNCED's Agenda 21. Recent major initiatives related to mountains in general, and to mountain forests in particular, include the following:

- International Year of Mountains. At its 53rd session in November 1998, the UN General Assembly formally recognized the importance of mountain communities and ecosystems by proclaiming 2002 the International Year of Mountains (IYM). The IYM is meant to be a springboard from which to launch or reinforce long-term and sustained mountain development and conservation efforts. FAO, as the designated lead agency for the event, maintains a Web site¹⁴ that provides information on national, regional and international preparations for the observance of the International Year of Mountains.
- Tropical Montane Cloud Forest Initiative. This initiative was launched in February 1999 to support the conservation of tropical montane forests, one of the world's most threatened forest ecosystems. The Tropical Montane Cloud Forest (TMCF) Initiative is a partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), IUCN and the International Hydrological Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It provides information, encourages networking and promotes new commitments and activities by organizations around the world that are working to conserve these forests.
- Forests in Sustainable Mountain Development.
 This state-of-knowledge report identifies major

- gaps in knowledge and corresponding research needs, thus providing a framework for future research initiatives on mountain forests (Price and Butt, 2000). Published in 2000, it culminates two years of work by a task force set up by the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO) and consisting of researchers from around the world.
- Mountains of the World: Mountain Forests and Sustainable Development. This publication, which was presented at the eighth session of CSD in April/May 2000, addresses the causes and consequences of deforestation in mountain regions and presents promising forest protection and sustainable management measures (Centre for Development and Environment, 2000).
- Electronic Conference on Mountain People, Forests and Trees: Strategies for Balancing Management and Outside Interests. This five-week electronic conference, hosted by the Mountain Forum network in 1999, highlighted major issues, documented examples of successful community-based management of mountain forests and trees around the world and made recommendations for action (Mountain Forum/The Mountain Institute, 2000).

NATIONAL-LEVEL EFFORTS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

National forest programmes

Most countries are now carrying out activities related to the formulation and implementation of a national forest programme, a process that started about 15 years ago in many countries. A national forest programme refers to an iterative forest sector planning process. The process involves the development of a comprehensive forest policy framework that is consistent with a country's socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental conditions, is integrated into wider programmes for sustainable land use and involves the participation of stakeholders. The IPF proposals for action emphasized the need for all countries, developed and developing, to elaborate,

¹⁴ www.mountains2002.org.

update and/or revitalize their existing policy and planning processes. IFF recognized national forest programmes to be a viable framework for the implementation of the IPF and IFF proposals.

A survey was carried out by FAO in November 1998 to assess the status of national forest programmes worldwide, appraise their impacts, and draw lessons for improving their development in the future (FAO, 1999c). The survey found that most countries of the world are engaged in national forest programme development to some extent and that the development of national forest programmes has had a positive influence on forest-related policy and planning processes in many countries, but that their implementation has lagged behind in many cases. A more detailed impact evaluation is currently being carried out in all Central and South American countries, the results of which are expected to be available in 2001.

Most countries implementing national forest programmes reported increased recognition of the importance of sustainable forest management and of forests' contributions to the national economy and the environment. A number of countries indicated wider stakeholder participation in forestry planning and decision-making processes in connection with national forest programmes. Furthermore, many countries reported significant revisions to their forestry policies and legislation during the post-UNCED period, a development that is indirectly linked to their national forest programmes.

Although nearly half of the countries had reached the stage of implementing their national forest programmes, the process had stagnated in many, in part owing to financial constraints. This was particularly the case for developing countries that are heavily dependent on external financial assistance. Financing was reported as a critical issue by both Latin American and African countries. Most developing countries reported a decline in external official development assistance for the forestry sector in recent years. Although financial limitations appear to be a common constraining factor, several countries indicated

some success in mobilizing domestic resources to support sustainable forest management through innovative financing mechanisms.

Constraints were by no means only financial. The survey indicated a shortage in many countries of reliable and up-to-date data and information on the forest sector. It also showed that, in most countries, five key areas related to forests required increased effort:

- awareness building among the general public and decision-makers;
- institutional effectiveness and international coordination;
- partnerships and conflict resolution;
- capacity building and the development of human resources, especially related to data collection and analysis for policy development, planning and monitoring;
- financial resources and innovative financing mechanisms.

An initiative that aims to address some of the weaknesses in the implementation of national forest programmes is the UNDP Programme on Forests (PROFOR). PROFOR was established in 1997 in response to the IPF proposals for action, in particular the proposal encouraging countries to develop and implement national forest programmes and to use them as a basis to improve cooperation in the forest sector. PROFOR operates simultaneously in two spheres: at the country level (e.g. in Cameroon, Costa Rica, Guyana, Malawi and Viet Nam) to assist in the development of national strategies for sustainable forest management through national forest programme processes, with a particular focus on developing financing strategies; and at the international level to advance the development of policy and financing instruments to support sustainable forest management.

PROFOR also contributes to establishing the foundations for forest partnership arrangements as a vehicle for coordinating sectoral support. By collating and reviewing existing information and analysing its own field-level and thematic work as well as that of others, PROFOR works to improve understanding worldwide of best practices for

achieving sustainable forest management and poverty alleviation. The audience for the knowledge generated by PROFOR includes the programme's national partners, donor agencies, governments, non-governmental and community-based organizations, researchers and the private sector. The future direction to be taken by PROFOR is currently under discussion – the current situation is reported on the UNDP Web site.¹⁵

Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management

Over the past several years, initiatives undertaken by governments and other institutions, NGOs and the private sector to develop and implement criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management have helped to develop a better and a common understanding of what is meant by sustainable forest management. Criteria and indicators were developed in response to countries' demands for practical ways of assessing and monitoring sustainable forest management at the national level and as benchmarks to measure and report progress towards sustainability.

The criteria define the essential elements or principles against which sustainability is judged, and the indicators help policy-makers and forest managers monitor the effects of forest management over time. Currently, about 150 countries are participating in nine major criteria and indicator processes, although the degree to which the criteria and indicators are used varies considerably from country to country. The initiatives include ITTO's criteria for sustainable management of tropical forests; the Pan-European Process on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (the "Helsinki Process"); the Montreal Process on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests Outside of Europe; the Tarapoto Proposal for Criteria and Indicators

for Sustainability of the Amazon Forest; the Dry-Zone Africa Process; the Near East Process; the Lepaterique Process of Central America; the Regional Initiative for Dry Forests in Asia; and ATO's identification and testing of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management in its member countries.¹⁶ While each process differs somewhat in specific content or structure, they are all conceptually similar in objective and approach. Criteria of all the international, regional and national processes and initiatives centre around seven globally agreed elements of criteria for sustainable forest management. An important implication of this is that there is potential for convergence or mutual recognition, so that over time a common global approach may be used to assess sustainable forest management.

While initially focusing on the assessment of sustainability at the national level, most of these processes have subsequently developed criteria and indicators to be adapted and applied by participating countries at the level of the forest management unit. The national-level indicators contribute mainly to the development and regular updating of policy instruments (laws, policies, regulations), while the indicators at the management unit level help to improve forest management so as to contribute to meeting established national goals. There are now some known cases of the use of criteria and indicators for the forest management unit by industry and forest communities (in both tropical and nontropical countries) to assess and monitor their forest management activities.

Criteria and indicators, as neutral assessment tools, and the certification of forest products, as a market-based instrument to encourage improved forest management, represent different approaches to achieving a similar objective. In certain countries they have been closely linked. For example, some countries have used international criteria and indicators (e.g. those of ITTO, the

¹⁵ www.undp.org/seed/forest.

¹⁶ Additional information is available at: www.fao.org/forestry/FODA/Infonote/en/T-CRIT-e.stm.

Pan-European Process and the Montreal Process) as the basis or starting point for their certification activities.

From the outset, various international institutions, including FAO, UNEP and ITTO, have collaborated with these criteria and indicators processes and initiatives, and have helped promote compatibility among them. IUFRO and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) have also helped countries review the scientific basis for action. The most recent effort was the convening of the Expert Consultation on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management by FAO, in collaboration with UNEP, ITTO, CIFOR and IUFRO, in support of ongoing processes. The meeting, held in Rome in November 2000, provided a forum for discussing progress, future plans and options for further enhancing comparability among processes at the international level.

The Year 2000 Objective

ITTO adopted the Year 2000 Objective in 1991 as the strategy by which all of its member countries would progress towards achieving trade in tropical timber from sustainably managed forests by the year 2000. The baseline for assessing progress was a 1988 ITTO report, which found that fewer than 1 million ha of tropical rain forest were under "sustainable" forest management for timber production.

ITTO has been placing considerable emphasis on assessing the extent to which the objective has been achieved, and on identifying how to assist countries in moving more rapidly towards the goal. A recent review (ITTO, 2000b) showed that member countries have come a long way towards achieving the Year 2000 Objective, although much more needs to be done. The review, undertaken in early 2000, found "a very considerable improvement over the situation recorded in 1988... [and] it is possible to affirm that significant improvement has been made in policy and legislative reform in almost all producer countries in all three continents". Other improvements include the establishment of a permanent forest

estate in many countries, a greater degree of consultation with local communities and an encouraging trend in many countries to produce more value-added exports. Nevertheless, the review found that a lack of trained personnel and finance still impedes progress in the forest sector and that even the best-performing countries have not yet fully achieved the objective.

In a statement issued in May 2000, ITTO affirmed its full commitment to "moving as rapidly as possible towards achieving exports of tropical timber and timber products from sustainably managed sources". It has established a set of priority actions that the Organization and its members must take to continue progressing towards sustainable forest management, and it is reviewing the role of the Year 2000 Objective in encouraging the timely implementation of these actions.

Model and demonstration forests

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in the number of model and demonstration forest initiatives designed to demonstrate sustainable forest management in practice and to promote the implementation of national forest programmes in the field.

The model forest concept was developed in Canada in the early 1990s. The concept, which is applicable to all types of forests, promotes the building of partnerships of stakeholders for the development, testing, implementation and demonstration of innovative, sustainable approaches to the management of forests for a range of benefits in accordance with UNCED's Forest Principles. Model forests are generally relatively large in size (existing sites range from 60 000 to 2.7 million ha) and forestry is the main, but not necessarily the only, land use. Important activities in model forests include defining sustainable forest management in locally relevant terms, developing and monitoring local-level indicators to measure progress towards sustainable forest management, sharing information and experiences through demonstrations and networking, and establishing active feedback

mechanisms between local and national or subnational policy levels. Individual sites are linked through national networks and through the International Model Forest Network.¹⁷

At present, there are 22 model forests, covering a total of more than 12 million ha in seven countries (Canada, Chile, China, Japan, Mexico, the Russian Federation and the United States). Others are being established in a further six countries (Argentina, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam). In addition, Australia, Brazil, India, Malawi, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, the Republic of Korea and Senegal have expressed an interest in developing model forests. Between 1998 and 2000, a series of four International Workshops on Model Forests for Field Level Application of Sustainable Forest Management was organized and hosted by Japan in technical collaboration with FAO and the International Model Forest Network Secretariat.

Two demonstration forest initiatives, with aims similar to those of model forests, have been launched in Latin America: the Demonstration Forest Management Areas in Central America, supported by CATIE; and the Network of Demonstration Watersheds in Mountain Areas of Latin America, established in 2000 by the FAO-supported Latin American Network of Technical Cooperation in Watershed Management. The objectives of this last initiative are to promote participation in integrated natural resource management of mountain watersheds through the demonstration and dissemination of information, and to strengthen institutions involved in such work.

Other initiatives include ITTO's demonstration areas and its Model Forest Management Area in Sarawak, Malaysia; the ITTO/CIFOR/Indonesia model forest in Bulungan, Indonesia; and China's network of eight experimental and demonstration areas covering the country's main ecozones. The Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission's ad hoc Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management

¹⁷ For details, refer to www.idrc.ca/imfn/index.html.

is currently drawing up a list of forests under sustainable forest management in the region that could potentially serve as demonstration sites.

OTHER INITIATIVES

World Bank forest policy review
Between March 1998 and December 2000, the
World Bank reviewed its 1991 Forest Policy
through its Forest Policy Implementation Review
and Strategy (FPIRS). Not only may the review
lead to significant new directions in World Bank
funding in the forest sector, but it could affect the
Bank's activities in other sectors that have a major
impact on forests.

The World Bank's Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network managed the review while, in a parallel process, an independent review of the Bank's forestry portfolio was carried out by its Operations Evaluation Department. The first phase of the FPIRS (May 1998 to June 2000) consisted of the Operations Evaluation Department's review; reviews of the forest policy's implementation in projects by the International Finance Corporation and the Global Environment Facility; the preparation of thematic studies; and consultations inside and outside the Bank. In the second phase (January to May 2000), nine regional meetings were held to discuss the reviews' findings and to elicit broad-based stakeholder input from around the world. The draft strategy, policy and internal implementation plan were written during the third phase (June to December 2000) and were due to be presented to the Board of the World Bank in December 2000.

When this publication was prepared, the draft strategy was not yet available, but consensus was emerging in the discussions for major shifts in direction from the 1991 Forest Policy. Whereas the objectives of the 1991 policy were combating deforestation, resource expansion and intensification, the proposed new objectives were poverty reduction, sustainable development and the protection of global values. Shifts in emphasis from moist tropical forest to all types of forest, and from biological diversity conservation to broader objectives (including support to rural

livelihoods, soil and water conservation, and the production of forest products) were also being discussed. The World Bank's so-called logging ban in primary tropical moist forests was being reconsidered in favour of the prevention of destruction in any forests of high protection/conservation value, but still allowing for the sustainable use and development of forest resources. Support was strong for a policy that went beyond the forest sector to a broad cross-sectoral focus on "forests".

The FPIRS process was notable from two standpoints: first, for the candour with which the World Bank review addressed the shortcomings of the implementation of its 1991 Forest Policy and, second, for the participatory manner in which the policy review and strategy development were carried out. A substantial effort was made to ensure transparency and wide participation throughout the course of the FPIRS. The relevant Web site¹⁸ provided updated information on FPIRS progress and easy access to the review's documents. The regional consultations attempted to garner worldwide input, and NGOs were invited to - and did play a major role by providing opinions and advice through consultations and the Technical Advisory Group for the new policy/strategy.

G8 support for sustainable forest management The Heads of State of the G8 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States) approved an action programme on forests at its summit in Birmingham, the United Kingdom in May 1998. The G8 Action Programme on Forests has five elements: the monitoring and assessment of forests, national forest programmes, protected areas, the private sector and illegal logging. An initial report on the implementation of the programme was presented at the G8 Summit in Miyazaki, Japan on 12 and

13 July 2000. A final progress report is to be provided to the G8 in 2002. At Miyazaki, the countries reaffirmed their commitment to and practice of sustainable forest management, agreed to take initiatives to implement the IPF and IFF proposals for action, and reaffirmed their commitment to combating illegal logging.

IUFRO World Congress

Convened every five years, IUFRO congresses provide scientists from around the world with an opportunity to present their forestry-related research activities and findings.

The XXI World Congress of the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 7 to 12 August 2000. Nearly 2 400 delegates from 96 countries participated in what was the largest forestry meeting ever held in Malaysia. The theme was Forests and Society: the Role of Research, and the focus was on the role of research in addressing the emerging issues in forestry today and on the close links between forests and society.

Nearly 600 papers were presented and 500 posters displayed. The Congress passed resolutions on current forestry issues, including: the role of forests and trees in human welfare; the need for policy-makers to enhance the interface between science, policy and industry; the role of IUFRO in intergovernmental processes; networking and an interdisciplinary approach to research; information supply and access; and the enhancement of research capacity through the encouragement of women and disadvantaged researchers to engage in forest science.

The Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
The Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems (PAGE), carried out from 1999 to 2000, is an evaluation of the global condition of five major ecosystems: agro-ecosystems, coastal areas, forests, freshwater systems and grasslands. In September 2000, the partners in the study – the World Resources Institute (WRI), UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank – presented the results at various international

 $^{^{18}}$ For an update on the FPIRS, see: http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/essd/forestpol-e.nsf/MainView?OpenView.

venues and published their findings in the Guide to world resources 2000-2001. People and ecosystems: the fraying web of life (Rosen, 2000). PAGE serves as the foundation for a more comprehensive assessment of the world's ecosystems, called the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Planning for this assessment has been under way since 1998, and substantive operations were due to begin in early 2001. Endorsed by the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his "Millennium Report" in April 2000, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has been authorized as a joint assessment by the secretariats or parties to the Ramsar Convention, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity. It will be conducted under a partnership arrangement between several UN agencies, the conventions mentioned above, the World Bank, WRI and several other institutions. It is expected to generate new information, integrate current knowledge, develop methodological tools, build human and institutional capacity for undertaking integrated ecosystem assessments, and increase public awareness about the condition of ecosystems globally.19

The role of NGOs in international discussions and initiatives on forests²⁰

Non-governmental organizations – including environmental NGOs, indigenous peoples' organizations and some industry groups – are playing a variety of roles in decision-making and implementation of action concerning forests. Active participation by NGOs gives intergovernmental processes added credibility and a higher political profile, and the substantive expertise and experience of NGOs help to link policy to practice and to highlight practical solutions to real world problems. NGOs also play an important role in focusing public attention on threats and opportunities related to forests.

NGOs have been particularly active in international discussions and initiatives on forests. In the past year, for example, they have contributed to important decisions on conservation and protected area issues in IFF and to the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to consider a more action-oriented programme of work on forest biological diversity in the future. In addition, NGOs were effective in informing and reflecting public concern about a possible forest products agreement during the Seattle ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization in November 1999 and about International Monetary Fund policies during the Fund's Washington, DC meeting in April 2000.

However, there have been disappointments. Despite NGOs' efforts, the implementation of commitments under Agenda 21 and of the proposals for action of IPF, IFF, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the FCCC has not reached the level needed. Furthermore, in their home countries, NGOs find that they are underutilized as implementers of forest action.

While it would be unrealistic to expect a broad and diverse group of NGOs to arrive at common positions on key forest issues, there has been some convergence of opinion among those active in international forest discussions. For example, almost all of those NGOs have opposed a proposed global forest convention, partly because they lack confidence in the willingness of governments to implement their forest-related commitments under existing agreements, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity, the FCCC and its Kyoto Protocol, Agenda 21 and the IPF proposals for action.

The negotiations on the establishment of UNFF have been conducted without any formal opportunity for NGOs or other parts of civil society to provide input. NGOs will not be included in the Technical Expert Group on Forests established under the Convention on Biological Diversity and may not even secure observer status.

 ¹⁹ Additional information is available on the Millennium
 Ecosystem Assessment Web site at: www.ma-secretariat.org.
 ²⁰ This section was provided by IUCN and WWF International.

Frustration with the intergovernmental process is pushing NGOs to take alternative approaches. One encouraging sign is the increasing interest of forest NGOs in forming innovative partnerships with other sectors of society. For example, the Alliance between the World Bank and WWF has been followed by formal collaboration between the World Bank and IUCN in the World Bank's FPIRS.

NGOs are playing an active and important role in providing useful information for international

discussions and action concerning forests. For example, a group of NGOs from several countries came together in 2000 to produce a status report on the implementation of the IPF proposals for action, and IUCN is currently working with its partners to produce the first Temperate and Boreal Forest Atlas.

These types of multistakeholder and actionoriented partnerships and initiatives make an important, if not essential, contribution to international efforts on forests. ◆