

Ecosystem Approach

From 6–10 September 1999 the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, in collaboration with UNEP and the Norwegian Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foreign Affairs, hosted a Conference on the Ecosystem Approach for Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in Trondheim, Norway.¹

This is the third of a series of conferences organized to improve the cross- and multi-sectoral dialogue on biodiversity research and management and to contribute to a solid scientific basis for policy and management decisions needed to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The first Trondheim conference, convened in May 1993, provided important scientific input to the first Intergovernmental Committee meeting of the signatories to the CBD. The second conference in July 1996 focused on the theme of alien invasive species. The results of this conference were presented at the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological

Advice (SBSTTA) of the CBD and contributed to the development of the Global Invasive Species Program.

One of the main aims of the 1999 Trondheim Conference was to provide useful scientific input to discussions on the development and application of an ecosystem approach in the context of ‘sustainable use of components of biodiversity’. The conference built on the results of a Workshop on the Ecosystem Approach that was convened in Malawi in 1998. This workshop identified twelve principles (known as the ‘Malawi principles’) that can contribute to the application of the ecosystem approach in biodiversity management. The conference focused on research and development contributing to an improved understanding of the Malawi principles, with the objective to integrate them in everyday management practices.

The Trondheim conference primarily discussed the application of the ecosystem approach and the further elaboration of the Malawi principles in the context of

forest and marine resource management. Particular attention was given to the involvement of stakeholders; the impact of use on ecosystem structure and functioning; decentralization of resource management; the balance between conservation and use in multiple use areas; the balance and relationship between international, national and local objectives; and principles of adaptive management. These issues were discussed in nine thematic sessions. The conference also included a panel discussion on trade and local resource management.

The conclusions and recommendations of the conference stress, *inter alia*, the need to: apply the precautionary principle or adequate risk-management procedures in respect of activities that may affect the structure, composition or functioning of ecosystems; ensure proper valuation of ecosystem services and equitable sharing of benefits obtained from these services; and decentralize ecosystem management to the

lowest appropriate level. They also include suggestions to improve intersectoral cooperation within and between government and management agencies and to incorporate adaptive management into policy-making and implementation.

The outcome of the conference is intended to provide input to the next meetings of SBSTTA and the CBD Conference of the Parties in 2000, as well as other relevant fora. (Harm Dotinga) □

Note

1 A preliminary copy of the Chairman's Report of the Third Trondheim Conference is available on the Norwegian website for the Clearing House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity at <http://chm.naturforvalting.no/Trondheimconf.htm> (last accessed on 29 November 1999). See for a complete coverage of the conference also Volume 31 of "Sustainable Developments" available at the website of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/sd/nor/index.html> (last accessed on 29 November 1999).