

REFERENCES TO OTHER TOPICS

FAO: Trade and Sustainable Forest Management

The Expert Consultation on *Trade and Sustainable Forest Management: Impacts and Interactions* convened from 3–5 February 2003 at the headquarters of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Rome.

The Consultation provided a forum to debate how current developments in trade policies and market development affect the sustainability of forest management, and how sustainable forest management (SFM) is changing trade patterns and market share. The Meeting constitutes one of the activities within FAO's international project on the *Impact Assessment of Forest Products Trade in the Promotion of Sustainable Forest Management*.

The project is financed by the Japanese government. FAO will publish the results of this process and will convene a second expert consultation later this year, which will include trade policymakers and trade specialists involved in debates on a new International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA); the Implementation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Doha Declaration; regional trade agreements and national trade policy making.

UNEP:

– Initiative on Coral Reefs

The United Nations Environment Programme has established a new Coral Reef Unit and will now take a leading role in international efforts to save the planet's threatened coral reefs.

The new Unit will be responsible for UNEP's participation in the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN), a unique international collaboration of important international organisations in coral reef science and conservation initiated with the financial support of the United Nations Foundation. ICRAN aims to reverse the trend of global degradation of coral reefs and to maintain the biodiversity and health of reefs through practical action in the field.

Through the coordinating units of UNEP's Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans in the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, ICRAN will work to demonstrate better reef management practices, supported by strengthened reef assessment and increased public awareness of the importance of reef resources.

The new Unit is part of the Division of Environmental Conventions and will work closely with the Division of Early Warning and Assessment.

For more information contact: Arthur Dahl, Director, Coral Reef Unit: Arthur.Dahl@unep.ch

– World Water Day 2003

The goal for World Water Day 2003 is to inspire worldwide political and community action and encourage greater global understanding of the need for more responsible water use and conservation.

The theme for this year's event is "Water for the Future", calling for a sustainable approach to water use for the benefit of future generations.

UNEP, the lead UN agency for the Day, aims to work with governments and key partners to plan events that achieve this end.

It is notable that World Water Day this year coincides with celebrations marking 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater.

– Best Practices

The need to disseminate success stories is behind a new UNEP initiative: the Best Practices and Success Stories Global Network (BSGN).

A lot of commendable work is being done in the area of environmental management but its visibility remains low. The BSGN is a service that will raise awareness of successful development initiatives and will encourage knowledge sharing and, wherever possible, promote replication.

It is a fully interactive website and database supplied with hard-copy material for those with less easy access to the Internet. Anybody can submit cases to the network at any time from anywhere.

See www.unep.org/bsgn

EU: Waste Law Violations

The European Commission has announced a series of legal proceedings against nine EU member States for alleged violations of waste legislation. The countries in question are Italy, France, Luxembourg, Greece, Sweden, Spain, Austria, Belgium and Ireland.

The Commission stated that the violations concern the regulation on waste shipment and directives governing waste management, hazardous waste, landfills, waste oils, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) and polychlorinated terphenyls (PCT), and packaging waste.

Kyoto Protocol: First Trade of Greenhouse Gas Credits

The first trade of greenhouse gas emission allowances under the Protocol (although it is not yet in force) has been executed using one of the flexible mechanisms available to meet compliance targets.

The Slovak Republic and a major Japanese firm, whose identity was not disclosed, made the trade of what they termed "assigned amount units" or AAUs. Each AAU equals one metric ton of carbon equivalent, and the transaction involved 200,000 AAUs.

Greenhouse gas credits are said to be trading in the market outside the Protocol for approximately US\$3 to \$5 per ton, putting the value of this trade in the range of \$600,000 to \$1 million. States that are Party to the Kyoto Protocol receive a five-year allocation of such units.

The International Emissions Trading mechanism, as defined by the Kyoto Protocol, allows a buyer to use its allowances as a way of complying with greenhouse gas emission reduction obligations under the Protocol. The seller will use the proceeds to finance domestic emission reduction projects.

EU: Biotechnology Industry

The European Union is proposing two far-reaching curbs on the biotechnology industry. It says that companies seeking patents should have to say where they found any natural product they are appropriating. The EU also says that poor farmers should be free to continue their traditional practice of saving and exchanging seeds – even ones already patented. The proposals will be discussed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The problem the EU is worried about is bio-piracy – the determination by some companies in developed countries to find and control natural resources or traditional knowledge for their profit.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) tries to make sure that benefits are shared between the exploiters and the communities from which they take their resources. However, many countries think that the CBD may be fatally damaged by the Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS), agreed in 1995.

In this regard, the EU is contributing a paper to be discussed by the TRIPS council, exploring its relationship with the CBD. The key proposal in the paper is a means of obliging applicants for patents who have used the fruits of bio-prospecting (i.e., taking knowledge from developing countries) for new products to disclose the geographical origin of any biological material used in biotech inventions. At present, there is no such obligation. The paper also supports the idea of providing better protection for traditional knowledge and recognises the right of subsistence farmers in developing countries to reuse and exchange seeds, even those covered by intellectual property-rights, via so-called farmers' exemptions. The paper states that larger-scale commercial farmers would remain subject to more stringent rules.

If the EU's proposals are accepted, they will mean that poor farmers need no longer fear they will be forced to buy fresh seeds annually from biotech companies, instead of saving some from the previous crop.

Acceptance of the proposals could also mean traditional communities gaining real benefits from sharing their knowledge and resources.

Kenya: Charcoal Survey

A survey carried out by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) on the destruction of the Aberdares – one of East Africa's

most famous, but now most threatened mountain ranges – revealed that a significant quantity of Kenya's charcoal, which is exported to the Middle East, comes from the Range. The survey revealed over 14,000 illegal charcoal kilns, some of which are the size of a factory. Most of the kilns are located in the south and west of the Aberdares.

The report indicates that the kilns are fed and fuelled by the highland forests that local people depend on for medicine and that act as a water catchment area. Charcoal production is recognised as one of the biggest threats to Kenya's forests and other forests across Africa. The findings highlight the need for improved conservation of the Range and the chronic dependence of Kenyans on wood as an energy source. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the country's fuel comes from wood, with only nine per cent of the population connected to electricity supplies.

Chile: Fishing Reform Law

At the end of 2002, Congress approved reforms to Fishing Law No. 19.713 which sets up a system for awarding individual, transferable 10-year quotas to both large and small fishing businesses for the harvesting of specific fish species. The goal of the law is to manage the entire country's fisheries, zone by zone, and ensure progress toward a sustainable fishing sector.

Chile is the world's fourth largest fishing nation, after China, Peru and Japan and, together with Peru, supplies up to 70 per cent of the world supply of fishmeal and fish oil. The World Bank and other institutions have warned frequently over the past decade that levels of exploitation of Chile's fisheries are ecologically unsustainable.

The new law, which came into force in January 2003, splits the quotas on a macro-scale between industry and artisan fishers for specific species. For example: 95 per cent (industry) to 5 per cent (artisan) for jurel; 65 per cent (industry) to 35 per cent (artisan) for common merluza; and 50–50 for southern merluza.

The fishing ministry is also preparing a draft law, called the Sanction Mechanism Law, for presentation to Congress in early 2003. This would apply stiff penalties on fishing businesses that violate their quotas. Such a penalty could mean a reduction of up to 300 per cent in a designated quota. The draft law also contemplates enforcing the quotas with special government tribunals instead of through the Courts, as a means of speeding up enforcement.

However, many environmental groups are doubtful if the new quota system will really be able to control over-fishing, as they maintain that Chile does not have the capacity to enforce such controls, and independent research is also lacking with regard to monitoring the levels of fish species.

Russia:

– New Law Needs Amendment

The Deputy Minister of Natural Resources has stated that the Framework Law on Environmental Protection of 10 January 2002 is already outdated and needs to be revised. Various environmental agencies at both the central and regional level have suggested about 150 different amendments to the law, including clarification on what the government means by "environmental control".

A special working group has already commenced work on amending the law. However, it is not yet known how long it will take the group to finalise the amendments before they can be presented to the State Duma and the Cabinet for approval. Most of the amendments are aimed at making the law more specific.

The main reason why the law is not working properly is the absence of specific legislation and bylaws. Although the law does outline which level of power should oversee which areas, it does not specify how this should work.

In addition to amending the framework Law on Environmental Protection, the government also needs to revise the Ecological Doctrine, the document summarising the government's environmental policies up to 2010. Both measures are held to have the same problems, as neither discusses specific details.

– Budget Increase

The government has announced plans to raise environmental spending by 12 per cent in 2003. It plans to spend an additional 60 million roubles on subsidies for environmental projects, 28 million roubles on current federal programmes and 137 million roubles on capital investment.

The main federal programme, called "Ecology and Natural Resources (2002–2010)" is aimed at developing and accumulat-

ing natural resources, as well as environmental protection, and it consists of projects such as waste management, mineral and water resources management, preserving Lake Baikal and the surrounding territory, and reviving the Volga River.

Africa: Switch to Unleaded Petrol

An international effort to phase out lead from petrol is accelerating as increasing numbers of countries on the African continent switch to unleaded petrol. Around 90 per cent of the world's petrol supplies are now unleaded. However, the 10 per cent that is still leaded is concentrated in developing countries, especially Africa. Research presented to the recent UNEP Governing Council indicates that within five years most African countries will have phased out, or be close to phasing out, lead from petrol. Four countries – Egypt, Libya, Mauritius and the Sudan – are already fully lead-free. This year, four other countries or dependent territories – Morocco, Reunion, Tunisia and Western Sahara – will join them.

The research indicates that a further 22 States, including Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo and Uganda, have or are in the process of drawing up action plans to phase out leaded by 2005–2006. Plans are under way to bring the remaining countries on board, many of which are in Central Africa, in order to deliver the goal of a lead-free Africa and a lead-free world.

This is seen by UNEP as one, if not the first, concrete outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The voluntary initiative, a so-called Type II project, was born there with funding and support from governments, the private sector, including the oil and motor industries, civil society and international organisations such as UNEP.

The WSSD and its Plan of Implementation has targets and timetables for a wide range of sustainable development issues. In respect of leaded petrol, it calls for the rapid, global phase-out of this key pollutant. The work is also being guided by the Dakar Declaration of March 2002, in which countries backed a phase-out of leaded petrol by 2005.

Nearly \$500,000 has been pledged by partners for this. UNEP is acting as a "clearing house" through which the various partners will be gathering and exchanging information on key issues, including the status of phase-outs in developing countries.

ICJ: Election of President

On 6 February 2003, Judge Shi Jiuyong (China) was elected President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) by his peers. Judge Raymond Ranjeva (Madagascar) was elected Vice-President. Both will serve a three-year term.

Composed of 15 members, the ICJ is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It adjudicates disputes between States and gives advisory opinions to United Nations organs and specialised agencies. There are 23 cases currently before the Court.

Taking into account the result of the election held on 21 October 2002 by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council to fill the five seats that became vacant on 6 February 2003, the composition of the Court is now as follows:

President Shi Jiuyong (China), Vice-President Raymond Ranjeva (Madagascar). Judges Gilbert Guillaume (France), Abdul G. Koroma (Sierra Leone), Vladlen S. Vereshchetin (Russian Federation), Rosalyn Higgins (UK), Gonzalo Parra-Aranguren (Venezuela), Pieter H. Kooijmans (Netherlands), Francisco Rezek (Brazil), Awn Shawkat Al-Khasawneh (Jordan), Thomas Buergenthal (USA), Nabil Elarby (Egypt), Hisashi Oada (Japan), Bruno Simma (Germany) and Peter Tomka (Slovakia).

RAMSAR: New Secretary-General

The Standing Committee has announced that Dr Peter Bridgewater is to become the new Secretary-General, to replace Delmar Blasco, who will be stepping down at the end of July 2003 after eight years of distinguished service to the Convention on Wetlands. The appointment was greeted by enthusiastic approval when it was announced on 3 March before Contracting Party States, International Organisation Partners, Mr Blasco and staff.

The new Secretary-General is a citizen of both Australia and the United Kingdom. Since 1999, he has served in his present position as Secretary of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme in Paris. During this time, among many other achievements he has been instrumental in bringing the MAB Programme to ever closer involvement with the Ramsar Convention, with a productive Joint Programme of Work signed in 2002, which focuses attention upon wetlands that are both Ramsar sites and Biosphere Reserves.

