



Edited
by
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Partnership on 'clean development and climate' announced

The governments of Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States released a joint vision statement for a new "Asia-Pacific partnership on clean development and climate" last July. According to the statement, the partnership will "collaborate to promote and create an enabling environment for the development, diffusion, deployment and transfer of existing and emerging cost-effective, cleaner technologies and practices, through concrete and substantial cooperation so as to achieve practical results". Areas for collaboration could include forestry, among other things. All the countries listed in the vision statement are parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), but two—Australia and the United States—have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol, the main intergovernmental mechanism designed to limit emissions of greenhouse gases, which are blamed for global warming.

The vision statement does not provide specific objectives or give details of how the partnership would function or be financed. It would, however, "be consistent with and contribute to [partners'] efforts under the UNFCCC and will complement, but not replace, the Kyoto Protocol". The partners pledged to "develop a non-binding compact in which the elements of this shared vision, as well as the ways and means to implement it, will be further defined", but no timetable has yet been provided.

American Serengeti?

A group of conservation biologists are proposing the creation of large game reserves in the Great Plains of North America for endangered African and Asian wildlife. The reserves would be 250 000 hectares or more in size and would operate on the assumption that the introduced wildlife would eventually reach an ecological equilibrium and would become more-or-less self-sustaining, with little input required from outside. The proposal, dubbed Pleistocene

rewilding, was made in a recent edition (Vol 436, No 7053) of the prestigious science journal *Nature* and also reported in *The Economist*. According to advocates, many species from Asia and Africa—including elephants, lions, cheetahs and camels—once roamed North America, and their ecological niches are still available. Advocates also suggest that since many countries in Africa and Asia are unable to afford the cost of conserving their large mammals, a rich country like the United States should do the job for them. Opponents of the idea, though, worry about the effects on existing wildlife in the US and would rather see conservation resources devoted to conserving species in their current habitats.

Rubber coverage

An ITTO project (PD 46/99 REV.3 (1)) has investigated the feasibility of the industrial utilisation of timber from rubberwood plantations in Colombia. According to the study, which was conducted by Centro para la Investigación en Sistemas Sostenibles de Producción Agropecuaria (CIPAV), an NGO, and Econometría, a research institution, just over 10 000 hectares of rubber trees have been established in Colombia since 1943 and just under 7000 hectares still exist, scattered across 17 departments; the department of Caquetá contains more than half. The immediate potential wood yield was estimated to be about 6600 m³/year; this will grow to about 100 000 m³ per year by the year 2019 and will remain at that rate for about 20 years. The project formulated a proposal to develop a pilot project for the industrial utilisation of rubberwood at a site near Florencia, the capital of Caquetá, and predicted its financial viability. A report of the study can be obtained at www.cipav.org.co.

DRC gorillas survive war, poaching

An estimated 5 500–28 000 lowland gorillas (also known as Grauer's gorillas) still survive in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), according to the conservation group Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International (DFGFI). This is good news for the gorillas, since it was feared that their number might have declined dramatically in the face of DRC's recent civil wars and reportedly widespread poaching. According to DFGFI's Patrick Mehlman, recent surveys undertaken by DFGFI and its Congolese partners have revealed: 1) "the presence of two large local populations of Grauer's gorillas that other scientists believed to be quite small and dwindling before the civil wars; and 2) the continuing presence of gorillas in the Itombwe Mountains where they existed before the civil wars".

More information is available at www.gorillafund.org

Fellowship reports available

The following fellowship reports may be obtained directly from the ITTO fellows listed below:

Modelo preliminar para la planificación del aprovechamiento en plantaciones forestales.
Contact: Mr Ramón José Chiari Lopez, Apartado 9859, Zona 9, San Francisco, Panamá, Republic of Panama, rjchiari@hotmail.com, rjchiari@ula.ve

Rôle conservateur de la diversité biologique des forêts riveraines de la zone forestière subhumide du Togo. **Contact:** Mr. Kossi Adjossou, Département de Botanique et d'Ecologie Végétale, Faculté des Sciences, Université Lomé, BP 1515, Lomé, Togo ; marcadjossou@yahoo.fr

Volume functions for common timber species of Nigeria's tropical rain forests. **Contact:** Dr Shadrach O. Akindele, Department of Forestry and Wood Technology, Federal University of Technology, PMB 704, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria; femi_akindele2@yahoo.com

Institutional capacity assessment of community forest user's group for marketing of forest products: a case study from inner Terai of Nepal. **Contact:** Mr Boj Raj Khanal, bhojrajkhanel@yahoo.com