

# Forests to the fore

## ***The Convention on Biological Diversity and its forest agenda***

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**Aiming to stop this:** CBD's forest agenda will seek to reduce forest biodiversity losses from destructive practices.

*Photo: iStockphoto/Brasil2*

Established at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The CBD recognizes that biological diversity is about more than plants, animals, microorganisms and their ecosystems – it is about people and our need for food security, medicines, fresh air and water, shelter, and a clean and healthy environment in which to live. With 193 Parties – 192 member states and the European Union – it has near-universal participation.

Forests are a particular focus of the CBD. They harbor an estimated two-thirds of all terrestrial species, as well as a fascinating array of ecological processes. Tropical forests, in particular, are among the most biologically diverse ecosystems on earth. To better address the global forest biodiversity loss, the 193 Parties to the CBD adopted an expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity at their sixth meeting in the Hague in 2002. In May 2008, they reviewed the programme's implementation and adopted a set of priorities for further implementation (SBSTTA 2007). At its upcoming tenth meeting to be held in Nagoya, Japan, from 18 – 29 October 2010, the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) will review the sustainable use of forests and other ecosystems, and adopt a revised and updated strategic plan, including new forest biodiversity targets for the post-2010 period. In Nagoya, the Parties will also assess recommendations by the CBD's scientific, technical and technological advisory body, SBSTTA, on how to achieve these targets. This article provides a brief overview of the CBD's forest biodiversity programme of work, the proposed forest biodiversity targets of its post-2010 strategic plan, and

the forest-related recommendations that will be considered at COP 10.

## ***The CBD forest programme***

The CBD's programme of work on forest biodiversity consists of 130 measures, which the Parties have agreed to implement in accordance with national priorities (CBD 2002). The measures are clustered in three elements:

- Element 1 relates to measures for the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources and the equitable sharing of the multiple benefits arising from their use. The measures include activities to increase sustainable

## **New priorities of the CBD Programme of Work on Forest Biodiversity**

Following a review process from 2006 to 2008, the Parties to the CBD adopted a new set of priorities for the CBD Programme of Work on Forest Biodiversity in May 2008 (Decision IX/5), including:

- unregulated and unsustainable use of forest products and resources (including unsustainable hunting and trade of bushmeat, and their impacts on non-target species)
- climate change
- desertification and desert creep
- illegal land conversion
- habitat fragmentation
- environmental degradation
- forest fires
- invasive alien species

forest management, implement the ecosystem approach, establish effective protected areas, restore degraded forests, fight against forest fires and invasive alien species, and ensure equitable access and benefit-sharing with indigenous and local communities.

- Element 2 involves measures to further develop the institutional and socio-economic environment necessary to enable forest conservation, sustainable use and benefit-sharing. Measures in this cluster include activities to provide incentives for the use of sustainable practices (e.g. certification), to develop good practices in forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG), and to clarify land tenure and resource rights.
- Element 3 concerns scientific and technical measures for better knowledge, assessment and monitoring of forest trends. These measures include activities to advance assessment methods, research forest ecosystem functioning, develop a global forest classification system, and improve the infrastructure for data and information management.

Since the inception of the forest programme of work, many countries and regions have considerably moved ahead with its implementation. For example, Brazil reduced deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon by some 50% from 2002 to 2008, and designated half the Amazonian state of Acre's territory as protected areas. Similarly, Madagascar reduced the rate of decline of tropical forest by almost 50% from 2000 to 2005; Liberia set aside 30% of forest land for conservation; Malaysia and Viet Nam have established forest corridors to connect forest biodiversity hotspots; and India enacted landmark legislation which assigned ownership rights to minor forest produce to indigenous peoples and local communities (Fourth National Reports 2009). However, despite encouraging progress, review of the programme of work and of the CBD's 2010 targets indicates that still greater efforts have to be made to enhance the protection of forest biodiversity. In particular, the continuing loss and degradation of primary tropical forests needs to be addressed more effectively.

### Elements of the CBD strategic plan

The revised and updated Strategic Plan of the Convention, which will be discussed at COP 10 in Nagoya<sup>1</sup>, contains several targets aimed to enhance forest biodiversity. The Strategic Plan is developed with a view to achieve synergies between the Rio Conventions, in the spirit of 'Rio +20', and strengthen the coherence between biodiversity-related targets and the Millennium Development Goals and other international goals. By 2020, it aims to:

<sup>1</sup> Square brackets indicate that no consensus has been achieved so far. The draft is presented for information purposes, without the intent to pre-empt negotiations at COP 10.

## The 2010 Biodiversity Target

In April 2002, the Parties to the CBD committed themselves to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level. This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, and by the United Nations General Assembly. It was also incorporated as a target under the Millennium Development Goals. To monitor progress towards achieving the target, 21 sub-targets and 16 headline indicators were developed, based on scientifically rigorous assessments of whether trends in various aspects of biodiversity were showing improvement, no change or deterioration.

In its *Global Biodiversity Outlook 3*, an assessment of the current state of biodiversity, the CBD concludes that the 2010 biodiversity target has not been met (CBD 2010). None of the sub-targets has been achieved globally, although some have been partially or locally achieved. Of those biodiversity indicators for which global data are available, ten show negative trends, three show no clear trend but provide grounds for concern, and three show positive developments. The diversity of species, diversity within species (genetic diversity) and diversity of ecosystems continue to decline globally.

- **halve [or bring close to zero] the rate of loss, degradation, and fragmentation of forests.** This could be achieved through improvements in production efficiency and land use planning combined with the recognition of the economic value of the ecosystem services provided by forests. Emphasis should be on preventing the loss of primary forests and other high-biodiversity value habitats.
- **manage all areas under forestry sustainably, ensuring the conservation of biodiversity.** Useful tools to achieve this target can be the criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management that have been adopted by the forest sector. In addition, the customary use of forest biodiversity by indigenous and local communities can offer lessons of wider applicability. This target would be pursued *inter alia* in collaboration with ITTO, building on the 'ITTO Objective 2000'.
- **protect at least [15%] [20%] of terrestrial areas, including forests, through comprehensive, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of effectively managed protected areas.** Particular emphasis is needed to protect tropical forests. Protected areas should be established and managed in close collaboration with indigenous and local communities. They should be integrated into the wider landscape and relevant sectors by applying an ecosystem approach and taking into account ecological connectivity and the concept of ecological networks.

- **enhance the resilience of forests and other ecosystems, and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15% of degraded ecosystems.** Appropriate incentive schemes (such as 'Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries – REDD-plus'<sup>2</sup>) could enhance the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of forests and, with appropriate safeguards, could deliver substantial benefits for biodiversity and local livelihoods. Monitoring, as it is currently developed, for example under the ITTO thematic programme on reducing deforestation and forest degradation and enhancing environmental services in tropical forests (REDDES), will have to be an integral part of these incentive schemes. Moreover, recent developments, such as commitments of countries under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Copenhagen Accord, open new opportunities to link efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity with climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. Furthermore, forest landscape restoration, as promoted by the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration ([www.ideastransformlandscapes.org](http://www.ideastransformlandscapes.org)), of which both ITTO and the CBD Secretariat are members, offers the tools to achieve synergies between international commitments under the Rio Conventions, and the UN Forum on Forests.

## Forest biodiversity and climate change

In order to seize the opportunities for forest biodiversity and local livelihoods associated with the on-going REDD-plus discussions, COP 10 will consider a series of recommendations that invite the Parties to:

- implement the protection of natural forests and the use of native assemblages of forest species in reforestation activities;
- implement improved land management, reforestation and forest restoration in forest landscapes subject to harvesting, clearing and/or degradation;
- implement reforestation and forest restoration in natural forest landscapes that have already been largely cleared and degraded;
- consider biodiversity and ecosystem services when designing, implementing and monitoring afforestation, reforestation and restoration activities for climate change mitigation. This could be done, for example, through converting only land of low biodiversity value or ecosystems largely composed of non-native species; choosing, whenever feasible, local and acclimated native tree species when selecting species for planting; avoiding invasive alien species; and strategically locating afforestation activities within the landscape to enhance connectivity and increase the provision of ecosystem services within forest areas; and
- enhance the benefits from REDD-plus, and other sustainable land management activities for mitigation, for forest-dwelling indigenous peoples and local communities through, for example, considering land ownership and land tenure; respecting, preserving and maintaining the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity; and ensuring space for the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities in relevant policy-making processes.

COP 10 will also consider requests to the CBD Executive Secretary to convene, in collaboration with relevant partners, a joint expert workshop on REDD-plus with a view to enhancing the coordination of capacity-building efforts on issues related to biodiversity and the conservation of forest carbon stocks. Moreover, COP 10 may request the Executive Secretary to contribute to the discussions on, and the possible development of, REDD-plus biodiversity safeguards and mechanisms to monitor the impacts of REDD-plus on biodiversity. To this end, the CBD Secretariat may investigate whether there are inadequacies in forest biodiversity reporting and monitoring, and if so, suggest ways to address these inadequacies, including by proposing improved definitions of forest and forest types.

## Sustainable use of bushmeat

Next to climate change, the unregulated and unsustainable use of forest resources, including unsustainable hunting and trade of bushmeat, is a major human-induced threat to forest biodiversity. This is particularly so in tropical forests, where the loss of fauna is reaching critical levels (Nasi *et al.* 2008). Forestry operations are often closely linked to commercial bushmeat hunting and trade through logging roads and crews. The 'empty-forest syndrome' caused by habitat degradation and the over-exploitation of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians in many tropical and sub-tropical countries has become a global threat to forest biodiversity (Brodie and Gibbs 2009).

For this reason, COP 10 will consider a set of recommendations that have been developed by the CBD Liaison Group on Bushmeat (CBD 2009). The Liaison Group recommends *inter alia* that:

- national governments increase their capacity to monitor levels of bushmeat harvest and consumption in national statistics to inform improved policy and planning;
- forest certification schemes take into account the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife to maintain healthy forest ecosystems;
- extractive industries (oil, gas, minerals, timber, etc.) operating in tropical and sub-tropical forests include wildlife management as an essential part of their business plans; and
- local stakeholders who have a vested interest in maintaining the resources and who can deliver sustainable, desirable solutions receive rights and associated duties to sustainably manage wildlife resources. The capacity of these empowered local communities should be built and strengthened to ensure that they have the capacity to exercise these rights.

<sup>2</sup> The acronym 'REDD-plus' is used in this paper without any attempt to pre-empt future negotiations under the UNFCCC.



## Cooperation with partners

Finally, COP 10 will consider further collaboration with the relevant partners of the CBD in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), a voluntary association of 14 international organizations and secretariats with substantial forest programmes. In the past, the CBD Secretariat has collaborated with ITTO, for example, on guidelines for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in tropical timber production forests (see Sayer and Boedhihartono, p. 11), and published a good practice guide for sustainable forest management jointly with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (CBD/IUCN 2009). In March 2010, the CBD Secretariat and ITTO signed a Memorandum of Understanding to further intensify their collaboration. The agreement is aimed at facilitating the implementation of activities linked to the conservation and sustainable use of tropical forest biodiversity within the CBD and ITTO work programmes. Concrete joint activities for 2010 and 2011 include the organization of an International Conference on Biodiversity Conservation in Transboundary Tropical Forests (the proceedings of which will be published in an upcoming TFU); the development, use and dissemination of publications of common interest; and the development of a support programme for the implementation of the CBD forest programme of work in ITTO member countries.

In December 2009, the CBD Secretariat also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), in which the two Secretariats agree to cooperate on joint activities, such as capacity-building on forest biodiversity and climate change, in particular in developing countries. The Secretariats are also working together to ensure a seamless bridging of the International Year of Biodiversity to the International Year of Forests in 2011, through a joint ceremony in December 2010 in Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan, as well as through several joint activities throughout 2011. As a contribution of the CBD to the International Year of Forests, the International Day of Biodiversity on 22 May 2011 will focus on forest biodiversity.

In addition to cooperation with ITTO, IUCN and UNFF, the CBD Secretariat cooperates with other organizations of the CPF on the monitoring of forest biodiversity and the clarification of definitions of forest and forest types. In this capacity, the Secretariat contributes, for example, to the Global Forest Resources Assessments of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Global Forest Expert Panels led by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO).

## Recent CBD publications on forests



*Water, wetlands and forests. A review of ecological, economic and policy linkages.* CBD Technical Series No. 47.



*Making Protected Areas Relevant: A guide to integrating protected areas into wider landscapes, seascapes and sectoral plans and strategies.* CBD Technical Series No. 44.



*Forest Resilience, Biodiversity, and Climate Change. A synthesis of the biodiversity/resilience/stability relationship in forest ecosystems.* CBD Technical Series No. 43.



*Review of the Literature on the Links between Biodiversity and Climate Change: Impacts, Adaptation and Mitigation.* CBD Technical Series No. 42.



*Connecting Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: Report of the Second Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change.* CBD Technical Series No. 41.



*Cross-Sectoral Toolkit for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest Biodiversity.* CBD Technical Series No. 39.



*Conservation and Use of Wildlife-based Resources: The bushmeat crisis.* CBD Technical Series No. 33.



Biodiversity and Livelihoods: REDD benefits.



Tourism for Nature & Development: A good practice guide.



Sustainable Forest Management, Biodiversity and Livelihoods: A good practice guide.

All publications are available for download at: <http://www.cbd.int/forest>.

Copies can be ordered free of charge at [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int).



**Not dinner:** Control of bushmeat harvesting is a key part of CBD's forest agenda.  
Photo: Intu Boedhihartono

## Conclusion

In sum, the CBD's forest programme of work and the COP 10 agenda are highly relevant to the forest sector. The collaboration of forest enterprises and institutions will be critical for reaching the CBD's post-2010 biodiversity targets, in particular through strengthening sustainable forest management. The International Year of Biodiversity and the International Year of Forests in 2011 provide ample opportunities for all actors to promote the conservation and sustainable use of forest biological resources, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use.

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## Forest related events in the International Year of Biodiversity

- ITTO/IUCN/CBD Conference on Transboundary Conservation and Forest Management. 14 – 17 July 2010, Quito, Ecuador.
- IUFRO World Congress. 23 – 28 August 2010, Seoul, Korea.
- United Nations General Assembly – High Level Session. 20 - 22 September 2010, New York, USA.
- 10th Conference of the Parties to the CBD. 18 – 29 October 2010, Nagoya, Japan.
- Forest Day 4. 5 December 2010, Cancun, Mexico. Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) event at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC.
- Closing ceremony for International Year of Biodiversity and seamless transition to the International Year of Forests 2011. 18-19 December 2010, Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan.

