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by
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Mangroves going fast

Mangroves, the salt-tolerant evergreen forests found along coastlines, lagoons and rivers in over a hundred tropical and sub-tropical countries and locations are being lost at an alarming rate. Halting the rapid loss of mangroves requires better protection and management programs in many countries.

Mangroves are essential for providing wood, food, and medicine for humans, and habitats for many animals. They also act as buffers by protecting land from erosion, cyclones and wind as well as filtering sediment and pollution from water upstream and preventing it from disturbing the delicate balance of ecosystems like coral reefs.

The main causes of the destruction of mangroves include population pressure, conversion for shrimp and fish farming, agriculture, infrastructure and tourism, as well as pollution and natural disasters. A recent FAO assessment (online at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a1427e/a1427e00.htm>) shows that 3.6 million hectares of mangroves have been lost around the world since 1980. Although studies show a slowdown in the destruction between the years 2000 and 2005, the loss still continues at an alarming rate. The deforestation of mangroves is significantly higher than other forest and, if it continues, may lead to severe losses of biodiversity and livelihoods, as well as salt intrusion in coastal areas and siltation of coral reefs.

ITTO is currently working with the International Society for Mangrove Ecosystems, FAO and other organizations on a World Atlas of Mangroves to be published later this year. This Atlas will provide a baseline for monitoring future changes in mangrove areas.

US chops visa permits to Cambodian officials tied to illegal logging

Cambodian officials tied to illegal logging could be denied visas to enter the United States according to the news agency AFP. The US law, which was enacted last December, will deny visas to Cambodian officials and their relatives who have been identified as guilty of destroying Cambodia's forests in a 2007 report by the London-based environmental watchdog Global Witness.

The report titled *Cambodia's Family Trees*, named several Cambodian Forest and Agriculture authorities as being actively involved in the destruction of Cambodia's natural resources. Although the travel ban on the Cambodian officials by the US is being seen as a strike against illegal logging, it remains to be seen whether it will have an impact on forest governance in the country.

Seeking inputs for humanitarian timber guide

Huge quantities of timber costing millions of dollars are consumed in humanitarian relief and reconstruction

programs. Poorly planned timber procurement can result in significant delays in responses to people's needs, environmental degradation and organizational, financial and operational inefficiency.

The 'humanitarian timber' project is developing a practical, consensus-based field guide to help humanitarian workers with the use, specification and procurement of timber. The guide will cover timber, bamboo and timber derivatives. The project is supported by UN/OCHA, IFRC and CARE International.

The guide will be published later in 2008 once peer reviews are complete. Workshops have been held in Indonesia, London and Bangladesh to date with future review workshops scheduled in North America and Kenya.

Visit www.humanitarian timber.org for more information and to participate in inputs to the current draft which can be downloaded from the website.

Return of malaria causes buzz

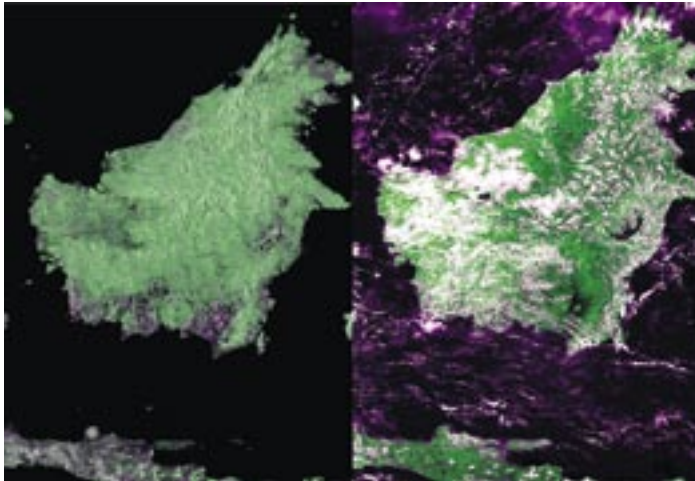
The buzz of saws harvesting trees is joined by a softer, yet, more alarming buzz of mosquitoes carrying malaria back into parts of Peru that were free of the mosquito-borne disease for 40 years. Deforestation and climate change are reported to be the main culprits that have returned the disease that causes fevers, permanent anemia and sometimes death in those afflicted by the illness.

According to an article released in late 2007 in the Guardian, the disease was almost completely eradicated within Peru 40 years ago, but in 2007 over 60 000 cases were reported. It is believed that many more cases have gone unreported in areas deep within the humid rainforest which are difficult to access for health officials.

Hugo Rodriguez, a doctor at the Andean Health Organization combating malaria in border areas of Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela by distributing mosquito nets to some villagers, stated that the disease is beyond the point of being eradicated and efforts now are only aimed at controlling it. Climate change in the form of off-season rain is leaving puddles and other bodies of still water which are ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes. In addition, deforestation is leaving large open areas which are also ideal in supporting the conditions for mosquito breeding grounds.

Indonesia and Japan reach agreement to introduce new remote sensing technology

The governments of Indonesia and Japan (through the Japan International Cooperation Agency-JICA) recently reached an agreement to introduce the new PALSAR (cloud-free remote sensing) technology into Indonesia's Forest Resources Monitoring and Assessment System. Remote sensing technologies have contributed substantially to



Seeing clearly: PALSAR (*left*) compared to MODIS (*right*) image of Borneo (23 May, 2007)

ED addresses Yokohama Council



ITTO's Executive Director, Emmanuel Ze Meka, addressed the Yokohama City Council last December at a specially convened session. Yokohama has hosted the ITTO headquarters since the Organization commenced operational activities in 1986. Mr Ze Meka thanked the city and its residents for more than 20 years of support and urged the city to continue to back ITTO as it tackled new challenges to the sustainable management of tropical forests. He stressed that core issues addressed by ITTO such as climate change, poverty, illegal logging and biodiversity are all linked and that strategies to tackle them require the type of holistic approach embodied in the concept of sustainable forest management that ITTO has been promoting throughout its existence. He also focused on the importance of environmental education in tackling such problems and offered ITTO's input to engaging with local children (possibly together with those from other countries to promote international understanding) about important issues facing tropical forests.

Mr Ze Meka presented a plan for an ITTO-sponsored international conference on the role of sustainable management of tropical forests in mitigating climate change in Yokohama in April 2008. He stressed the importance of this initiative for helping ITTO to formulate activities to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from tropical forests. Mr Ze Meka noted that further enhancing cooperation between ITTO and the city of Yokohama in areas such as public education and sustainable management of tropical forests would contribute to the battle against climate change, a problem with grave implications for humanity.

Mr Ze Meka also congratulated the city of Yokohama for being selected to host the fourth international conference on African development (TICAD IV) in May 2008, an event which will also place the issue of climate change high on its agenda and in which ITTO will actively participate (meeting details on p30).

Photo: K. Sato, ITTO

better understanding of the status of forests. One of the weaknesses of conventional technologies that use optical sensors, such as those of Landsat-TM and MODIS, is their inability to penetrate through clouds.

Cloud-penetrating SAR (Synthetic Aperture Radar) technologies that use microwave-based sensors have recently become available. With Japan's assistance, PALSAR (Phased Array type L-band Synthetic Aperture Radar) technology will be used by Indonesia to monitor its forests in future. Recent studies indicate that this technology is unique even among other SAR technologies. In addition to monitoring forests, it allows experts to estimate biomass and CO₂ equivalent volumes at earlier stages of ecological succession relatively economically. The use of PALSAR technology in CO₂ inventories will also be tested. The same technology is contributing to monitoring illegal logging and deforestation in the Amazon.

Work to introduce PALSAR to Indonesia is expected to start in June 2008 and will continue for three years. Training opportunities for those who are involved in forest resources monitoring and assessment in Indonesia will be provided. The PALSAR sensor is currently on the ALOS (Advanced Land Observing Satellite) launched by JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency) in 2006.

Letter

Dear Sir,

Recently, data regarding the increased deforestation in the Amazon has been widely publicized. This has led to generalized discussion and all sorts of proposals for changing this situation. These proposals focus on increasing law enforcement, which tend to present a solution with more restrictive legislation allied to more bureaucracy. This policy has been followed in the last few years but evidence suggests that it has not produced the expected results. One can note an absence of proposals to promote forestry development in the region which is unfortunate since I think forestry activities are more suitable to the region than agriculture. In fact, forestry activities, including forest management, are most of the time perceived as detrimental to the forest resources.

I would like to suggest that press releases with concrete examples (data, figures, photos, etc.) all over the world