

The 3rd IUCN World Congress was one of the largest conservation gatherings ever staged

THE 3RD IUCN World Conservation Congress, which was held in Bangkok in November, attracted 4900 people from across the world, including nearly a thousand scientists, over 200 business representatives, more than 40 ministers of foreign affairs, environment, agriculture, tourism and fisheries, and hundreds of environmental activists and community leaders.

The IUCN Members Business Assembly, which was convened in the latter part of the Congress, voted on over a hundred resolutions and recommendations on conservation policies and actions and laid out the organization's priorities for the next four years. Among other things, IUCN:

- called for a moratorium on the further release of genetically modified organisms;
- established a World Conservation Learning Network to build the capacity of conservation and development professionals; and
- pledged to work with indigenous peoples, especially in the management and establishment of protected areas.

Cutting down on illegal logging

The first part of the Congress, called the World Conservation Forum, comprised over three hundred small events and plenary sessions. Among these, ITTO convened a three-hour panel discussion in cooperation with IUCN. Moderated by Ms Jan McAlpine, current Chair of the International Tropical Timber Council, this discussion focused on the theme of illegal logging, which is a significant threat to sustainable forest management in the tropics and elsewhere. How can international organisations help to reduce this threat and to increase the trade in legally produced and traded timber products?

Speakers included Kazuyuki Morita of the Japan Forestry Agency, the ITTO Secretariat's Steven Johnson, James Gasana of Swiss Intercooperation and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, Yati Bun from Papua New Guinea's Foundation for People and Community Development, Robianto Koestomo of the Association of Indonesian Forest Concessionaires, Chen Hin Keong of TRAFFIC Malaysia, and Stewart Maginnis from IUCN's Forest Conservation Programme.

Mr Morita said that Japan's role as a major importer of logs and plywood made it a significant player in efforts to reduce illegal logging. The country's timber importers had declared that they didn't want to use illegally sourced timber, and the government was working in support of this aim, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

Dr Johnson presented some of ITTO's work in the prevention of illegal logging and illegal timber trade, including an investment of more than US\$5 million in field projects with specific objectives for improving forest law enforcement. He also highlighted efforts to improve the quality of information

on timber production and markets, but noted that statistical weaknesses remained an obstacle in the fight against illegal logging and illegal timber trade in many countries.

James Gasana summarised some of the experiences gained through ITTO projects that have established and strengthened tropical transboundary conservation reserves. He reported that successful law enforcement in such reserves required high-level political commitment to the transboundary approach, the formalisation of cooperative approaches, the strong involvement of civil society, a scientific underpinning for management, and the nurturing of a culture of stewardship within local communities. He also stressed the need for better information on the status of management in protected areas.

Yati Bun outlined some of the problems that illegal logging can cause in indigenous and local communities. He said that one of the important roles of the international community was to publicise such activities and to support national-level responses aimed at preventing them.

Mr Robianto said that illegal logging and illegal timber trade created a vicious circle that led to bankruptcy in the forest sector, the massive lay-off of forestry and timber workers, and increased illegal activities. He called on international organisations and importing countries to campaign for the use of legal logs—and against the consumption of illegally obtained logs.

Mr Chen described the state of forest law enforcement in Malaysia, particularly as it related to the trade of ramin, a timber now listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Some of the challenges facing Malaysia in dealing with the ramin listing included the need for increased coordination between Malaysian states, the reconciling of laws related to native customary rights and land and compensatory issues, and the closing of gaps in the barter trade system, particularly with neighbouring Indonesia.

Mr Maginnis highlighted the results of increased dialogue between civil society and the private sector over the issue of illegal logging, which had been brought about through processes initiated by IUCN, ITTO and others. He said that a tripartite approach involving government, civil society and the private sector was an essential part of combating illegal logging and illegal timber trade. One starting point would be to define the parameters of legality, which would require a further process of trust-building between the three sectors, which could be facilitated by international organisations such as ITTO and IUCN.

The presentations made by the panelists can be downloaded at www.itto.or.jp/live/PageDisplayHandler?pageId=223&id=809. More information on the outcomes of the IUCN World Conservation Congress can be obtained from www.iucn.org/congress/index.cfm