

## **Promoting pro-poor generation of wealth, food security and peace through sustainable forest management:**

### **Global Realities and Regional Innovations**

An estimated 1.6 billion people depend on, live in or around forests and use forest resources for fuel, food, medicine and income; of these, 70 million are Indigenous Peoples living in remote areas that depend completely on forest resources for their livelihoods. While most rural development policy traditionally looks to agriculture as the basis for food security and poverty alleviation in rural areas, it is forests that provide basic components of sustainable agriculture in terms of soil conservation and water supply, and are most often used by the rural poor as a 'safety net' in times of economic hardship as well as a part of income generation. Poor forest management and lack of clear tenure can also lead to and sustain conflicts. More than 580 million people live in areas where agricultural lands and forested lands are intertwined, constituting more than double the population of people living in purely agricultural landscapes, and 1.2 billion people use trees on farms to generate food and income. Yet the majority of Poverty Reduction Strategies do not explicitly consider forests as a potential resource for poverty alleviation.

This is particularly true for the African region. Africa is home to some of the world's last great expanses of tropical forests and the largest areas of savannah. The primary driver of deforestation in this region continues to be poverty based as trees are cut for fuel-wood. Conflicts have also played a significant role in the over-exploitation of this natural resource. At the same time, successful reforms of forest and tree tenure laws in some countries are spurring resurgence of reforestation and sustainable management efforts.

### **I. United Nations supports Sustainable Forest Management**

The seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, held from 16 to 27 April 2007, resulted in a landmark international agreement on sustainable management of the world's forests. The Forum acted on growing global recognition on the role of forests in stabilizing climate change, protecting biodiversity and in ensuring the livelihoods of people who depend on them. The new global instrument on all types of forests will significantly advance efforts to galvanize international cooperation and support for a new people-centered forest policy agenda, with actions for increased pro-poor, pro-nature and pro-growth actions that link trees and forests to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. This agreement includes four shared global objectives on forests to advance sustainable forest management, curb deforestation and enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of international development goals.

### **II. Using forests to ensure food security and stability**

Forests provide multiple ecosystem benefits that form the basis for rural livelihoods in many countries. In almost all of the Least Developed Countries, especially in Africa, the majority of the population relies on wild game and fish products for 20% of protein intake, much of which comes from forest ecosystems. Wild fruits and vegetables are also an important source of

vitamins and minerals and are used mostly by the poorest sectors. Fuel-wood is the main source of energy for a majority of the rural population in most developing countries. Forest ecosystems also help provide clean water that is less likely to bear disease. In many cases, poor management and unsustainable use of forest resources put these benefits under threat.

The use of forests for their economic benefits is of enormous importance to economic and social stability. Unfortunately forests have also been misused to maintain and expand conflicts. Conflict over tenure has proven to be a serious problem in many countries, including in the African region. Policies that ensure sustainable forest management, including wildlife management, as well as clear tenure and access to forest resources are essential for maintaining the capacity of forests to continue to provide a subsistence base to poor and marginalized rural populations and provide food security over the medium- to long term.

### **III. Using forests to alleviate poverty**

There are a number of strategies that could be used to increase the contribution of forest resources to raising people out of poverty.

**Industrial scale commercial forestry** has the potential for resource development and exploitation. Proper policies and incentives have proven to enable truly sustainable utilization of forests as a renewable resource while providing consistent and rewarding employment with benefits that far exceed the risks associated with small scale enterprise and the informal economy. Increased use of sustainable forest management practices that include the institutionalization of fair and equitable labor standards (such as those provided by the ILO conventions) can provide the employment required to help lift communities out of poverty.

**Small and medium forest enterprises** are estimated to contribute about \$130 billion of value added per year, constitute more than 50% of forest-related employment per year and comprise about 80-90% of forestry enterprises in many countries. Most such enterprises face a wide range of challenges including: insecure tenure and access to forest resources; lack of managerial capacity and ability to meet the requirements of the formal economy; inadequate market information, design capability and technology; low bargaining power; and lack of assets to lure investment and capital or offset risks. Associations of such enterprises have been shown to help overcome some of these challenges and should be supported in addition to policy changes that ensure an enabling environment and equitable market access.

**Community based forest management** is gaining increasing credence as an approach to both ensuring livelihoods and increasing incomes. Yet the way in which such schemes are designed can have a significant impact on their ability to deliver pro-poor results. In some regions, high levels of tenure rights and autonomy make for a very valuable enterprise and user groups are found to specifically target the poorest in their communities. In some regions, such schemes seem to reduce incomes because of reduced or eliminated payment for previously compensated services provided by the community while requiring permits for access to resources.

**Non-timber forest products** play an important role in filling income and subsistence gaps for the rural poor and in some cases can serve as a foundation for poverty alleviation. A combination of conditions is required to use non-timber forest products to alleviate poverty including: an enabling environment which ensures access and tenure, equitable market access, sustainable use as well as household capacity for both product development and marketing.

#### **IV. Regional Policy Innovations**

Regional level cooperation and collaboration is being increasingly recognized as an important way of addressing policy needs and supporting countries' efforts in improving forest management. Such partnerships as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and the Asia Forest Partnership show that an informal approach to dialogue can be particularly productive. Other more formal policy processes such as the Central African Forestry Commission (COMIFAC), the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of the Environment (MCPFE) in Europe and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) also play an important role in facilitating dialogue and ensuring implementation of national commitments. The regional Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) processes have also played an important role in raising awareness of governance issues and promoting regional level cooperation and action. The increased involvement of civil society in sustainable forest management is also of growing importance in many regions as decentralization allows for greater participation by local communities.

Inter-change of successful experience of regional-level cooperation could provide greater stimulus and support for improved forest management at all levels. It is hoped that the discussion to take place at the Ministerial Breakfast will further explore the challenges to sustainable forest management and the advantages of using regional processes to further the goal of sustaining pro-poor growth, food security and peace, particularly in Africa.