

## **ITTO/IUCN International Workshop on Increasing the Effectiveness of Transboundary Conservation Areas in Tropical Forests**

17-21 February 2003, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand

### **Transboundary Conservation Areas and the Intergovernmental Forest Policy Dialogue (IPF/IFF/UNFF)**

**Pekka Patosaari**

Coordinator and Head, Secretariat of the UN Forum on Forests

The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) is one of the 10 functional commissions under the aegis of the Economic and Social Council of the UN (ECOSOC). As a permanent intergovernmental policy and political forum, composed of all State Members of the UN and members of the specialised agencies, the Forum serves in the development of international forest policy while facilitating the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action as well as other relevant forest-related agreements. The UNFF also fosters a common understanding of sustainable forest management and addresses international forest policy issues - particularly emerging areas of priority concern.

Deliberations within the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)(1995-1997) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) (1997-2000) enriched the forest policy process and resulted in a wide-ranging set of proposals for action towards sustainable forest management. A considerable number of these proposals for action address transboundary forest conservation and protected areas.

To support the UNFF, a Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) was established in 2001 following the recommendation of the ECOSOC. The CPF consists of thirteen members, including IUCN and ITTO, from forest-related international organizations, institutions and instruments, and secretariats of conventions, that have the capacity, programmes and resources to support the UNFF process, particularly in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. The UNFF Secretariat services the UNFF and assists with the overall coordination of the CPF.

This presentation highlights the outcomes of the IPF, IFF and UNFF as they relate to Transboundary Conservation Areas. Furthermore, the presentation demonstrates the willingness of the UNFF Secretariat to continue working closely with other partners in order to support the establishment of Transboundary Conservation Areas, as well as the the relationship between TCBA sand sustainable forest management.

#### **Outcome of the IPF/IFF/UNFF as it Relates to TBCAs**

The IFF encouraged countries that share ecologically important or unique transboundary forests, to establish joint protected forest areas to safeguard forest and related ecosystems, by establishing or expanding networks of protected areas, buffer zones and ecological corridors and by establishing agreed upon guidelines concerning their collaborative management.

The IFF called upon countries, international financial institutions and other donors to provide financial support and other resources to activities in developing countries related to forest

conservation and to the implementation and management of protected areas in the surrounding landscape, in accordance with national action plans, where such plans exist. This should be done through institutional strengthening and capacity-building; research, education and public awareness; promotion of access, development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies; and through technical and scientific cooperation.

The IFF also invited and encouraged countries and relevant international organizations and institutions to a collective work to develop guidelines to enhance consistency in the interpretation and use of existing IUCN categories of protected areas, to be used in a national context. It also encouraged developing a global approach for assessing the effectiveness of protected forest area management in relation to environmental, social, cultural and other relevant objectives.

The IFF further acknowledged that existing protected areas are important in protecting a number of forest values and represent considerable effort and achievement on the part of all concerned in their establishment and management. However, it was noted that fragmentation of forest land might be a constraint to the effective protection of biodiversity and ecological functions of forest areas. In a number of countries, existing protected areas are not, in themselves, sufficient to maintain forest conservation objectives.

Forest conservation cannot be based solely on a rigid demarcation between protected areas and all other forms of land use, in particular, commercial forest use. Where possible, protected areas should form part of a landscape continuum where the conservation of biological diversity, environmental services and other values, are also accorded priority in the wider context of other forest management and land-use practices in surrounding areas.

Most countries have adopted legislation, policies and strategies towards landscape management, biological diversity, forest conservation and protected areas. However, implementation and enforcement of these policies and laws, in many countries, is inadequate. Insufficient coordination of conflicting policies and practices, inappropriate implementation strategies and lack of political will and financial and human resources are widely recognized as the major reasons for the failure to achieve forest conservation goals in some countries.

The effectiveness of the management of protected areas can be assessed in terms of security of status through the implementation of appropriate legislation, the effectiveness of protection of biodiversity and ecological values, institutional capacity, positive social impacts, the level of support from indigenous and local communities and adequate financial support at both the national and international levels.

At its second session (March 2002), the UNFF invited the donor community, CPF members and major groups, as appropriate, to assist countries in strengthening their capacity to undertake national assessment of protected areas of threat, with a particular emphasis on fragile and unique forest ecosystems; and to support developing countries' efforts to increase the effectiveness of the management of their protected areas, by building on existing international frameworks and incorporating capacity-building programmes.

### **The mutually supportive nature of UNFF and TBCAs**

The UNFF and the CPF provide two unique opportunities for dialogue on forests and for enhancing cooperation and coordination on issues related to TBCAs. The key organizing partners of this workshop, ITTO and IUCN are both members of the CPF, with catalytic roles of engaging CPF members in the promotion of TBCAs.

The CPF Network, an informal network open to all stakeholders interested in forests, including individuals, international, regional and national organizations, institutions, instruments and processes, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples' organizations, private sector entities and other major groups, provides a further channel for information sharing among a wide range of partners in support of the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. While increasing collaboration on forests, the Network also brings together a broad range of expertise, resources and perspectives, adding value to the forest policy dialogue and promoting sustainable forest management.

An important task of the UNFF is to consider how to incorporate regional perspectives into its work. In this respect, TBCAs may be a vehicle to focus regional cooperation on forests, in general, since TBCAs are intrinsically a regional phenomenon, requiring regional approaches that support the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The UNFF Secretariat is closely monitoring, and in some cases, directly involved in, several existing regional processes that TBCAs may wish to benefit from, including those in Africa (NEPAD, Congo Basin Partnership), Asia (Asia Forest Partnership), Latin America (Model Forest Network) and Europe (MCPFE).