

# TROPICAL FORESTRY ACTION PLAN

REPORT  
of the  
INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, May 1990

## Background to the Independent Review

In a move to strengthen international efforts to save the world's rapidly vanishing tropical forests, an independent high-level review of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) was initiated by the Director General of FAO. The review took place in January - May, 1990.

The members of the review team were:-

Ambassador Ola Ullsten, former Prime Minister of Sweden and Swedish Ambassador to Italy.  
Dr. Salleh Mohd. Nor, Director-General of the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia.  
Dr. Montague Yudelman, Senior Fellow of the Conservation Foundation, USA and formerly of the World Bank.

The terms of reference for the review are set out in full in Appendix 1.

The review included field visits to tropical countries. Members of the team visited Cameroon, Ghana, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Honduras and Colombia. They also had discussions with aid agencies, government representatives and international non-government organisations in Europe, North America and Japan. In Rome, the team had access to the wealth of data and experience built up by FAO, particularly while acting as the main international coordinating agency for the TFAP since 1985. All aspects of TFAP implementation were considered and the Plan's objectives and strategies were examined in the light of changes in the economic and environmental situation since it was launched.

The review concluded with a meeting in Malaysia at which this Report was finalized.

The review team acknowledges with thanks the assistance so freely given by so many individuals and organisations while carrying out its task.

The team is particularly indebted to Dr. Michael Gane of the United Kingdom, who made a valuable contribution to the substance of this report and assisted in its preparation.

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involved in at least ten country exercises - considerable progress compared with five years earlier. We expect international and local NGOs to continue to contribute constructively to the TFAP. We note their complaint that they are not allowed access to TFAP reports and other documents, which are classified as confidential. It is difficult to see how they can be better informed until freedom of information is accepted as a matter of principle and there is willingness to authorise the release of relevant information. We strongly urge that every effort be made to persuade all parties that pertinent information be disclosed in a timely fashion. The new Guidelines which we propose should address this issue. A central repository for documents and a data base are also prescribed.

In line with the objectives of the TFAP, it needs to be emphasized that part of the commitment is to widen participation in the consultation process at country level such that the government actively promotes the involvement of NGOs. So far this has only happened in a few countries.

There are also many other international organisations with numerous programs on tropical forestry, such as UNESCO, UNEP, IUCN, WWF, ITTO, World Food Programme etc. These programmes are all related directly or indirectly to the aims of the TFAP. While these institutions are encouraged to continue their programmes in tropical forestry, there should be closer contacts between the TFAP Secretariat and these agencies so that there is greater and more effective coordination than hitherto in their programmes in order that they can reinforce and support each other.

### 5.13 An International Forest Convention

Proposals for international conventions on biodiversity and climate change are under consideration. The UNEP/WMO initiative for a Convention on Climate Change, with a Protocol on Tropical Forests, is likely to be discussed at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development.

Neither convention is likely to directly address the issue, of the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources for the benefit of mankind, which is central for forestry. Conversely, forestry is likely to be a major component of the other conventions. We believe that an initiative for a separate international forest convention is appropriate and timely for the following reasons:-

- First, forests are essential to the well-being not only of the localities in which they are found but of the entire world. Their survival depends on factors arising in the forest, in the nation and throughout the world. There is now a clear perception of the ecological services provided by forests and of the global interdependence of forests and man.

- Second, there is a global awareness of the need for international and national action on all aspects of forest management, conservation and development. In fact, forests are a precious resource for mankind not only for their ecological services but also for their economic value; they play a major role in the economies of many countries. There is need for a conceptual framework within which to foster intensified cooperation between countries.
- Third, while various conventions deal with forestry issues, their scope is limited either because they cover only specific subjects, such as trade in timber, or because they deal only with forests within the framework of a convention on nature conservation generally. There is a clear need for a comprehensive global convention dealing directly with all aspects of forest management, conservation and development.
- Fourth, a forestry convention would serve as a bridge between opposing view points. It would help to harmonize the ecological and economic approaches to the use of forest resources and thereby reconcile the divergent points of view of developed and developing countries.

Although our remit is to review the TFAP, we consider that a convention dealing only with tropical forests is not appropriate. It is preferable to include them as an important component of a general convention which covers all forests. The role of forests in relation to biodiversity and climate change is no different intrinsically in the temperate forests than in the tropics. However, the TFAP would undoubtedly be strengthened if it operated within the framework of a global forest convention and could become the main instrument for implementing the convention in tropical countries. Furthermore if the convention provides special finance on highly concessional terms, such as the proposed 'green window' at the World Bank, this would become available for tropical countries.

Article XIV of the FAO Constitution could, we understand, provide a legal basis for the proposed International Convention on Forests. The proposal could be put to the next meeting of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) in September, followed by the Council of FAO at its ninety-eighth session in November, 1990. It could then be developed for presentation to the Xth. World Forestry Congress, to be held in Paris in 1991. It may then be taken up by the Conference of FAO which meets in November, 1991 or also be offered to the 1992 UN Conference on the Environment and Development. It will be necessary to harmonize the forest convention with the other initiatives which are under way, and it may be possible to arrange shared protocols.