

our planet

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ZHOU QIANG
TRANSFORMING
DEVELOPMENT

EMMANUEL ZE MEKA
WELL WORTH PAYING FOR

RAY C. ANDERSON
IT'S NATURE'S WAY

YOLANDA KAKABADSE
FORESTS PRODUCE
GREEN GROWTH

FORESTS

Nature at your service





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reflections

ACHIM STEINER

UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UNEP

This year marks a first for the long standing relationship between India and the United Nations. For the first time ever India will host World Environment Day (WED). With a population of 1.2 billion people, a rapidly growing economy and a diverse cultural past, present and future there is enormous potential for India to catalyze and to champion sustainable development nationally and internationally.

This year's WED theme is 'Forests: Nature at Your Service'. It speaks to the intrinsic connection between livelihoods and human well being and the health of forests and forest ecosystems.

India has shown leadership by, for example, instituting a tree-planting system to combat land-degradation and desertification, including windbreaks and shelterbelts to protect agricultural land. The recently launched Mission for Green India, as part of National Action Plan on Climate Change, aims at qualitative as well as quantitative improvement in forest cover over 10 million hectares, with an estimated outlay of about US\$10 billion over the next 10 years.

India has successfully introduced projects that track the health of the nation's plants, animals, water and other natural resources including the Sunderbans — the largest deltaic mangrove forest in the world, and home to one of India's most iconic wildlife species: the tiger.

Meanwhile the country is increasingly at the forefront of some of the 'green shoots' of a Green Economy that are emerging across the globe.

From its manufacturing of solar and wind turbines to its Rural Employment Guarantee Act which underwrites paid work for millions of households via investments in areas ranging from water conservation to sustainable land management, foundations are being laid in India towards a fundamental and far reaching new development path..

UNEP's recent report — A Transition to a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication underlines that such a transition not only possible but relevant to developing nations as it is to developed ones.

WED 2011 comes in advance of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 or Rio+20. Its twin themes are the Green Economy within the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and an institutional framework for sustainable development.

Rio+20 comes against a backdrop of rapidly diminishing natural resources and accelerating environmental change — from the loss of coral reefs and forests to the rising scarcity of productive land; from the urgent need to feed and fuel economies and the likely impacts of unchecked climate change.

India is among a range of nations spotlighting different choices that represent an opportunity to fulfil the promise of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit in order to deliver development that meets the needs of seven billion people, rising to nine billion by 2050.

One that delivers growth, greater equity and employment opportunities: one that keeps humanity's footprint within planetary boundaries in order to ensure that Nature can remain at our service for current and future generations.



JAIRAM RAMESH

Minister for Environment and Forests, India

"We need a strong ethic of conservation and in this role, World Environment Day is a powerful catalyst and voice. There must be limits on how and where we encroach on the natural world for without them habitats will be paved over, rivers ruined, corals bleached and forests unwittingly plowed for agriculture."



ZHOU QIANG

Party Secretary of Hunan Province and
UNEP Champion of the Earth

TRANSFORMING DEVELOPMENT

Adopting a sustainable approach that both satisfies a society's economic dynamics and protects the ecological environment has become a major international challenge. We in the province of Hunan, in central China, are determined to meet it, and will work with others across the world to do so.

Hunan is blessed with a high level of forest cover, along with an optimal climate and abundant rainfall — but it faces great environmental stresses with rapid industrialization and urbanization. In recent years, it has actively responded to calls to manage forests so as to increase their role as carbon sinks and partially counteract emissions of carbon dioxide covered by the Kyoto Protocol. In line with the Chinese Government's requirements and action to accelerate the transformation of the country's mode of development, Hunan's basic principle and aim is green, low-carbon and sustainable economic and social development. Accordingly, we comprehensively are promoting a new style of industrialization, agricultural modernization,

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and urbanization. We are aiming to construct a resource-saving and environment-friendly society, focusing on building a ‘Green Hunan’.

Leading the people to love trees and forests is an essential part of this. For over 30 years, provincial leaders have been in the forefront both of voluntary tree planting and of mobilizing people throughout Hunan to engage in it — thus creating a multi-agent and multi-level afforestation programme. Zhangjiajie, a city in northwestern Hunan, has held the China International Forest Protection Festival — with the theme ‘Green for the Earth and Forests for Humanity’ for 14 consecutive years. It is not only one of China’s ten ecological festivals, but the only one featuring ‘forest protection’ as its theme.

“Those who own some properties and have greater perseverance”, as the ancient Chinese Scholar Mencius put it, “tend to plan both production and their livelihoods in a systematic way”. Since 2008 Hunan has been vigorously promoting the reform of the system of collective forest rights so as to protect the interests of tree farmers and entice them into both planting trees and protecting forests. As a result, they can all receive forestry land use certificates clarifying ownership and are encouraged to manage the land under contracts so that they can benefit from the orderly cutting of their own trees. This undertaking

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has greatly stimulated farmers’ enthusiasm: many treat trees tenderly like grain seedlings and are willing to plant them wherever there is empty unused land.

We are also determined to strengthen the environmental protection of forest in cities to counteract the effects of wood chopping and requisition of forest land during rapid urbanization. In addition, the province is making the Changsha-Zhuzhou-Xiangtan (CZT) city cluster a Vienna Forest — with tree cover greater than 45%— enacting legislation to safeguard Zhaoshan Mountain, the green heart of the city cluster, and protecting the core area by making it a pilot of a resource-conserving and environmentally-friendly society.

We are also attempting to turn the Xiangjiang River into an Oriental Rhine through comprehensive treatment of both it and Dongting Lake and by constructing a Xiangjiang River Scenic Belt. As a result, the CZT’s core ecological district will be in good custody, forest coverage will be increased and the wetlands of the Yangtze, Xiangjiang and other rivers will be conserved and well-protected.

Continuous efforts in building “Green Hunan” have yielded remarkable achievements. The forest land area of Hunan has reached 193 million mu (about 12.87 million hectares), with the addition of a total 402 million cubic meters of storage volume. Forest cover amounts to over 50%, and it absorbs 60 million tons of carbon dioxide annually. At the same time, over 90% of the province’s surface water meets drinking water standards, and the air of all its cities and prefectures has achieved the Second National Ambient Air Quality Standard. This ecological environment has attracted many well-known enterprises — both domestic and foreign — to invest in Hunan, in turn promoting rapid and sound social and economic development.

Achieving sustainable development calls for in-depth cooperation and joint efforts. These have global significance. Over recent years, for example, the Indonesian Government has adjusted its development strategy to enhance the protection of tropical rainforests, and it plans to plant 1.5 billion trees each year. This has enlightened our vision of building a ‘Green Hunan’. In turn, we are willing to share the experience we have gained in such fields such as forest protection and sustainable development with Indonesia and other countries and to further promote mutual exchange and cooperation in protecting the earth — the common homeland of humanity.



Well worth paying for



EMMANUEL ZE MEKA

Executive Director,
International Tropical Timber Organization

Many studies — such as UNEP's *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* — have recently reported on the high ecosystem service values associated with forests, especially tropical ones. They have found that the values of water, carbon storage, soils, biodiversity maintenance and other forest ecosystem functions dwarf the economic value of traditional forest products (primarily timber). This leads to forests being valued at billions — or, globally, trillions — of dollars. Nevertheless, about 13 million hectares of tropical forests continued to be lost — along with their valuable biodiversity and other ecosystem services — every year from 2000 to 2010. How could this be?

There is a simple answer. While the ecosystem services catalogued and assessed in recent reports, using sophisticated economic techniques, are indeed valuable, the markets for transferring payments for them mostly remain in their infancy — if, indeed they exist at all. With the exception of the emerging global market for carbon, there are no mechanisms for tropical countries to monetize the potential value of their forests. No one is lining up to pay them for these services. So it is not surprising that forest owners (mostly countries but sometimes also the private sector) decide to use the land on which those forests sit for what they perceive to be more productive economic uses, such as agriculture.

ITTO — an intergovernmental organization based in Yokohama, Japan — began life a quarter of a century ago as a commodity organization focused on promoting markets for sustainably produced tropical timber. This objective is still relevant, but the Organization has increasingly sought to help countries manage their forests sustainably and add value to all tropical forest services; it recognises that the revenue from any one service is simply insufficient to offset benefits from such competing land-uses as agricultural crops or oil palm, with their relatively short harvest cycles and simpler management regimes.

Timber remains the single most important way of generating revenue from tropical forests. It has earned tropical countries over \$20 billion in export earnings annually over the last decade, if both primary and secondary processed products (like furniture) are taken into account. Indeed the forest sector's contribution to economic development is even greater when the millions of jobs it creates and the revenues generated by domestic timber markets are also considered. Sustainable forestry and sustainably produced timber products must therefore be a part of the solution both to valuing tropical forests appropriately and to reversing their continuing clearance while simultaneously promoting economic development. So ITTO continues to argue that it is essential that the new funding schemes being formulated to combat climate change (such as "REDD+" or Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) include sustainable forestry — incorporating sustainable timber production — within their approved activities.

There is a wealth of experience — some of it generated from ITTO field projects — on how to produce timber and other forest products

"Sustainable forestry and sustainably produced timber products must be a part of the solution both to valuing tropical forests appropriately and to reversing their continuing clearance while simultaneously promoting economic development."

sustainably — by taking the ecology of the tree species into account, using technology to reduce the impact of harvesting, undertaking appropriate rehabilitation and/or reforestation afterwards, and providing market information to ensure the resulting products are fairly priced, so that funds can flow back to the forest. Of course corruption and poor governance — which affect many sectors and countries — need to be tackled to allow the system to work and to ensure funds are not misappropriated: significant work on tackling such problems has been undertaken globally in recent years.

ITTO has tracked progress towards sustainable forest management (SFM) in the tropics since its formation. One of the Organization's first studies (published as the 1989 book "No Timber without Trees"; by Duncan Poore) found that only a miniscule amount of the world's tropical forest was under sustainable management in the late 1980s. A follow up study — ITTO's Status of Tropical Forest Management 2005 — found that, though there had been improvements, the area under SFM was still only around 5% of what was

intended to be kept as forest, both for production and for protection, in tropical countries. ITTO's most recent survey — Status of Tropical Forest Management 2011 — finds that progress has continued over the past five years: well over three million hectares a year has been added to the total area under SFM in the tropics. However this still leaves over 90% of the world's tropical forests under poor or no management. Clearly, progress in SFM needs to accelerate to meet our shared goal of ensuring the future of global tropical forest resources.

UNEP — as the key UN agency charged with promoting environmental sustainability — shares a special concern for tropical forests and their ecosystem values, and they have a high profile on the lead-up to next year's Rio+20 Earth Summit. It is worth recalling, however, that many stakeholders (especially the developing countries where virtually all tropical forests exist) were disappointed with the lack of "new and additional" resources that the international community was expected to make available to implement the non-binding forest principles agreed during the original 1992 Earth Summit. In the nearly two decades since that historic event many services provided by tropical forests — including ecotourism, bio-prospecting, and most recently REDD and carbon — have been identified as having the potential to reverse their continued loss. Organizations like ITTO and UNEP must work with governments, NGOs, the private sector and other stakeholders to develop fair and equitable markets for these and other forest products and services. In this way, we can help to send the global community a clear message that managing tropical forests sustainably is a viable land-use option — provided that we properly value and pay for the many goods and services they produce.



FRANCES SEYMOUR

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Director General

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