



EU

# Forest Watch

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## New report shows way forward for forests in CBD

On 15 April at a side event of the main CBD COP6 negotiations the Global Forest Coalition (GFC) and Fern will launch a new report that independently reviews the implementation of forest related commitments in the CBD. The report calls on the CBD Parties to assert an active leadership and reinforce their commitment to forests as the terrestrial strongholds of Earth's biodiversity.

Commissioned by the GFC, the report, *Status of Implementation of Forest-Related Clauses in the CBD: An independent review and recommendations for action*, assesses how far 21 selected countries have succeeded in meeting their commitments to key forest-related CBD articles and decisions. Of the countries studied, 14 are in the South, two are countries with economies in transition, and five are in the North. Together, the forests in these countries comprise over half of the Earth's forest area.

The report shows that the main impact of the CBD's ratification has been the development of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs). The implementation of other forest-related CBD commitments has been sporadic however:

- Lack of financial resources has hindered implementation of the NBSAPs. Even where GEF funding has ensured development, the follow-up has not been sufficient. Long-term financial, legal and political support is needed.
- Participation of stakeholders in the development and implementation of

NBSAPs and in determining priority actions has generally been inadequate.

- All countries have established a 'system' of protected areas but in no instance is it viewed as sufficient to sustain biodiversity.
- Some limited steps to protect and encourage customary and traditional use of biological resources have been taken. Most of these initiatives are very small and linked to NGO activities.

The report is timed to inform decision-makers at CBD COP6 as they discuss the adoption of an action-oriented work programme on forests. The report calls for COP6 to assert leadership on forests and make use of the CBD's holistic mandate and binding character. The report recommends that CBD adopt the following:

- A strategic plan focusing on the

integration of biodiversity in other sectors, including the forestry sector;

- An holistic work programme on forest biological diversity prioritizing the elimination of 'perverse incentives' leading to forest loss and the establishment of a comprehensive and effective network of protected areas;
- A commitment to create national-level forest biodiversity working groups and monitor the implementation of forest related commitments at that level;
- Provision of adequate resources for countries to develop and implement NBSAPs ensuring participation of all relevant parties, especially indigenous peoples and local communities

The report will be launched at 6.15pm on 15 April, at a COP6 side-event. It is also available on request from Fern at [info@fern.org](mailto:info@fern.org).

## High stakes for forests after UNFF

This year started promisingly for forests with two major intergovernmental meetings in the diary: the second meeting of the UNFF (4-15 March) and the sixth Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (7-19 April).

Although hopes were not high for UNFF2, few expected it to fail in such a dismal fashion. The late-stage relocation of the meeting from Costa Rica to New York resulted in a poor organisation, insufficient space for negotiations and strict last-minute accreditation rules. Still, there were more profound problems that lead to the failure of the UNFF's second meeting (see attached special report for details).

Now, all eyes are focused on the sixth Conference of the Parties of the CBD, which starts on 7 April. The two main agenda items are the adoption of a work programme on forests and a strategic plan. Both of these have been prepared in draft form and give some hope for positive action to protect and sustainable use the world's forests. But, as usual, much rests on the determination of delegates to make this a turning point in the forest crisis. For Fern's view see the special report enclosed.



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Carmanah Valley, Canada.

Like many tropical forests, this temperate rainforest is the focus of a land rights dispute and an environmental campaign.

NGOs and forest peoples have joined forces to protect the valley from clear cutting.

## Forest definitions: a chance to get real

We all know that there are many ways to Rome and even more ways to define a forest. For anyone not yet convinced, please try a websearch and take your pick. Different intergovernmental bodies, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the CBD and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) also use different definitions, which may or may not be compatible with each other. This is perceived as a problem by some governments, while many NGOs argue that the current FAO definition (which, in short, identifies a forest as anywhere with a crown cover of more than 10%) is misleading. 'Misleading' not least because clearcutting a primary old growth forest and replacing it with a monoculture tree plantation is currently not classed as 'deforestation' in FAO statistics.

It is therefore to be welcomed that the FAO and the IPCC, in collaboration with the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the International Union of Forestry Research Organisation (IUFRO), have initiated a review of forest related definitions. Following the first meeting held in Rome in January, a task force has now been formed consisting of FAO representatives, WWF, IUFRO, UNEP, CIFOR and the Malaysian Government. A draft framework for forest-related definitions is being developed and will be presented at a second meeting expected in June. The only negative note is about the limited participation of social and environmental organisations in this process. It should be acknowledged that many of these organisations have more 'technical' knowledge and understanding of forests and affiliated definitions than some of the governments and agencies present.

## Villagers take timber company to court

On 22 March, a complaint was brought to the Paris magistrate's court on behalf of seven Cameroonian villagers against the Société Forestière et Industrielle de Doumé (SFID) and Rougier S.A. The latter is a French timber company listed on the Paris stock exchange that also owns 56% of SFID. In essence the villagers will accuse the two companies of illegal logging in Cameroon. The charges include destruction of property, forgery, fraud, possession of stolen goods, and corrupting of civil servants.

The villagers have turned to the French justice system because they believe that Cameroonian justice has been corrupted by the influence of European forestry companies, and that local citizens have therefore been deprived of the fundamental right of an independent judiciary. The villagers expect the French magistrate to provide an independent and impartial judgement and view the case as an opportunity to bring the EU companies to justice for alleged illegal destruction of forests.

## ECAs: Commission and Council take two more steps on path to progress

On 4 March the Environment Council concluded its Sustainable Development Strategy in the run up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (26 August - 4 September 2002). The Council called on the EU to act to ensure that environmentally and socially responsible investment and business is promoted and that sustainable foreign direct investment and export credits consistent with sustainable development are encouraged.

Similarly, the Commission's working paper 'Environment Integration in the External Policies of the General Affairs Council' stresses that progress on integrating environmental considerations with export credits is essential.

Taken together, these two documents seem to indicate a gradual shift in the EU's position on export credits. Let us hope that this will lead to adoption of binding environmental, social and human rights standards for EU export credit agencies (ECAs).

## How to assess forest certification schemes

*Assessing Forest Certification Schemes: a practical guide* is a report that many have been anticipating. Presented by the UK consultancy ProForest in close co-operation with a number of consultants from all sides, the report aims to provide governments and Commission officials with the tools to carry out adequate assessments of forest certification schemes.

The report does not include an assessment of the FSC or the PEFC (or indeed any specific scheme), but provides an approach to identifying objectives and a discussion of the key elements of a forest certification scheme. Once governments and other users have identified their own objectives for forest certification they can use the tools developed in this report to assess existing certification schemes. The assessment is based on three steps: identify the objects which the scheme will need to deliver; identify which elements of the scheme will influence whether the objectives are met and establish the way in which each of the identified elements will need to be designed in order to meet the objectives in practice. To facilitate the assessment a checklist is added. The report is available at [www.proforest.net](http://www.proforest.net)

## Forest Agenda

**7-19 April:** COP6 of the CBD, The Hague.

**15 April:** 6.15pm side event at the COP6 of CBD: Launch of Fern's report *Status of implementation of forest-related clauses in the CBD: an independent review and recommendations for action*.

**22-24 April:** DG Relex consultation on illegal logging, Brussels.

**24-26 April:** OECD meeting on sustainable development, Paris.