

## **“Disseminating Scientific Information for Policy and Management”**

Report on IUFRO's Parallel Event at the Asia Pacific Forestry Week  
Hanoi, Viet Nam, 25 April 2008

Over the past several years, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) has implemented a number of initiatives that aim at promoting the interactions between forest science and policy, and the dissemination of scientific knowledge to forest stakeholders. Towards this end, a one-day seminar was organized by IUFRO as a Parallel Event at the First Asia Pacific Forestry Week in Hanoi, Vietnam, on 25 April 2008. The event was made possible through generous funding by the Korea Forest Research Institute (KFRI) and contributions from various members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

In his welcome address, Professor Don K. Lee, President of IUFRO, expressed his gratitude to FAO for accommodating this IUFRO event within the programme of the First Asia Pacific Forestry Week. He welcomed the participants and thanked them for their interest in the issue of effective dissemination of forest-related scientific information.

Professor Lee informed the participants about IUFRO's current involvement in three global initiatives promoting the interaction between forest science and forest policy and management. These initiatives are (a) Capacity Building on Science Policy Interfacing, (b) Joint CPF Initiative on Science and Technology, and (c) the Global Forest Information Service (GFIS). Based on these initiatives the programme of the seminar (Annex 1) was organised in three sessions and is briefly described in this report.

### **Session 1: Capacity Building on Science Policy Interfacing**

The need for sound scientific information in the development of public environmental and forest-related policies at the local, national and international levels has grown significantly in recent years. So, too, has the need for such information within the private forestry sector and among non-governmental organizations, whose role in the development, sustainable management and conservation of forest resources in all regions of the world is steadily increasing in importance. Although it is commonly accepted that scientific information is indispensable for policy and management, linking substantive knowledge and authoritative political decision making is a chronically difficult task.

Michael Kleine, Coordinator of IUFRO's Special Programme for Developing Countries, described in his presentation (Annex 2) some of the major features of the science-policy

interface and discussed past experiences made with work in science-policy interactions. He further reported on the work of the IUFRO Task Force on the Science Policy Interface, which compiled a best practices guide on “Effectively working at the interface of forest science and forest policy.” These guidelines are available online on the IUFRO website at <http://www.iufro.org/publications/series/occasional-papers/>.

Based on the work of this Task Force, IUFRO’s Special Programme for Developing Countries (IUFRO-SPDC) has developed a training module on science-policy interfacing for scientists and research managers in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The aim of this training is to provide concepts and methods for researchers on how to plan, conduct, and organise research activities, so that results can more quickly and easily be transformed into usable information for problem-solving and policy-making. Over the past three years several training workshops have been organised in all three regions and the demand for such training continues to remain high. The training events were made possible through contributions by expert institutions (e.g. resource persons and expertise) and financial support through various donor organisations of international development. Detailed information about the training workshops is available on the IUFRO-SPDC website at <http://www.iufro.org/science/special/spdc/>.

## **Session 2: Joint Initiative on Science and Technology**

Markku Kanninen, Director of CIFOR’s Environmental Services Programme and member of the Steering Committee of the Joint Initiative on Science and Technology, gave a presentation (Annex 3) on IUFRO’s science-policy work at the international level. Since 2001 IUFRO, through its Special Project on World Forests, Society and Environment (WFSE), has been actively involved in global networking focusing on the broad interrelationship between forests, society and the environment. The WFSE network shares scientific knowledge and participates in forest-related policy processes, synthesises research findings on topics of global and regional importance and publishes the results in books, scientific synthesis reports and policy briefs. The core group of WFSE is composed of 9 leading research institutions coordinated by IUFRO.

Over the past four years, the work of IUFRO at the international level has intensified significantly with representations of IUFRO in sessions of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). One of the results of these efforts is a new Joint Initiative of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), coordinated by IUFRO. This Joint Initiative supports international forest-related processes by assessing available scientific information and by producing reports on forest-related issues of high concern. The main principles of the work of the Joint Initiative include the incorporation of scientific results generated by experts from all regions of the world, the assessment of existing information without conducting new research, and communicating effectively with policy makers at the right time (<http://www.iufro.org/science/science-initiative/>).

The outcome includes focused reports reflecting state-of-the-art understanding on the subject matter, representing comprehensive, peer-reviewed scientific assessments with each report containing a summary for policy makers.

Based on consultations with policy-makers and stakeholders at UNFF-7 (April 2007), CBD SBSTTA-12 (July 2007), and the Forest Day Bali (December 2007) “Adaptation of Forests to Climate Change” was confirmed as the first priority theme to be addressed by an expert panel to be established under the Joint Initiative. This panel provides sector-specific assessments of available knowledge on impacts and vulnerabilities of forests and people, and adaptation options, recognizes various spatial and temporal scales involved, makes best use of information provided by IPCC, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, and prepares a report for use by UNFF-8 (April 2009), and also by UNFCCC and CBD.

Core issues to be addressed in the panel report include potential future environmental, economic and social impacts as well as adaptation options for policy and management.

Session 1 and 2 each concluded with lively discussions on science-policy interfacing whereby the participants shared their own experiences on interactions between policy-makers and other stakeholders. Overall the discussions showed that although there is agreement on the importance of interacting with stakeholders at various levels, constraints on the part of the science community in many developing countries with regard to time, human and financial resources, and hierarchical and cultural barriers prevent effective interactions with the decision-making levels.

### **Session 3: Global Forest Information Service (GFIS)**

The third session of the IUFRO event – taking place in the afternoon – focused on the Global Forest Information Service (GFIS) and was moderated by Ho Sang Kang, GFIS Regional Coordinator for Asia and Russia. GFIS, an IUFRO-led CPF Initiative, provides the framework for sharing forest-related data and information through a single gateway. The main objectives of this session were a) to introduce the GFIS concept, b) invite current information provider partners from the regions to share their experiences with GFIS, c) invite new potential partners to discuss their expectations of global information sharing, and d) demonstrate under real-world conditions how easy it is to create the necessary information feeds (RSS) and link them to the GFIS gateway at <http://www.gfis.net/>.

In the first presentation Eero Mikkola, the GFIS Coordinator, introduced the participants to the latest GFIS internet gateway as well as the status of partnership development with expert institutions from around the world. This was followed by short presentations prepared by three GFIS partners – i.e. Research Center for Forest Ecology & Environment (RCFEE) Vietnam; Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research

Institutions (APAFRI); and USDA Forest Service (USA) on their experiences with providing information to GFIS and using the system in their daily work. Some recommendations and plans for future development of GFIS were mentioned.

In a second block of presentations, potential GFIS partners in Asia – i.e. Indonesian Ministry of Forestry; Indonesian Center for Education & Training (CFET); Myanmar Forest Research Institute, and The World Resources Institute Forest Team Indonesia informed the participants about their own information resources and how these are currently stored, managed and disseminated. They also elaborated on their expectations of GFIS when joining as GFIS partners.

In a final session, Mr. Randy D. McCracken, USDA Forest Service demonstrated how a forest information news feed – based on “Really Simple Syndication” (RSS) – can be created and linked to the GFIS gateway. In this way, individual information resources can be located from anywhere in the world.

Overall, the participants showed great interest in GFIS and some of them expressed their interest to join as GFIS partners. In the weeks to come, the GFIS Coordination Unit will establish contacts with these potential partners to finalize the link to GFIS and commence with the exchange of forest-related information resources. The presentations made during this session can be downloaded from the IUFRO website at <http://www.iufro.org/science/gfis/>.

A powerpoint presentation was shown by KFRI regarding the preparation and invitation to XXIII IUFRO World Congress to be held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in August 2010. A promotional video was presented showing the excellent meeting facilities of the congress venue in Seoul and various forested landscapes of Korea, which will be visited during the in-congress and post-congress excursions. For more information please visit the Congress Website at <http://www.iufro2010.com/>.

### **Closing Remarks**

The IUFRO event concluded with closing remarks by the IUFRO President, Professor Don K. Lee. With 57 registered participants from 14 countries in the Asia Pacific region this event was very successful, providing latest information on IUFRO's ongoing initiatives on the dissemination of scientific information for policy and management. Professor Lee thanked all the participants for their support and active participation and expressed his hope for further closer cooperation among scientists in the region under the umbrella of IUFRO.