



International Union of Forest Research Organizations

Union Internationale des
Instituts de Recherches
Forestières

Unión Internacional
de Organizaciones de
Investigación Forestal

Internationaler
Verband Forstlicher
Forschungsanstalten

ADAPTATION OF FORESTS AND PEOPLE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Action pledge of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations to the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change

BACKGROUND

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) is “the” global network for forest science cooperation. IUFRO’s mission is to promote global cooperation in forest-related research and to enhance the understanding of the ecological, economic and social aspects of forests and trees; as well as to disseminate scientific knowledge to stakeholders and decision-makers and to contribute to forest policy and on-the-ground forest management.

IUFRO unites more than 15,000 scientists in almost 700 Member Organizations in over 110 countries who collaborate on a voluntary basis. Scientists with similar interests working under different economic, political, and environmental conditions spread over eight permanent Divisions, sub-divided in Research Groups and Working Parties, as well as a number of Task Forces that are established for a limited period of time. Numerous scientific units of IUFRO address aspects related to forests and climate change, including both climate change impacts and vulnerabilities (forest health, natural disasters, etc.) and adaptation measures (silviculture, forest monitoring, etc.).

IUFRO is a member of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), an alliance of 14 international organizations that each has substantial forestry programs. Membership in the CPF also includes the UNFCCC Secretariat. Within the CPF, IUFRO leads and coordinates the Global Forest Expert Panels (GFEP) initiative. GFEP was launched in April 2007 to provide objective and independent scientific assessments of key issues in order to support more informed decision-making at the global level. The assessments are carried out by thematic Global Forest Expert Panels uniting leading scientists from around the world.

As consultations with policy makers identified adaptation of forests to climate change as an issue of high concern, the first Global Forest Expert Panel (Expert Panel on Adaptation of Forests to Climate Change) was set up in October 2007 to assess the state of knowledge regarding the impacts of climate change on forests, their implications for human wellbeing, and options for adaptation.

ACTION PLEDGE

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Overall objectives

The action pledge aims to contribute to the Nairobi Work Programme by means of (i) providing a global assessment of scientific information about the impacts of climate change on forests, their implications for human wellbeing, and options for adaptation, (ii) effectively disseminating the assessment results to policy makers, stakeholders and the public, and (iii) developing follow-up activities supporting the objectives and activities of the second phase of the Nairobi work programme. The project activities are carried out in the frame of the CPF Global Forest Expert Panels Initiative. They contribute to both sub-themes of the Nairobi work programme by:

- improving the understanding globally of climate change impacts on forests, implications for human livelihoods and options for adaptation, including identification of knowledge gaps and further research needs; and
- contributing to the development of strategies, policies and measures for forest adaptation that are based on the best scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge available from multiple sources, taking into account current and future climate change and variability.

More specifically, the activities of this action pledge contribute to the following areas of work of the Nairobi Work Programme:

NWP Area of Work	Contribution through IUFRO action pledge
Data and observations	Assessment and dissemination of current knowledge regarding observational data and other relevant information about forest responses and vulnerabilities to recent climate change.
Climate modelling, scenarios and downscaling	Application of global emission scenarios and the corresponding scenarios for climate change developed by the IPCC, and introduction of four “scenario clusters” (unavoidable, stable, growth, fast growth).
Climate related risks and extreme events	Assessment and dissemination of state of knowledge about projected future impacts of climate change on forest ecosystems, services at risk, and key vulnerabilities, including extreme events.
Socio-economic information	Assessment and dissemination of state of knowledge about future socio-economic impacts and vulnerabilities of forest-dependent people, and discussion of methods for integrating socio-economic information and impact and vulnerability assessments.

Adaptation planning and practices	Provision of science-based management and policy options for adaptation of forests and people to climate change; analysis of trends in existing policies and management measures that promote the adaptation of forests to climate change, as described in national communications and National Adaptation Programmes for Action (NAPAs) produced for the UNFCCC.
Research	Communication of uncertainties and identification of limitations in current scientific knowledge regarding the impacts of climate change on forests and people, and indication of priorities for further research.

Project purpose

By means of providing the first systematic global assessment to date with a specific focus on climate change impacts on forests and people, the action pledge responds to the information needs articulated by the UNFCCC (notably the Bali Action Plan / Decision 1/CP.13 and the Nairobi Work Programme), the United Nations Forum on Forests (ECOSOC Resolution 2006/49) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD Decision IX/16).

The global assessment makes best use of the information available from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other relevant sources and complements, but in no way duplicates their work.

The outputs support the formulation of effective policies, measures and actions so that harmful effects of climate change on forests and people can be moderated and beneficial opportunities can be exploited.

Activities

The following key activities form part of the action pledge and contribute to the overall objectives described above:

- Formation of an Expert Panel on Adaptation of Forests to Climate Change consisting of 35 leading scientists from all regions of the world with outstanding expertise on aspects related to forests and climate change, and chaired by Professor Risto Seppälä of the Finnish Forest Research Institute (implemented);
- Compilation and comprehensive assessment of available scientific data and information about climate change impacts on forests, implications for human livelihoods and options for adaptation by the Expert Panel, including submission of draft manuscripts peer-review to 35 independent scientific experts (implemented);

- Preparation of targeted publications (full assessment report, global policy brief, regional policy briefs) and dissemination of assessment results to policy makers and stakeholders at major global and regional events (partly implemented; on-going);
- Raising public awareness about the assessment results by reaching out to international and national quality news media, specialized media and climate change blogs (on-going);
- Development of training activities for scientists and research institutions in developing countries with the objectives of strengthening capacities for scientific assessments, information sharing, and science-policy interfacing (planned);
- Contribution to relevant activities of other CPF members supporting the objectives and activities of the second phase of the Nairobi work programme (planned).

The implementation of these activities is led and coordinated by IUFRO and is overseen by a Steering Committee chaired by IUFRO and consisting of one representative each of the following CPF members: Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

Reached and expected results

The activities implemented so far have resulted in these concrete outputs:

- Publication of a comprehensive report titled “Adaptation of Forests and People to Climate Change – A Global Assessment” in English language¹;
- Based on the global report, publication of a global policy brief titled “Making Forests Fit for Climate Change” in all six UN languages;
- Launching of a designated webpage <http://www.iufro.org/science/gfep/> with access to all publications and complementary information about the activities, including information for the media;
- Formal presentation of the assessment results at the 8th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (20 April to 1 May 2009, New York, USA).

The following outputs are envisaged in order to further contribute to the achievement of the specific objectives:

- Further dissemination of assessment results to intergovernmental processes (including the Conference of the Parties and subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC and the CBD), organizations and agencies (notably in the context of the CPF);

¹ Recommended catalogue entry: Risto Seppälä, Alexander Buck and Pia Katila. (eds.). 2009. Adaptation of Forests and People to Climate Change. A Global Assessment Report. IUFRO World Series Volume 22. Helsinki. 224 p.

- Preparation of regional policy briefs on basis of the global assessment for targeted dissemination of assessment results at the regional level;
- Implementation of training activities in collaboration with IUFRO Special Programme for Developing Countries and GFEP donors;
- Contribution to the “CPF Strategic Framework for Forests and Climate Change” and other relevant activities of other CPF members supporting the objectives and activities of the second phase of the Nairobi work programme.

Indicators of achievement

The United Nations Forum on Forests, at its 8th session, took note of the assessment report on Adaptation of Forests and People to Climate Change in its resolution on “Forests in a changing environment”. Several key messages of the assessment are reflected in the text of the resolution. The UNFF also invited the Global Forest Expert Panels initiative to continue to provide science-based information relevant to the themes of future UNFF sessions.

The promotion of the assessment report prior to the UNFF session resulted in significant media coverage around the world, bringing public attention to the key findings of the assessment.

Further information

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