

## **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**

### **Concept note to workshop "Forests in the Changing Environment"**

In the view of the UNCCD, the European stance on forests should underpin the work of the Collaborative partnership on Forests (CPF). Work under the CPF seeks to improve the institutional context and political will with regard to the concerted efforts and cooperation schemes required to manage forests globally.

Granted that the forestry management problems of Europe differ from other regions of the world, a new era is emerging for forestry. This era is mostly driven by the ongoing agenda in the climate change negotiation process, the so called REDD (Reduction of emissions from deforestation and degradation). Governments and other stakeholders are shaping a post-2012 regime to combat climate change in which forests and forestry are expected to make a significant contribution. The UNCCD 10YSP regards forests in drylands as being of particular importance. The agreements reached in various international forums advocate sustainable forest management, especially the non-legally binding instrument (NLBI) of UNFF and the outcomes of COP13 of UNFCCC.

Economic options and incentives are essential for the UNCCD to achieve reduced deforestation in vulnerable ecosystems, particularly those in drylands. There is an undisputed agreement among forest researchers, policy makers and practitioners that most of the causes of deforestation are found in clearing for agriculture, energy production, urbanization and infrastructure. These account for most deforestation with unsustainable forestry practices contributing to serious forest degradation. Therefore, investing in the sustainable management of forests is the key to effect sustainable reductions in GHG emissions. Even more, if also other resources are taken into account, e.g. the potential of soils for carbon sequestration.

Recognizing that an estimated 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods and many more contribute to the factors of deforestation listed above, it is apparent that curbing deforestation is not only about reducing the levels of carbon released to the atmosphere. More importantly, reducing deforestation is a serious development challenge that affects the lives of many people.

Forests are more than just carbon sources and sinks. Therefore, important as REDD is, it should be part of larger mitigation schemes, keeping in mind that combating deforestation is broader than climate change. It is a sustainable development issue. Policy approaches to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation should be holistic, with incorporating measures to rehabilitate and restore landscapes and including the establishment of planted forests on abandoned and degraded lands -particularly those in drylands and in other vulnerable ecosystems. There is an urgent need for countries to integrate explicit efforts to reduce deforestation and promote forest restoration as part of their national forest programmes (NFPs) and national development strategies.

A sustainable solution to deforestation will require serious investments in livelihood-support systems and capacity building that will offer an economic alternative for the millions of people living on the

fringes of forests who are dependant on their products and services. In other words, even if it looks as if mitigation measures may take precedence over adaptation to climate change, this could be implemented in the short term due to the urgency of the present problems. From a forestry perspective however, both are important and should proceed hand in hand, noting that appropriate adaptation measures should be in place for mitigation to succeed.

From the perspective of developed countries, where forests have long been managed, sustainable management of forests is a unifying concept and practice. It simultaneously provides reductions in carbon emissions; it enhances adaptation to climate change; protects biodiversity; furnishes environmentally friendly forest products that store carbon and in addition to other essential ecosystem services, it supplies carbon neutral renewable energy resources. In Finland for example, the undergrowth that is harvested through sustainable forest management is utilized for producing energy. This is testimony to the fact that addressing the role of forests in mitigation of and adaptation to climate change as well as sustainable development requires holistic approaches to combine the best science with concrete action by governments, civil society and the private sector. The forest community will need to work with other sectors to develop comprehensive solutions and transfer these best practices and experiences to other regions of the world through Forest Partnerships. To the UNCCD, management of dryland ecosystems is of priority importance.

The forest sector needs to be strategic and convey a clear, strong message in the forthcoming round of deliberations especially at UNFCCC COP-14 and 15, and UNFF-8, as well as into CRIC7 and COP9 of UNCCD. This strategy should include capacity building, livelihoods, land tenure, financial flows, research and forest governance.