

Global Bamboo and Rattan Congress (BARC 2018): 25-27 June 2018

The Global Bamboo and Rattan Congress (BARC 2018) opens today in Beijing, China. The conference, which takes place from 25-27 June 2018, is expected to result in an outcome document on the role of bamboo and rattan in achieving sustainable development, especially with regard to the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as international development cooperation initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative.

BARC 2018 will open with a ministerial summit on the first day, followed by sessions focusing on technical and policy aspects relating to technology, standards and cooperation on bamboo and rattan. An exhibition alongside the conference will showcase participants' initiatives, featuring bamboo and rattan products as well as related scientific and technological achievements. After the conference, field excursions are offered to centers for growing and processing bamboo and rattan.

BARC 2018 is jointly organized by the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR), China's National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA), and the International Centre for Bamboo and Rattan (ICBR), a research institute under the State Forestry and Grassland Administration of China. It is the first international, policy-focused conference on how bamboo and rattan can contribute toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The conference theme is 'Enhancing South-South Cooperation for Green Development through Bamboo and Rattan's Contribution to the SDGs.'

A Brief History of International Activities on Bamboo and Rattan

INBAR was established in 1997 as a multilateral development organization to promote South-South cooperation on the use of bamboo and rattan for green growth and ecologically sustainable development. The organization evolved from the Bamboo and Rattan Research Network in Asia, which began in 1984 as a project supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada.

While INBAR initially focused on technical and research support for countries, the organization now also provides leadership in policy development and advocacy relating to the cultivation and use of bamboo and rattan, focusing on four areas: affordable, sustainable and reliable modern energy services for all; coordination of Member States' inputs on bamboo and rattan and representation in the global policy arena; knowledge sharing, training and awareness raising of the relevance of bamboo and rattan as strategic resources and commodities; and action research and country support to promote on-the-ground innovation.

INBAR and its members have highlighted the value of bamboo and rattan in contributing to the achievement of international policy objectives, including the Paris Agreement on climate, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the SDGs, especially those relating to poverty eradication (SDG 1), clean energy (SDG 7), sustainable housing (SDG 11 on cities), efficient resource use (SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production), climate action (SDG 13), life on land (SDG 15), and partnerships for implementation (SDG 17).

Within the UN Common Fund for Commodities, an intergovernmental financial institution, INBAR serves as the International Commodity Body on bamboo. INBAR's Council of Member States and the Board of Trustees also led the development of relevant International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards and of custom codes for bamboo products under the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System.

China, the world's largest producer of bamboo products, is INBAR's major supporter in terms of funding, administration and political support. Most of INBAR's 43 members are from countries of the Global South. The secretariat is based in Beijing, and regional offices are located in Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana and India. The organization is governed by a Council made up of representatives of member states, and a Board of Trustees that includes senior officials from government, business and UN organizations.

INBAR often conducts activities together with its sister organization, the International Bamboo and Rattan Centre, including regular awareness-raising events and training courses. Since their beginnings, up to 25,000 people have received such training.

INBAR also supports comprehensive assessment of the availability and economic potential of bamboo and rattan worldwide through its Global Assessment of Bamboo and Rattan (GABAR). GABAR was launched in 2015 at the World Forestry Congress in Durban, South Africa. The assessment is planned as a US\$100 million initiative, and is supported by Member States and development organizations, including the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The previous global assessment was conducted in 2003.

Several international organizations and processes have also highlighted the role of bamboo and rattan in forestry, land restoration, housing, mitigation of climate change, and sustainable development.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON BAMBOO AND RATTAN: The first International Bamboo Workshop was organized in 1980 by IDRC in Singapore. Subsequent workshops

took place in 1985 in China, 1988 in India, and 1991 in Thailand. From 1995 onwards, the International Bamboo Workshop and the International Bamboo Congress (independently organized by the International Bamboo Association, a trade body) were merged into a single event, and the Fifth International Bamboo Workshop & Congress was jointly organized in Bali, Indonesia in 1995. After the establishment of INBAR in 1998, the Sixth Workshop & Congress, also jointly organized, took place that same year in Costa Rica, attended by nearly 550 people from 47 countries. The Seventh World Bamboo Congress, organized by the World Bamboo Organization (WBO), the new name of the International Bamboo Association, took place in New Delhi, India in 2003. Subsequent events have taken place in Thailand, the Republic of Korea and Mexico. In 2010, INBAR organized another combined Bamboo & Rattan conference.

OTHER GLOBAL PROCESSES: INBAR is a Permanent Observer to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). At the 12th Conference of Parties to the UNCCD in Ankara, Turkey in 2015, INBAR highlighted bamboo as a strategic resource to achieve land degradation neutrality, citing experiences of land restoration from China, India, and Ethiopia.

At the 20th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP20) in Lima, Peru in 2014, INBAR launched a synthesis report about the role of bamboo in mitigating climate change. At COP21 in Paris, France in 2015, a special session with IFAD highlighted that bamboo industrial products made in China and shipped to Europe can be carbon-neutral or carbon-negative. At COP22 in Marrakesh, Morocco in 2016, INBAR, together with the China National Development and Reform Commission and the China State Forestry Administration, launched a ministerial statement on the importance of bamboo as a unique vehicle for South-South and triangular collaboration on climate change. The ministerial statement concluded with a pledge to launch a political commitment and a practical, detailed South-South and triangular action plan at BARC 2018.

INBAR partners with many other UN global initiatives and agencies, is a member of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and works closely with several CGIAR centers, especially the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the World Agroforestry Centre. In China, INBAR is a partner of the China Council for International Development on Environment and Development. Following are some examples of sectoral collaboration on bamboo and rattan.

FORESTRY: In January 2011, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) published a manual on management and utilization techniques for rattan plantations in China. The manual provided detailed information on: seed technology and nursery operations; plantation establishment and management; and the harvesting, processing and manufacturing of rattan canes and shoots. The manual was published in collaboration with the State Forestry Administration of the People's Republic of China, and Guangzhou Municipal Forestry Administration, with technical support from the Chinese Academy of Forestry and INBAR.

ENERGY: With financial support from the EU, INBAR undertook a project in 2009 on 'Bamboo as Sustainable Biomass Energy' in Ethiopia and Ghana to develop bamboo firewood

and charcoal as alternatives to traditional fuelwood from trees. Training and workshops in local communities, some using demonstration kilns, raised awareness of bamboo as an energy alternative. INBAR introduced appropriate bamboo species in both countries, guiding the establishment of small enterprises and supporting government and civil society to develop bamboo charcoal value chains. By 2013, over 600 hectares of new bamboo had been planted in Ethiopia and Ghana, and 10,000 hectares of existing stands had been placed under sustainable management. The project also trained 4,000 individuals in bamboo cultivation, carbonization, and briquette production and use, resulting in the production of 550 tonnes of bamboo charcoal and allowing more than 10,000 households to start using bamboo for fuel.

Separately, a partnership between Jamaica and China to strengthen the production of bamboo charcoal resulted in enterprise development in rural Jamaica and a modest amount of exports to the US.

HOUSING: INBAR was a founding member of the Global Network for Sustainable Housing, in partnership with the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). In May 2015, a coordination workshop with the Kenyan Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Kenya Forestry Research Institute and Kenya Forestry Service discussed the development of an integrated national bamboo sector policy for Kenya.

Workshop participants considered the development and promotion of bamboo-based initiatives in Kenya, where bamboo forms an integral part of indigenous forests and provides vital ecosystem services. Participants noted that, as a fast growing, highly renewable resource with properties similar to timber, bamboo can support green economic development and contribute to the country's Vision 2030, under which Kenya aims to become a middle-income nation.

SDGS: In August 2015, in preparation for the UN Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, INBAR issued a position paper on 'Bamboo, Rattan and the SDGs,' which discussed how the bamboo and rattan sector could contribute to the green economy and add value to national action plans for sustainable development. The paper especially highlighted the role of bamboo and rattan with regard to six of the 17 SDGs that were being debated prior to adoption, on: poverty reduction; energy; housing and urban development; sustainable production and consumption; climate change and land degradation; and partnerships for implementation. The paper also highlighted that bamboo and rattan could contribute to the achievement of policy objectives on food security, women's empowerment, economic growth, and technology.

In 2017, INBAR and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) published a report on 'Inspiring Sustainable Development with Bamboo.' The report is part of a series of UNOSSC flagship reports, for sharing of South-South and triangular cooperation activities by intergovernmental organizations and civil society. Global trade in bamboo and rattan is valued at US\$60 billion a year, and the report highlights ways in which this resource, indigenous to many countries of the Global South, can contribute to a better and more inclusive future.