



RECENT MEA ACTIVITIES

► BIODIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE

CBD COP AGREEMENT REACHED ON GENETIC USE RESTRICTION TECHNOLOGIES



Dais at the opening of CBD COP-8

The eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-8) is being held from 20–30 March 2006, in Curitiba, Brazil (<http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/cop8/>). The agenda of the meeting includes: adoption of a work programme on island biodiversity; access and benefit-sharing (ABS), including setting up a process for continuing negotiations on an international regime; protected areas; cooperation with other conventions and

engagement of stakeholders; as well as a series of strategic issues for evaluating progress or supporting implementation towards the target of reducing significantly the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.

First week highlights include an agreement on genetic use restriction technologies (GURTs). Against the background of a COP-5 decision recommending that parties should not approve GURTs for field testing, the G-77/China, other parties and civil society organizations objected to a recommendation coming from the intersessional Working Group on Article 8(j) allowing for a case-by-case risk assessment of GURTs, arguing that it would undermine the ban established by the COP-5 decision. Although a number of developed country parties supported the reference to case-by-case risk assessment, it was finally agreed to drop the reference. This decision will be considered for final adoption in plenary on Friday, 31 March.

Held immediately prior to COP-8 from 17–18 March 2006, an expert workshop on protected areas (<http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/paws/>) reviewed implementation of activities/elements of the work programme on protected areas, and revised an evaluation matrix addressing each of the work programme's goals.

A one-day brainstorming meeting on avian influenza also convened prior to the COP to examine threats to migratory species and wetlands, knowledge gaps and the need for capacity building. The meeting welcomed the participation of the CBD in the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza, and suggested that SBSTTA further assess the interlinkages between ecosystems and health (http://www.ramsar.org/cbd/cbd_cop8_avian_flu_press.pdf).

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RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

ANIMAL HEALTH: AVIAN INFLUENZA

(FAO, 2006) This UN Food and Agriculture Organization website (http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/subjects/en/health/diseases-cards/special_avian.html) contains information and links to facts and activities related to Avian Influenza.

BIRD FLU: THE FACTS

(SciDev.Net, 2006) This SciDev.Net news focus page (<http://www.scidev.net/ms/bird%5Fflu/>) offers links to news stories, questions and answers and resources related to Avian Influenza.

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GUEST ARTICLE

Addressing An Emerging Issue: The CMS Taskforce On Avian Influenza

by Robert Hepworth, Executive Secretary of UNEP/CMS Secretariat

Abstract

In mid-2005, concerns about the role of migratory birds as potential "vectors and victims" of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus (H5N1), which was spreading north-westwards from its origins in poultry farms in South East Asia, led the UNEP Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) to establish a Scientific Task Force. The Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza, which was established in August 2005, now comprises 13 UN bodies, wildlife treaties and specialist NGOs.

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RESEARCH AND RESOURCES (cont.)

GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY OUTLOOK 2

(CBD, UNEP-WCMC, 2006) Based on COP-7 decision VII/30, the CBD Executive Secretary, with the assistance of the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-WCMC) and other relevant international organizations, prepared this second Global Biodiversity Outlook for publication prior to COP-8, following peer-review and review by SBSTTA. The text (<http://www.biodiv.org/gbo2/default.shtml>) assesses the current status and trends of biodiversity and the key drivers of biodiversity loss.

WATER, A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

(UN, 2006) The Second UN World Water Development Report, "Water, a Shared Responsibility" (<http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr2/index.shtml>), reviews the state of the world's freshwater resources and seeks to provide decision-makers with the tools for sustainable water use. The report was formally launched during World Water Day, on 22 March 2006, at the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico City, Mexico (<http://www.worldwaterforum4.org.mx/home/home.asp>).

CHALLENGES TO INTERNATIONAL WATERS: REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

(UNEP, 2006) This Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) Final Report (<http://www.giwa.net/publications/finalreport/>) reviews the most important findings from the GIWA regional reports, including the major transboundary concerns and their environmental and socio-economic impacts.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING SYSTEM (GEMS)

(UNEP, 2006) UNEP's Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS) Water Programme has expanded GEMStat (<http://www.GEMStat.org>) as an open Internet service. This is a searchable database of global surface and ground water quality data and statistics collected from the GEMS/Water Global Network.

COSTING MDG TARGET 10 ON WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION

(World Water Council, March 2006) This publication (http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/fileadmin/www/News/WWC_News/News_2006/FullText_Cover_MDG.pdf) assesses the progress made and what remains to be done in order to achieve the target of halving by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

► BIODIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE

BIO SAFETY MEETING ADOPTS DECISION ON DOCUMENTATION OF GM COMMODITIES

The third Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP/MOP-3) (13-17 March 2006, Curitiba, Brazil) considered reports on ongoing activities under the Protocol, as well as a number of issues, including: risk assessment and risk management; compliance; monitoring and reporting, and assessment and review of implementation (<http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/bs-copmop3/>). Adoption of a compromise package on documentation requirements for living modified organisms for food, feed, or processing (LMO-FFPs) was heralded as a key step forward in the Protocol's imple-

mentation. The decision requests parties to take measures to ensure that documentation accompanying LMO-FFPs in commercial production is in compliance with the requirements of the country of import and clearly state that, in cases where the identity of the LMO is known through identity preservation systems, the shipment "contains" LMO-FFPs, and in cases where the identity of the LMO is not known, the shipment "may contain" LMO-FFPs. COP/MOP-5 will review experience gained with these provisions, with a view to considering a decision at COP/MOP-6 to ensure that documentation clearly states that the shipment "contains" LMO-FFPs. COP/MOP-6 is expected to convene in 2012.

► WATER, WETLANDS AND COASTS

DELEGATES PREPARE FOR REVIEW OF STRADDLING AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS AGREEMENT

Delegates met from 20-24 March 2006 at United Nations headquarters in New York to prepare for the Review Conference of the 1995 Agreement for the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (22-26 May 2006) (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sea1848.doc.htm>). Participants discussed guidelines to use during the May conference to assess the adequacy of the Agreement. The draft criteria that resulted from these discussions will be recommended to the Review Conference, and cover the extent to which States parties have adopted measures to conserve and manage straddling and migratory fish stocks. Criteria also cover the extent to which States parties have sought to: eliminate overfishing; minimize catch of unwanted species; establish new regional management organizations; and strengthen international cooperation (<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=17937&Cr=fish&Cr1=>).

RAMSAR ACTIVITIES AT THE FOURTH WWF AND CBD COP-8

At the Fourth World Water Forum (WWF) (<http://www.worldwaterforum4.org.mx>), the Ramsar Secretariat launched "Beyond More Crop per Drop," a publication released in collaboration with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and other partners (http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/wwf4/PDF/Beyond%20more%20crop%20per%20drop_WWF4%20doc_IWMI%20and%20partners.pdf). This publication highlights various key areas for action including: increasing blue and green water productivity and access to water resources; balancing water for food and other ecosystem services; and investing in water security to aid poverty alleviation. It also identifies cross-cutting actions such as integrated water resources management, capacity building and continued research. Ramsar Deputy Secretary General Nick Davidson participated in a

brainstorming meeting prior to the eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-8) on the "Impacts of Avian Influenza on Wildlife." He addressed the meeting on highly pathogenic avian influenza and its consequences for wetland and waterbird conservation and wise use (http://www.ramsar.org/cbd/cbd_cop8_avian_flu.pdf).

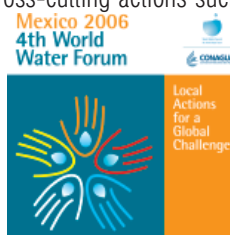
The Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands 2006-2008 version (http://www.ramsar.org/ris/key_ris.htm) is the datasheet adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention in 1990, and amended several times since. The Ramsar Information Sheet assesses the international importance of each listed wetland against the agreed criteria; supplies ecological data; identifies the threats to effective management of the site; and provides information on the virtues of the site for the public.

GPA AT THE FOURTH WWF

At the Fourth World Water Forum, the UNEP-Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), together with the GEF, Mexico's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Ocean Service (NOAA/NOS), and the Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands, organized two sessions on the connection between freshwater and oceans. These sessions considered "Management Link for Freshwaters and Coasts - Progress in Local Actions" and "Protecting the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities" (http://www.globaloceans.org/materials/pdf/FW_to_Oceans_WWF4.pdf).

MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION COMMITTEE OF MARPOL IMO CONVENES

The fifty-fourth session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee convened at IMO Headquarters from 20-24 March 2006 (agenda of the meeting: http://www.imo.org/includes/blastDataOnly.asp/data_id%3D14130/1.pdf) and considered for adoption some amendments to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships on: regulation on oil fuel tank protection, the definition of "heavy grade oil," and port State control on operational requirements.



GUEST ARTICLE (cont.)

The Task Force focuses on obtaining the best scientific advice on the conservation impact of the spread of H5N1, assessing the role of migratory birds as vectors and victims of the virus, and issuing advice on the root causes of the epidemic as well as technically sound measures to combat it and develop early warning expertise.

The Task Force has addressed public statements to the media and more specialist audiences. Task Force members have consistently emphasized evidence that Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza is being spread by methods including trade in poultry and its products; legal and illegal trade in wild and captive bred birds; human movements; and cross-infection between poultry and migratory water birds. The relative importance of each method of transmission remains open to argument, however, the impression given by some in the media that migratory birds are the main cause of the epidemic is scientifically inaccurate and generates anxiety and prejudice about wildlife.

Largely as a result of the Task Force's work, successive Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of the Ramsar Convention, the African-Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement and CMS itself, held in October-November 2005, passed detailed resolutions on Avian Influenza, recommending:

- higher standards and new biosecurity measures in poultry farming and related industries and markets;
- integration of biodiversity with the human and animal health expertise;
- preparation of national contingency/action plans and public awareness programmes;
- improved global surveillance of Avian Influenza in wild birds plus accurate information on the spread of the virus to support informed decision-making;
- avoidance of ineffective or counter-productive "quick fixes" such as culling migratory birds or destroying their wetland habitats; and
- continuing to support the Task Force's work.

More than 120 Governments endorsed one or more of the three resolutions.

The Task Force's latest project is a partnership with UNEP to hold a scientific seminar in Nairobi from 10-11 April 2006. The seminar will include top experts in virology, epidemiology, human and animal health, poultry farming, ecology and migration patterns. The Convention on Biological Diversity will present the outcome of the Avian Influenza brainstorm session it organized in Curitiba, Brazil, on 19 March 2006. The seminar will aim to produce an up-to-date synopsis on the H5N1 epidemic for decision-makers and media, including advice on preventing or mitigating its spread.

Further details can be found at <http://www.cms.int>

Read Full Article: <http://www.iisd.ca/mea-1/guestarticle3.htm>

Editor's note:
 MEA Bulletin invites articles from practitioners, MEAs and academics on issues that are of interest across the MEA community. Please contact the Research Editor, lynn@iisd.org, for further information and article guidelines.

► SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CSD LAUNCHES WATER ACTION AND NETWORKING DATABASE (WAND) AT FOURTH WWF



The UN Commission on Sustainable Development

launched CSD WAND (<http://www.csdwand.net/>), a follow-up activity from CSD-13 and the Portfolio of Water Actions (PWA) developed by Japan for the Third World Water Forum, during the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City. The launching session on 20 March 2006 was co-organized by the US, Mexican and Japanese governments and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and included a brainstorming session to receive participants' opinions and suggestions for promoting more effective use of CSD WAND. CSD WAND is a web-based tool for advancing implementation of actions that support the achievement of the internationally agreed goals related to water and sanitation. WAND will provide a web-based platform for: exchanging best practices, lessons learned, and case studies; online expert-to-expert

discussions; and searching international agreements on water and sanitation to support the identification of guidelines, commitments, and/or policy recommendations. Case studies submitted as Local Actions to the World Water Forum will be automatically entered in the database, and it will soon be possible to input other case studies directly into an online form linked to the database itself.



Photo courtesy CSD WAND

► FORESTS, DESERTS AND LAND

UNCCD ORGANIZES REGIONAL E-FORUM ON BEST PRACTICES AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE; PREPARES RESPONSE TO JIU REPORT

The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is organizing an e-forum to provide a space of debate and exchange of information on challenges, experiences and lessons learned among stakeholders dealing with land degradation and traditional knowledge in Latin America and the Caribbean (<http://services.unccd.int/Forums-LAC/index.htm>). The e-forum will be carried out in a number of phases and sessions and will combine technical and socio-political discussions along with the exchange of information on practical experiences and knowledge relevant to the Convention and according to the interests expressed by the participants during the process. The first e-forum will be held from 20 March to 7 April 2006 and will be organized around two sessions: opportunities for establishing a regional network on best practices and traditional knowledge in Latin America and the Caribbean; and challenges in the rescue and application of sustainable traditional practices, technologies and knowledge to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

The CCD Secretariat has also released its response (http://www.unccd.int/convention/docs/JIU_response.pdf) to the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations' "Review of the Management, Administration and Activities of the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,"

which was considered at COP-7. By its decision 3/COP7, the COP requested the Executive Secretary to provide Parties and the working group that was created to follow-up the report with comments and views on the JIU report, including his management response to the recommendations pertaining to the secretariat.

ITTA, 2006 SET TO OPEN FOR SIGNATURE

The International Tropical Timber Agreement, 2006, is set to open for signature at UN headquarters in New York beginning 3 April 2006, and extending until one month after the date of its entry into force. The agreement, which was concluded in January 2006 as the successor agreement to ITTA, 1994, is expected to come into force in 2008 and will operate for ten years, with the possibility of extensions of up to eight years. <http://www.itto.or.jp/live/PageDisplayHandler?pagelid=217&id=1126>



Delegates during ITTA-4 informal consultations

► TRADE, FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

GEF AND UNCCD GLOBAL MECHANISM LAUNCH SMALL GRANTS PARTNERSHIP

The UNCCD's Global Mechanism and the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) Small Grants Programme concluded a partnership agreement on community-based sustainable land management on 23 February 2006 (<http://www.gm-uncd.org/frontpage-news/Gm-sgp.htm>). The partners will begin by facilitating information exchange at the community level and build local capacity through "learning by doing." The pilot phase will focus primarily on two strategic areas: market access and trade, and compensation for ecosystem services. Once five pilot countries have been identified, the project will document best practices, the constraints to community investment, and the incentive mechanisms that could be introduced to increase public and private investment in sustainable land management. The project will explore trade-related incentive mecha-



From left to right: Christian Mersmann (Managing Director of the GM), Olav Kjørven (Director of UNDP Energy and Environment Group) and Delfin Ganapin (Global Manager of GEF Small Grants Programme) toast their new partnership. (Photo courtesy Global Mechanism).

nisms, such as improved access to local and regional markets, increased trade in ecosystem goods and services, and compensation for ecosystem services for their potential for generating eco-compatible sustainable investment at the community level. Ultimately, the knowledge generated will be used at the policy level to persuade decision-makers of the importance of fostering enabling environments for local communities and to advocate appropriate incentive mechanisms to encourage investment at the community level.

UNCCD GLOBAL MECHANISM HOSTS PARTNERS ON CENTRAL ASIA INITIATIVE

The UN Convention to Combat Desertification Global Mechanism hosted a meeting (9-10 February 2006, Rome, Italy) to discuss next steps for the implementation of the Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM) (http://www.global-mechanism.org/frontpagenews/CACILM_Event_9_10Feb06.htm). CACILM is a multi-country partnership to engage in a coordinated approach to sustainable land management and poverty alleviation in Central Asia over a 10 year period. It seeks to mobilize a diverse array of financing including from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The meeting addressed ways to strengthen the engagement of existing partners, discussed the theory and practice

of donor harmonization, and agreed on future steps to ensure financing of the CACILM Phases. It included presentations by donors, and an analysis of the implementation of national programming frameworks in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. Participants agreed on future actions such as updating the data on national programming frameworks and developing projects for GEF's fourth replenishment.

NEW ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE WORLD BANK AND GEF

A World Bank loan of US\$20 million was approved on 23 March for a "Pollution Abatement Project II," to provide assistance to the Egyptian government for improving its environmental management capabilities (<http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=64283627&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P090073>).

A GEF grant of US\$ 7 million was approved on 21 March for a "Livestock Waste Management in East Asia Project," to reduce the major negative environmental and health impacts of concentrated livestock production on water bodies and thus on the people of East Asia. Its global environmental objective is to reduce livestock-induced, land-based pollution and environmental degradation of the South China Sea (<http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=64283627&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P079610>).

► CHEMICALS AND WASTES

ROTTERDAM, STOCKHOLM AND BASEL CONVENTIONS CONSIDER SYNERGIES

The first Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (20-24 September 2004) proposed considering a joint head of the Secretariats of both the Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions and decided that further possibilities for additional synergies should be explored (decision RC-1/17 - <http://www.pic.int/cops/reports/z33/English/COP%201-33%20e.doc>).

Welcoming this proposal, the first Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention (2-6 May 2005) decided to explore cooperation and synergies within the two conventions (decision SC-1/18 - http://www.pops.int/documents/meetings/cop_1/meetingdocs/en/cop1_31/COP1_REPORT.pdf). As a result, the Stockholm Convention Secretariat released on 13 March 2006 a document on "Enhancing synergies within the chemicals and waste cluster" (http://www.pops.int/documents/meetings/cop_2/meetingdocs/advance/advance%2025%20K0650840%20COP2-25.doc), an information note on 17 March 2006 on "Cooperation with the Basel Convention" (http://www.pops.int/documents/meetings/cop_2/meetingdocs/English/INF6%20K0650844%20COP2-INF-6.doc), and on 20 March 2006 a "Study on improving cooperation and synergies between the secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions" (http://www.pops.int/documents/meetings/cop_2/meetingdocs/advance/advance%20INF12%20K0650893%20COP2-INF12.doc). It is expected that an additional information note on "Supplementary analysis of financial and administrative arrangements that would be needed to implement any changes that the three convention secretariats and UNEP may propose to enhance synergies between the chemicals and waste conventions" will be available on the Stockholm Convention website soon.

By decision OEWG-IV/10 on financial matters, the fourth session of the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention (4-8 July 2005) requested the Secretariat to cooperate with the Rotterdam Convention and the Stockholm Convention secretariats in exploring cooperation and synergies and to make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting (<http://www.basel.int/meetings/oewg/oewg4/documents/18e.pdf>). At its meeting in February 2006, the Expanded Bureau requested the Secretariat to provide its comments on the study prepared by the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention and the supplementary analysis prepared by UNEP pursuant to RC-2/6 adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, which is expected to be posted soon. The Expanded Bureau also decided that it would provide comments to the Open-ended Working Group on the study, the supplementary analysis and the comments on these documents prepared by the Secretariat (<http://www.basel.int/meetings/bureau/bureau%202%20cop%207/10e.pdf>). The document with comments and recommendations of the Secretariat on enhancing cooperation and synergies, which was finalized on 15 March 2006, is available at: <http://www.basel.int/meetings/oewg/oewg5/docs/02a8e.pdf>.

Stockholm Convention secretariats in exploring cooperation and synergies and to make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting (<http://www.basel.int/meetings/oewg/oewg4/documents/18e.pdf>). At its meeting in February 2006, the Expanded Bureau requested the Secretariat to provide its comments on the study prepared by the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention and the supplementary analysis prepared by UNEP pursuant to RC-2/6 adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, which is expected to be posted soon. The Expanded Bureau also decided that it would provide comments to the Open-ended Working Group on the study, the supplementary analysis and the comments on these documents prepared by the Secretariat (<http://www.basel.int/meetings/bureau/bureau%202%20cop%207/10e.pdf>). The document with comments and recommendations of the Secretariat on enhancing cooperation and synergies, which was finalized on 15 March 2006, is available at: <http://www.basel.int/meetings/oewg/oewg5/docs/02a8e.pdf>.

► CHEMICALS AND WASTES

BASEL CONVENTION RELEASES REPORTS ON PROJECTS

The Basel Convention Secretariat has published information on projects that are being undertaken by the Basel Convention Regional Centres (BCRC) and Parties under the Technical Cooperation Trust Funds (http://www.basel.int/centers/techcoop_tf/projects_tctf.html).

These projects include the provision of legal assistance for the elaboration and adaptation of national legislation for implementation of the Basel Convention in Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro; capacity building for implementation of the Basel

Convention in Egypt; the preparation of a regional strategy for the environmentally sound management of used lead-acid batteries in Central America, Colombia, Venezuela and Caribbean Island States; and an inventory of electronic wastes in the South American region.

► INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

UN ENVIRONMENT-RELATED REFORM ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY

Following up on the 2005 UN World Summit, several interlinked processes on UN reform are taking place that have a bearing on environmental matters and sustainable development. Reforms proposed by the ECOSOC President include the ECOSOC's functioning as a high-level panel for policy dialogue and implementation as well as coordinating urgent and effective responses to crises in the international economic, environmental and social fields. The EU proposed that ECOSOC should ensure a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development and, in ECOSOC's relations with the Peace-building Commission, highlight the medium- and long-term economic, social and environmental dimensions of post-conflict situations (<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/workingpapers.html>). According to IISD sources, consultations on ECOSOC reform have stagnated due to the opposing views of developed countries, which have generally focused on targeted financing, and developing countries, which have focused on expanding the scope of the development issues to be addressed.

Consultations on international environmental governance (IEG) within the General Assembly - informal consultations on the issue of the institutional framework for the UN environmental activities - were de-

layed pending negotiations on the now-approved Human Rights Council. A letter dated 20 March 2006 was circulated by Informal Consultations Co-Chairs Maurer (Switzerland) and Berruga (Mexico), suggesting that consultations focus on identifying constraints and obstacles to IEG, in particular to: enhanced coordination, improved policy advice and guidance, strengthened scientific knowledge, assessment and cooperation, better treaty compliance, and better integration of environmental activities in the broader sustainable development framework at the operational level. The Co-Chairs solicited comments from UN member States on initial topics for discussion, including views on a more coherent framework. Discussions are expected to begin in the second half of April 2006.

The Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence in the areas of Humanitarian Assistance, the Environment and Development is expected to commence discussions with "constituents", which is likely to include civil society, in the coming weeks in New York.

Finally, UN management reform consultations are ongoing, with specific consultations on the UN mandate expected to start in early April. According to IISD sources, controversy may arise between developed countries wishing to streamline the mandate and developing countries wishing to maintain the existing one, with non-governmental

organizations preoccupied with integrating and preserving sustainable development issues in the mandate.

UNEP LAUNCHES PROJECT ON SACRED SITES

UNEP has launched an international initiative, "Conservation of Biodiversity Rich Sacred Natural Sites," to conserve ancient sacred sites as an integral part of protected area networks, with a view to contributing to their expansion, preservation of cultural diversity, and effective conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The project is jointly proposed by the Rigoberta Menchu Tum Foundation, as leading organization of the Indigenous Initiative for Peace, and IUCN, and has received preliminary funding from the Global Environment Facility (<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=471&ArticleID=5230&=en>).



Photo courtesy UNEP

► CLIMATE AND ATMOSPHERE

IPCC GUIDELINES DEADLINE NEARS

An 18 April 2006 deadline has been set for governments to submit comments on the draft Overview Chapter of the 2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. In a letter dated 21 March 2006, IPCC Secretary Renate Christ explained to IPCC country focal points that, "in accordance with IPCC procedures... the Overview Chapter would be adopted section by section, and the underlying report will be accepted by the Panel at its 25th Session (Mauritius, 26-28 April 2006)." Comments have been requested prior to IPCC-25 with a view to fa-

cilitating the adoption process (<http://www.ipcc.ch/meet/session25/lettergl.pdf>).

UNFCCC HOLDS ADAPTATION EVENTS

The UNFCCC Consultative Group of Experts (CGE) has held a training workshop on vulnerability and adaptation assessment for the Asia-Pacific region. The workshop (20-24 March 2006, Jakarta, Indonesia) aimed to train experts on tools for assessing vulnerability and adaptation in countries' national communications reports, which are required under the UNFCCC. The CGE on national Communications from non-Annex I Parties to

the Convention - a large group of mostly developing countries - also held its sixth regular meeting in Jakarta, from 17-18 March. Participants worked on technical inputs as part of the CGE's 2003-2007 work programme (http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc_calendar/items/2655.php?id=431&out=detail).

Two other official UNFCCC adaptation-related events are planned prior to the 24th sessions of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies in May: a regional workshop for Latin America in April and a workshop on the Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol, in May (http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2006).

► COMINGS AND GOINGS

- Achim Steiner (Germany), the current Director-General of IUCN-the World Conservation Union, has been appointed as the next **Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme** (UNEP), effective from 15 June 2006 to 14 June 2010 (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ga10450.doc.htm>).
- UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has announced a shortlist of five **candidates for the open position of Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change** (UNFCCC). The finalists are: John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), Yvo de Boer (Netherlands), Luis Gomez Echeverri (Colombia), Miklós Persányi (Hungary), and Simon Upton (New Zealand). Annan has indicated that he may also consider candidates who were shortlisted for the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director's vacancy. This list included Rajendra Pachauri (India) (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sg2109.doc.htm>).



Achim Steiner
(Photo courtesy UN
News Centre)

► KEY UPCOMING MEA MEETINGS

- **SMALL INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP (SIWG) ON POPS:** 2 April 2006. Geneva, Switzerland. The SIWG will meet prior to the Fifth Session of the Open-ended Working Group (3-7 April 2006) to finalize the draft technical guidelines on POPs. <http://www.basel.int>
- **FIFTH SESSION OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP OF THE BASEL CONVENTION:** 3-7 April 2006. Geneva, Switzerland. <http://www.basel.int>
- **MULTILATERAL FUND FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL: 48TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:** 3-7 April 2006. Montreal, Canada. The 48th Meeting of the Multilateral Fund's Executive Committee will be attended by representatives of the following Executive Committee member countries: Brazil, Burundi, Guinea, India, Mexico, Syrian Arab Republic and Zambia (Article 5 countries) and Australia, Belgium Czech Republic, Italy, Japan, Sweden and the US (non-Article 5 countries). http://www.multilateralfund.org/48th_meeting_of_the_executive_.htm
- **WORKSHOP ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** 7-8 April. New Delhi, India. This workshop is organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and The Energy Research Institute (TERI), with the support of the Government of India. Its deliberations will be reported to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/climate_change/climateChange_inter.htm
- **FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE OF THE BASEL CONVENTION:** 8-9 April 2006. Geneva, Switzerland. This will be a closed meeting. <http://www.basel.int/>
- **EXPERT MEETING ON AVIAN INFLUENZA:** 10-11 April 2006. Nairobi, Kenya. This meeting is organized by UNEP, in collaboration with the Convention on Migratory Species and the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, to investigate the root causes of the spread of avian influenza and identify effective solutions for its containment. <http://www.cms.int/news/PRESS/nwPR2006/AvianFLu.pdf>
- **34TH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS:** 10-13 April 2006. Gland, Switzerland. The Standing Committee oversees Convention affairs and the activities of the Secretariat between ordinary meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. http://www.ramsar.org/sc/34/key_sc34_doc01_e.htm
- **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DESERTIFICATION, HUNGER AND POVERTY:** 11-12 April 2006. Geneva, Switzerland. This conference is organized within the framework of the 2006 International Year for Deserts and Desertification by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in partnership with the Secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Graduate Institute of Development Studies (IUED) of Geneva. http://www.unige.ch/iued/new/information/conferences/pdf/coll_IYDD_avril_06.pdf
- **ECOSOC HIGH-LEVEL MEETING WITH BRETTON WOODS INSTITUTIONS, WTO AND UNCTAD:** 24 April 2006. New York, US. The Economic and Social Council will hold its ninth Special High-Level Meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development at UN headquarters the day following the spring meetings in Washington, DC, of the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) and the Development Committee. Participants will consider four sub-themes within the overall framework of "Coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the 2005 World Summit Outcome." The four sub-themes are: Implementation of and support for National Development Strategies, towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs; Fulfilling the development dimension of the Doha Work Programme: Next steps, including in the area of "Aid for Trade"; External debt – Building on current initiatives to enhance debt sustainability; and Supporting the development efforts of middle-income developing countries. <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2006/bwi2006/index.html>