



## RECENT MEA ACTIVITIES

### ► BIODIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE

#### CBD WORKING GROUP ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING FORWARDS DOCUMENT TO COP 9

The sixth meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing (ABS) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) met from 21-25 January 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland, in a continuation of its fifth meeting, held in October 2007. The Working Group proceeded



CBD Executive Secretary Ahmed Djoghlaif congratulates ABS Working Group Co-Chairs Fernando Casas, Colombia, and Timothy Hodges, Canada, at the close of the meeting

with the elaboration and negotiation of an international regime on ABS, under the co-chairmanship of Fernando Casas (Colombia) and Timothy Hodges (Canada). Discussions focused on the main components of the international regime, including fair and equitable sharing of benefits, access to genetic resources, compliance, traditional knowledge and genetic resources, and capacity building. The Working Group made considerable progress in producing a short and concise working document on the international regime, consisting of sections on the main components and lists of items “to be further elaborated with the aim of incorporating them in the international regime” in cases where there was agreement in principle, or “for further consideration,” in cases of disagreement or need for further clarification. The outcome of the Working Group’s deliberations will be submitted for consideration by the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD at its ninth meeting, to be held from 19-30 May 2008, in Bonn, Germany, where delegates will have to take critical decisions on the future of the ABS negotiations, with the 2010 deadline for completion rapidly approaching (<http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/abs6/>).

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#### GUEST ARTICLE I

##### **Bridging the Climate-Change Media Divide on the Road to Copenhagen**

*By Mike Shanahan, IIED and Climate Change Media Partnership*

##### **Abstract**

Hundreds of news-hungry journalists were among the ten thousand-plus people who gathered in Bali last December for the UN climate change conference.

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#### GUEST ARTICLE II

##### **Improving MEA Compliance: The Role of National Audit Offices**

*By Vivien Lo, team member from the past Chair of INTOSAI’s Working Group on Environmental Auditing, Office of the Auditor General of Canada*

##### **Abstract**

Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) can play a major role in evaluating whether the tools that their governments use to manage and protect

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## GUEST ARTICLE I (cont.)

But while the meeting was billed as the most important to date, for hundreds of millions of people in low- and middle-income countries, there was virtually nobody there to interpret the developments and send relevant news back home. This gap between people and policy occurs time and again at big meetings of UN conventions and at other major events, such as G8 summits. Ordinary people in vulnerable communities are left in the dark while important decisions that will affect their lives are made.

To help fill the gap in Bali, three organizations – the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Internews and Panos – joined forces to form the Climate Change Media Partnership and provide a programme of media support before, during and after the conference. In addition to sending more than 1,200 journalists in developing countries new briefing papers on climate-change reporting and the UNFCCC

processes, the Climate Change Media Partnership brought nearly 40 journalists from such nations to Bali. They received daily briefings on the negotiations, access to experts and negotiators, and editorial support from the former BBC environment correspondent Alex Kirby.

Without the partnership there would have been no journalists in Bali from countries including Burma, Jamaica, Kenya, Laos, the Philippines, Sudan and Uganda, leaving these nations reliant on reports from Western news outlets that were not in a position to provide much locally-relevant information. The journalists in Bali were both learning and doing, actively reporting from the Conference on a daily basis. During the meeting, they produced an average of 18 stories for print, online, radio and TV outlets in their home countries.

The Climate Change Media Partnership did not end in Bali. The journalists will receive ongoing support and

briefings in the run up to the crucial COP15 meeting Copenhagen in 2009. They will be helped to join networks of fellow reporters, scientists and other experts to continue strengthening their ability to report on climate change.

The Climate Change Media Partnership has demonstrated an effective approach to boosting the ability of media in developing countries to generate in-country public debate on their governments' climate change policies, and to help their audiences understand the governance and equity issues at stake. We aim to consolidate this work and scale it up so that many more journalists benefit over the next two years on the road from Bali to Copenhagen.

For more information about the Climate Change Media Partnership visit: <http://www.climatemediapartnership.org/>. The author can be reached at [mike.shanahan@iied.org](mailto:mike.shanahan@iied.org).

Link to the full article: <http://www.iisd.ca/mea-1/guestarticle40a.html>

## ► CLIMATE AND ATMOSPHERE

**UN CLIMATE CHIEF OFFERS POST-BALI VISION, RESPONDS TO 'DAVOS QUESTION'**

Yvo de Boer, the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), has set out his views on the events in Bali and the process to negotiate a new climate agreement during the next two years. In a think piece published on 28 January 2008, he refers to the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali in December 2007 as "historic." He also looks ahead to future meetings, including the first



Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary

meeting of the UNFCCC's *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action (AGLCA) in March/April 2008, which he says should develop an agenda for its work through December 2009. In addition, he highlights other meetings outside the UNFCCC process that could influence climate talks, including the G8 Hokkaido Summit in July 2008 and the US-led Major Economies meetings scheduled for the coming months. On the substance of the upcoming UN negotiations, he suggests that negotiators could start in 2008 with a focus on the financial and technological arrangements. He also suggests that a global "Climate Change Marshall Plan" is needed to spur green, low carbon economic growth ([http://unfccc.int/press/news\\_room/newsletter/in\\_focus/items/4272.php](http://unfccc.int/press/news_room/newsletter/in_focus/items/4272.php)).

De Boer has also responded to the 'Davos question' posed for the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, which was held from 23-27 January 2008, in Davos, Switzerland. In a video interview, de Boer responded to the question "What one thing do you think that countries, companies or individuals must do to make the world a better place in 2008?" by highlighting the immediate and long-term risks of climate change, including economic implications (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvihkoabKL0>).

The Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Rajendra Pachauri, attended the Davos meeting, where he outlined the scientific basis of climate change and the need for urgent action (<http://www.ipcc.ch/graphics/speeches/pachauri-davos-january-2008.pdf>).

## ► TRADE, FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

**GEF AND OTHERS TEAM UP TO PROTECT UNIQUE AND THREATENED AREAS; WORLD BANK INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR 2008 COMPETITION**

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has announced that it will provide US\$ 20 million to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), a fund managed by Conservation International

(CI) with the aim of protecting some of the world's most unique and threatened areas (biodiversity hotspots), including island ecosystems and temperate forests. Other partners include the World Bank, the French Development Agency, the Government of Japan and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. (<http://gefweb.org/interior.aspx?id=20274>).

Meanwhile, the World Bank's Development Marketplace has called for applications to its 2008 Global Competition, which is focused on sustainable agriculture for development. It is offering US\$ 4 million in grants to social entrepreneurs with ideas that have a potential high impact in promoting sustainable agriculture (<http://www.developmentmarketplace.org>).

**GUEST ARTICLE II (cont.)**

the environment have produced the intended results. Environmental audits, like all other audits, essentially compare the current situation with what it should be. For public sector auditors of the environment, what the situation should be is derived from multi-jurisdictional agreements, legislation and regulations, policies, programmes, and enforcement requirements.

For SAIs, environmental audits can be conducted from several perspectives and on a variety of government activities that affect the environment. Environmental audits from a compliance perspective examine how government activities are conducted according to relevant environmental laws, standards, and policies—both at national and international levels. An environmental audit from a financial perspective is conducted to ensure that public funds were spent efficiently and for their intended purpose. Finally, from a performance perspective, environmental audits have been conducted of environmental indicators, programmes, and policy decisions to see if these activities were completed economically, effectively, and efficiently. All SAIs are unique, and they may use a combination of these three types of audits.

Environmental auditing in the public sector is now a common part of the cycle for good governance. Environmental audits are often reported to elected assemblies, executive governments, or central government bodies. SAI audits can make a difference, and environmental audits have been linked to improved water quality in rivers, strengthened protection of flora and fauna, and reduced desertification and pollution. With over 2,000 environmental audits completed by

SAIs around the world, environmental auditing is now mainstream in many audit offices.

When SAIs examine their government's actions on the environment, they consider if their country has signed MEAs, so they can audit MEA implementation and compliance. In most countries, only SAIs have the mandate and access to audit government's progress on MEAs. An audit of an MEA in an individual country may include examining the capacity of the country's institutions responsible for environmental management, the reporting material provided to international bodies, and the effectiveness and efficiency of policy tools, such as domestic programmes, funds and projects created to meet the MEA commitment.

Since 2003, more than a third of the SAIs have used international agreements as a source of audit criteria for a variety of issues: biodiversity, wetlands, endangered species, transportation of hazardous waste, marine pollution, ozone protection and climate change, to name a few. There is no fool-proof method for auditing MEAs. In some cases, the language in agreements is not audit friendly; ambiguous phrases such as "do as appropriate" or "in as far as possible" do not provide clear expectations for auditors. This makes it challenging for SAIs to audit results and compliance.

One notable trend in environmental auditing is several SAIs auditing an issue cooperatively. For example, eight SAIs recently conducted a cooperative audit of the Helsinki Convention, which addresses the transportation of hazardous waste in the Baltic Sea. Border protected areas, shared water bodies, transboundary air pollutants

and multilateral environmental policy tools have played a large part in SAIs working more closely together.

SAIs also work cooperatively to build capacity for environmental audits. Cooperative audits, especially those of MEAs, help auditors build knowledge, learn about auditing techniques, compare audit findings with other countries, and benchmark results. The INTOSAI Working Group on Environmental Auditing (WGEA) has published several guidance documents on audits of MEAs, including the *Audit of International Environmental Accords* and *How SAIs may Cooperate on the Audit of International Environmental Accords*.

All SAIs are unique. Their mandates vary as do their governments' environmental activities. Therefore, not all SAIs can audit environmental issues in the same way. Public sector auditors work in courts of audit, offices of the auditor general, and chambers of accounts. SAIs may also be called chambers, tribunals, or comptrollers. They are making great gains in working together to share knowledge and audit methods. It is the WGEA's goal to work more with other organizations to achieve common goals. For more information about the organization visit [www.environmental-auditing.org](http://www.environmental-auditing.org). The author can be reached at [vi-vien.lo@oag-bvg.gc.ca](mailto:vi-vien.lo@oag-bvg.gc.ca).

Link to the full article: <http://www.iisd.ca/mea-l/guestarticle40b.html>

*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 Editor, [lynn@iisd.org](mailto:lynn@iisd.org), for further information.*

**► CHEMICALS AND WASTES**

**BASEL CONVENTION CONSULTS PARTIES REGARDING ARTICLE 17 AMBIGUITIES**

The Secretariat of the Basel Convention has published information regarding ongoing consultations on paragraph 5 of Article 17 (Amendments of the Convention). In decision OEWG-VI/16, the Basel Convention Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) agreed that this paragraph pres-



ents ambiguities as to the requirements for the entry into force of amendments to the Convention and acknowledged the need for a common interpretation. The Secretariat has therefore published comments received from parties and a clarification provided by the UN Office of Legal Affairs on the interpretation of paragraph 5 of Article 17 ([http://www.basel.int/legalmatters/article17\(5\)/Decision%20VI/comments%20oewg6.html](http://www.basel.int/legalmatters/article17(5)/Decision%20VI/comments%20oewg6.html)). The Basel Convention Secretariat has also made available the Report of the sixth session

of the OEWG (<http://www.basel.int/meetings/oewg/oewg6/docs/29e.pdf>).

**SAICM TEXTS PUBLISHED IN UN LANGUAGES**

The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) texts, including the Overarching Policy Strategy and the Global Plan of Action, have been published in the six UN languages. Advance copies may be requested from the SAICM Secretariat (<http://www.chem.unep.ch/saicm/>).

## RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

### STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO PREPARE FOR AND PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS ON FUTURE ACTIONS UNDER THE UNFCCC AND ITS KYOTO PROTOCOL

(Institute of Development Studies, 2007) This report, authored by Farhana Yamin, summarizes the activities undertaken by the BASIC Project (Building and Strengthening Institutional Capacities on Climate Change in Brazil, India, China and South Africa), which has focused on supporting the institutional capacity of key developing countries to determine what kind of national and international climate change actions best fit their social, political and economic circumstances ([http://www.ids.ac.uk/UserFiles/File/poverty\\_team/BASIC\\_Final\\_Report\\_September\\_20071.pdf](http://www.ids.ac.uk/UserFiles/File/poverty_team/BASIC_Final_Report_September_20071.pdf)).

### G8 IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS - GOOD OR BAD?

(Ecologic, 2007) This paper, authored by Nils Meyer-Ohlendorf and Henrike Peichert, analyzes the recent G8 Summit outcomes and their practical impacts on international climate change negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The paper maintains that G8 Summit outcomes appear to yield overall positive influence on the UNFCCC processes, although more ambitious action needs to be taken and implemented ([http://www.ecologic.de/download/zeitschriftenartikel/meyer-ohlendorf/g8\\_impact\\_on\\_international\\_climate\\_change\\_negotiations.pdf](http://www.ecologic.de/download/zeitschriftenartikel/meyer-ohlendorf/g8_impact_on_international_climate_change_negotiations.pdf)).

### FORESTS SOURCEBOOK: PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR SUSTAINING FORESTS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

(World Bank, 2007) This sourcebook is a resource for World Bank clients, task managers and other stakeholders to design and implement projects in line with the Bank's 2002 Forest Strategy, drawing on experiences from within and outside the Bank. The sourcebook addresses, *inter alia*, forests for poverty reduction, engaging the private sector in forest sector development, and meeting the growing demand for forest products (<http://go.worldbank.org/9OURYI3KT0>).

## ► CHEMICALS AND WASTES

### ROTTERDAM CONVENTION CHEMICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS POSTED

The Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention has posted documents for the Chemical Review Committee (CRC) at its fourth session (10-13 March 2008, Geneva, Switzerland). The documents

include: an annotated agenda; a report of the Bureau on the prescreening of notifications and proposed priorities for review by the CRC; review of the role and mandate of the CRC; and notifications for methyl parathion, chrysotile asbestos, mirex, alachlor, aldicarb and carbaryl (<http://www.pic.int/home.php?type=b&id=145&sid=18&tid=42>).

## ► WATER, OCEANS AND WETLANDS

### RAMSAR STRP MEETING UNDERWAY, UNCCD HEAD VISITS RAMSAR

The 14th Meeting of Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) opened on 28 January 2008, in Gland, Switzerland, and will end on 1 February. Participants will focus on finalizing the draft guidance and draft Resolutions that will be submitted to the Standing Committee for consideration for adoption by Contracting Parties at COP 10 (28 October-4 November 2008, Changwon, Republic of Korea) ([http://www.ramsar.org/strp/strp14\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.ramsar.org/strp/strp14_agenda.pdf)).

Luc Gnacadja and Gregoire de Kalbermatten, Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary, respectively, of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), visited the Ramsar Convention Secretariat on 16 January 2008, to discuss the future directions of the conventions and possible areas of collaboration. While the UNCCD recently adopted a ten-year strategic plan (2008-2018) and is finalizing a four-year strategic work plan (2008-2011), the Ramsar Convention is currently developing its third Strategic Plan (2009-2014), to be adopted by COP 10 in November 2008. Discussions concluded that these plans should form the basis of identifying areas for enhanced synergy and joint ac-

tivity between the two conventions, including through possible establishment of a joint work plan ([http://www.ramsar.org/wn/w.n.unccd\\_visit2008.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/wn/w.n.unccd_visit2008.htm)). In related news, Ramsar Secretary General Anada Tiega attended the International Conference on Combating Desertification, which took place from 22-24 January in Beijing, China. In his statement to the Conference, Tiega called attention to the Memorandum of Cooperation between the two Secretariats, which was signed during UNCCD COP 2 in Dakar, Senegal, in 1998 ([http://www.ramsar.org/speech/speech\\_desertification\\_beijing\\_2008.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/speech/speech_desertification_beijing_2008.htm)).

The Ramsar Secretariat has also reported that Hungary has finished updating site data for all 26 of its Wetlands of International Importance ([http://www.ramsar.org/profile/profiles\\_hungary.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/profile/profiles_hungary.htm)).



Gregoire de Kalbermatten (left) and Luc Gnacadja (right) of the UNCCD visit Nick Davidson and Abou Bamba (center left and right) of Ramsar (Photo courtesy of Ramsar)

## ► FORESTS, DESERTS AND LAND

### UNCCD'S GNACADJA VISITS RAMSAR, BEIJING MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Luc Gnacadja, the Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), together with Gregoire de Kalbermatten, UNCCD Deputy Executive Secretary, visited the Ramsar Secretariat in Gland, Switzerland, on 16 January 2008 (see the report in the "Water, Oceans and Wetlands" section of this issue). While in Switzerland, Gnacadja also consulted with the International Organization for Migration and the UN Economic Commission for Europe.

Gnacadja attended the 22-24 January 2008 Beijing International Conference on Combating Desertification, which

was convened as an intersessional event in contribution to the 16th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 16; see the report in the "Sustainable Development" section of this issue). In his opening statement, he called attention to the UNCCD Secretariat's role in preparations for the CSD 16 regional implementation meetings in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe. He also highlighted that climate change has added a new dimension to the challenge to achieve poverty reduction in a manner that ensures rational resource use, since this challenge now needs to be addressed "in a scenario of increasing natural disasters, including risks of droughts, desertification, land degradation and ecosystem change."

**RESEARCH AND RESOURCES**

**BIODIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION: A QUALIFIED ANALYSIS AND UNQUALIFIED SUGGESTIONS**

(ANPED, 2008) This report compares the place biodiversity and consumption hold in the overall sustainable development discourse, and focuses on the known reasons for biodiversity loss and how they could be influenced by sustainable consumption. The report concludes that the discussion about biodiversity policy must no longer be restricted to the levels of nature protection efforts, but should address the drivers behind the pressures leading to biodiversity loss (<http://www.anped.org/media/biodivsc-web.pdf>).

**INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND ACCESS TO CLEAN ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: AN ANALYSIS OF SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC, BIOFUELS AND WIND TECHNOLOGIES**

(ICTSD, 2007) This paper by John Barton explores the potential role of intellectual property in the development and diffusion of clean energy technologies. The paper finds that specific improvements or features are usually patented, rather than basic technologies, and concludes with suggestions for developing countries, lenders and donors, and international negotiations ([http://www.trade-environment.org/page/ictsd/projects/BARTON\\_DEC\\_2007.pdf](http://www.trade-environment.org/page/ictsd/projects/BARTON_DEC_2007.pdf)).

**OVERVIEW OF UN ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

(UN, 2008) This report by the UN Secretary-General has been released in advance of the UN General Assembly's High Level Thematic debate on climate change, to be held in February 2008. The report notes that an inclusive and coherent approach to climate change would enable the UN system to provide support for the negotiations on an international agreement on an effective post-2012 climate change framework, and provide a multi-sectoral mechanism through which to deliver on future agreements, as well as improve implementation of existing mandates (<http://www.un.org/ga/president/62/ThematicDebates/a-62-644.pdf>).

**▶ FORESTS, DESERTS AND LAND**

**UNFF 8 BUREAU DISCUSSES TRUST FUND**

The Bureau of the Eighth Session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) met on 17 December 2007, in New York, US. The Bureau discussed a number of upcoming activities for 2008, including region- and country-led initiatives on regional processes, forest governance and decentralization in Africa,

and finance. In discussing the UNFF Trust Fund, Bureau members noted the need for additional funding to cover temporary staffing and travel support for representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to attend Forum sessions and expert meetings ([http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/bureau/unff8/minutes\\_17122007.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/bureau/unff8/minutes_17122007.pdf)).

**▶ INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**UN SECRETARY-GENERAL HIGHLIGHTS WATER ISSUES IN DAVOS**

Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on 24 January 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted the linkages between poverty, climate change, water scarcity and conflict, citing a recent report by International Alert that identifies 46 countries, home to 2.7 billion people, where climate change and water-related crises increase the risk of violent conflict. He emphasized that both governments and businesses must play a role in the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to secure safe water for all (<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25398&Cr=davos&Cr1=>).

made to date, including the implementation of the 'One UN' pilot projects (<http://www.un.org/ga/president/62/letters/swc110108.pdf>).

**TAKING STOCK OF 'ONE UN' PILOTS, NEW SYSTEM-WIDE COHERENCE CHAIRS APPOINTED**

Following the first year of operation of the 'One UN' pilot projects, which include Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam, the UN Development Group has announced the development of reports containing key potential or emerging results, lessons learnt and recommendations. The results of the stocktaking exercise will feed into the UN consultations on the recommendations of the High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence. Having concluded the planning phase, the focus in 2008 will shift to implementation of the 'One Programme' and realization of substantial operational change (<http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=568>).



Assad wind farm (Photo courtesy of UNDP)

**UNDP AND GEF INAUGURATE WIND FARMS IN ERITREA**

The UN Development Programme (UNDP), in cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Eritrean Ministry of Energy and Mines, has inaugurated the first wind-generated electric power in Assad, Eritrea, on 18 January 2008. The wind power project aims at transforming the market for wind energy applications through investments in and replication of new technology, and is expected to contribute to a lower dependence on imported fossil fuels and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the partial displacement of diesel generating facilities. An additional objective of the project is to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially the goal pertaining to "the protection and sustainable use of the environment" (<http://www.er.undp.org/energy&environment/>).

In related news, UN General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim announced on 11 January 2008 that he has appointed Augustine Mahiga (Tanzania) and Paul Kavanagh (Ireland) as new Co-Chairs for the consultations on System-wide Coherence, which will resume on 8 February 2008. The focus of the first meeting will be assessing last year's developments and progress



The newly installed generator (Photo courtesy of UNDP)

## ► INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

### UNEP-ORGANIZED CONFERENCE ADDRESSES ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The Asia Pacific Regional Conference on Environmental Justice and Enforcement, organized by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, convened on 14-16 January 2008, in Bangkok, Thailand, bringing together judges, prosecutors and legal practitioners from about 40 countries in the region. The event

was aimed at strengthening the role of judges and legal practitioners in environmental governance, enforcement and the rule of law. Participants discussed, among other issues: emerging trends in environmental jurisprudence and enforcement of environmental laws; the interface between international policy and legal frameworks and national legal systems; and ways to strengthen environmental justice to deal with major environmental challenges, including

climate change (<http://www.roap.unep.org/press/NR08-01.html>).

UNEP has also announced that nominations are open for the 2008 UNEP Sasakawa Prize, noting that winners will be chosen for work related to the theme for this year's World Environment Day: 'Kick the Habit: Towards a Low Carbon Economy' (<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=525&ArticleID=5735&1=en>).

## ► SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### UNDESA CO-ORGANIZES CONFERENCE ON DESERTIFICATION, THIRD EDITION OF INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POSTED

The Beijing International Conference on Combating Desertification, which was co-organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the State Forestry Administration of the People's Republic of China (SFA), convened from 22-24 January 2008 in Beijing, China. The Conference was convened as an intersessional event in contribution to the 16th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which will address the issue of desertification, along with agriculture, land, drought, rural development, and Africa, in May 2008. The objective of the Conference was to provide opportunities for ministerial statements and panel discussions in thematic sessions and to guide and facilitate an in-depth review of barriers and constraints as well as policy options and practical measures in combating desertification. Sha Zukang, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Minister Francis Nhema, CSD 16 Chair, Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Anada Tiega, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands,

Minister Jia Zhibang, State Forestry Administration of China, and ministers from other countries participated in the meeting. China's Vice Premier Hui Liangyu addressed the opening ceremony of the Conference, which was attended by over 250 representatives from 60 countries and 18 UN organizations, as well as representatives from NGOs, regional and international organizations. Hui emphasized the need to: effectively implement the UNCCD and fulfill the commitments made under the Convention; formulate and implement national strategies to combat desertification and incorporate them into national plans for social and economic development; and change production and consumption patterns and follow the path of sustainable development.

Participants reportedly adopted, in principle, a Beijing Statement on combating desertification and agreed that a summary of the Conference would be developed. Based on Sha Zukang's presentation during a press conference at its conclusion, Conference participants' common understandings included: the need to strengthen the implementation of the Ten-year Strategic Plan and Framework adopted at UNCCD COP-8 as well as the coordination of implementation of the UNCCD, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity; forests play an

important role in preventing and controlling land degradation and restoring degraded land; National Action Plans offer an effective tool in combating desertification and should be implemented in coordination among relevant government agencies, including central government agencies and local governments; multilateral and bilateral regional cooperation should be strengthened; partnerships and strategic alliances are critical instruments; and international development cooperation, including ODA, can play an important role in investing in addressing land degradation, while central and local governments should take effective measures to mobilize financial resources (IISD RS Sources; [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/calendar/desertification\\_beijing2008.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/calendar/desertification_beijing2008.htm)).

In addition, the UNDESA Division of Sustainable Development, which serves as the CSD Secretariat, has recently posted a link to the third edition of "Indicators of Sustainable Development: Guidelines and Methodologies." This edition is based on two previous editions, which were developed, adjusted and tested as part of the implementation of the CSD's Work Programme on Indicators of Sustainable Development, as adopted at CSD 3 in 1995 and presented to the CSD in 2001 (<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/indicators/guidelines.pdf>).

## ► COMINGS AND GOINGS

- After serving as the Head and Coordinator of the Secretariat of the **UN Forum on Forests (UNFF)** since 2002, Pekka Patosaari retired from the UN on 31 December 2007 (<http://www.un.org/esa/desa/desaNews/v12n01/cg.html>).



Pekka Patosaari

## ► KEY UPCOMING MEA MEETINGS

- **UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY THEMATIC DEBATE: ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE: THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE WORLD AT WORK:** 11-12 February 2008. New York, US. <http://www.un.org/ga/president/62/ThematicDebates/themclimatechange.shtml>
- **SECOND MEETING OF THE CBD AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON PROTECTED AREAS:** 11-15 February 2008. Rome, Italy. <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/wgpa2/>