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Much work is currently being undertaken around the globe to measure and identify sustainability in forests. A series of initiatives are underway in preparation for 1997, when the fifth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and a special session of the UN General Assembly will meet in New York, New York, the eleventh World Forestry Congress will convene in Antalya, Turkey, and major political decisions relating to forests are expected at the international level. The recent increase in the number of initiatives to develop **criteria and indicators (C&I) of sustainable forest management (SFM)** and related **certification** (or accreditation) schemes, is in fact part of a wider movement around the world to develop measurements and indicators of sustainable development. Meaningful and practical measures of sustainability are necessary, the argument goes, in order to better gauge the progress of nations. A recent survey found that by mid-1996 more than 30 countries had already implemented initiatives for eco-labeling or certifying sustainability of one kind or another (ISO 14000 initiatives not included).

This subject is certainly one of the most intricate and complex parts of today's discussions on international forest policy - both because of the speed at which it is evolving and the sheer number of initiatives underway. The purpose of this *Countdown* briefing is two-fold: (1) to highlight some of the international (as distinct from purely national and local) initiatives underway to develop forest-related C&I and certification systems, and (2) to capture some of the broad range of opinions that prevail on the subject among different groups and around the world. As the processes described in this issue are still in flux, this briefing offers a 'snapshot in time' overview of the subject.

Editorial

If debate is healthy, then the international dialogue on C&I and certification of forest sustainability can certainly be called robust. The sharp differences in views on the subject - which vary across nations as well as interest groups - suggest that better understanding is required on all sides before a wider global consensus is possible.

Many observers argue that much of the debate on C&I and certification is driven by economic considerations such as trade. Government and industry positions tend to vary alongside the nature of demand (both domestic and foreign) for forest products. There is nothing like consumer demand for sustainably managed forest products to create a favourable commercial and political atmosphere for C&I and certification. Notable examples of pro-C&I and certification regions include Europe (with its 'green' consumers) and Canada and Indonesia (with their strong dependence on wood exports), among others. Where governments and commercial interests are less influenced by green consumers, however, international C&I and certification are often seen as unnecessary or irrelevant. In certain countries, C&I and certification may be viewed more as chips to bargain with at international negotiations than as the stuff of true national priorities.

Because of the complexity of the discussions, it is sometimes all too easy to lose sight of how C&I and certification should fit into the wider international dialogue on forests. C&I and certification may be important tools for promoting sustainable forest management around the globe, but they should not be viewed as a panacea for all that ails the world's forests. Unless *underlying* causes of forest loss - such as poverty, landlessness and misdirected government policies - are addressed, it seems unlikely that trade-driven policies alone could

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IISD'S BRIEFINGS SERIES ON INTERNATIONAL FOREST POLICY LEADING UP TO THE SPRING 1997 SESSION OF THE U.N. COMMISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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safeguard the forests of the future. (Please see Issue 1 of *Countdown* for a more detailed sketch of the underlying causes issue). Closely linked, of course, is the need to reform current economic, political and institutional arrangements for managing forests.

The result is a rather uneasy cross-section of economic interests, environmentalists and nations promoting C&I and certification, while others stand on the sidelines urging the international community not to forget the more deep-seated driving forces behind deforestation. Will C&I and certification dominate the discussions at the expense of other issues? It's hard to say. Rest assured, however, that if the international community chooses to restrict the parameters of the debate now, the wider issues facing the world's forests will still remain to be addressed in future discussions.

"The dynamics of the [international forest negotiations] are as follows: Europe and Scandinavia want conservation, C&I and certification, and a strong role for NGOs. Brazil wants open markets, more compensation for its forests, and national sovereignty. The USA opposes international C&I and certification, and is lukewarm on a Forest Convention - the USA is not dependent on international markets for forest products. The G-77 and China want development and compensation for sustainable forest management in developing countries. Canada is trade-dependent and wants a Forest Convention based on international C&I. Indonesia and Malaysia want compensation but resist 'participatory' models. India promotes 'joint forest management' and the satisfaction of basic human needs. Russia is not 'playing the game'."

- from an IPF-2 delegate interview 3

OUTLINE OF INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

The international initiatives for measuring sustainable forest management can be divided into two broad categories - C&I and Certification. We lead off with the C&I category because it is the more generic of the two - while certification requires agreed C&I, C&I do not imply any formal certification system per se. Certification is certainly the more controversial of the two, and while some nations are energetically pursuing agreement on C&I, they remain actively against certification.

1. CRITERIA & INDICATORS

In this section, we review five major international initiatives on C&I. The first four involve formal inter-governmental discussions and agreements, while the last one is more of an international study or comparison. Each initiative has arrived at a set of suggested C&I for use in measuring sustainable forest management. These suggested C&I are listed in accompanying tables, using the words of the respective processes or organizations rather than those of IISD. Each table is accompanied by a brief history of the process used to arrive at the suggested C&I, along with relevant contact information.

(a) Amazonian Process

The Tarapoto Proposal C&I are widely seen as the most comprehensive C&I yet to emerge for SFM in tropical forests, including a strong emphasis on socio-economic considerations and criteria at the global, national and management unit levels. Evaluation of some indicators may prove difficult,

however. The Tarapoto C&I are the only ones that explicitly raise the issue of the global services provided by tropical forests.

The signatory countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACT) include Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela. On February 25, 1995 the ACT countries, in consultation with international NGOs, agreed to a broad-ranging list of C&I for the sustainability of the Amazonian forest. The *Tarapoto Proposal* includes 12 criteria (each with assorted indicators) grouped into three broad categories: national, managerial or global.

Tarapoto Proposal (1995): **Criteria (no. of indicators)**

- I. NATIONAL LEVEL
 1. Socio-Economic Benefits (16)
 2. Policies and Legal-Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (4)
 3. Sustainable Forest Production (5)
 4. Conservation of Forest Cover and Biological Diversity (8)
 5. Conservation and integrated Management of Water and Soil Resources (4)
 6. Science and Technology for the Sustainable Development of Forests (6)
 7. Institutional Capacity to Promote Sustainable Development in Amazonia (8)
- II. MANAGEMENT UNIT LEVEL
 8. Legal and Institutional Framework (3)
 9. Sustainable Forest Production (5)
 10. Conservation of Forest Ecosystems (6)
 11. Local Socio-Economic Benefits (9)



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III. SERVICES AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

12. Economic, Social and Environmental Services Performed by the Amazonian Forests (7)

Contact information:

*Pro Tempore Secretariat of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, Avenida Prolongación Primavera 654, Surco, Lima, 33 Peru
Tel.: (511-4) 38-9664/9662/9658 or 49-9084 or (511-2) 71-7497
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Internet: http://www.spt-tca.org.pe*

"The Amazonian countries have attempted to identify and define criteria and indicators which respond to the peculiarities of the region's ecosystems as well as other social and cultural factors. Their purpose was to make compatible environmental sustainability factors with the optimal economic use of the Amazon forest's natural resources ... The Amazon countries are those most interested in the sustainable management of the [Amazon] forest. To accomplish this they need, among other things, improved institutional capacity, fairer prices for their products, the elimination of trade barriers and compensation for global environmental services ...

"Bearing in mind that one of the characteristics of the international economic order in the last twenty years has been the collapse of real raw materials prices, the Countries Party of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty accord that the trend to the imposition of tariff and other barriers must be reversed. These include discriminatory criteria such as the imposition of environmental

conditions on tropical timber imports, especially those of high aggregate value."

- selections from the Tarapoto Proposal on C&I for the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACT) countries, February, 1995. 3

(b) Montreal Process

Like the Amazon/Tarapoto C&I for tropical forests, the Montreal Process C&I are widely seen as being the most comprehensive set of criteria and indicators yet to emerge for national-level reporting on SFM in temperate and boreal forests. They include a wide array of socio-economic considerations. Evaluation of some indicators may prove difficult, however.

The Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests, or 'Montreal Process', was initiated in September 1993 in Montreal. Numerous subsequent meetings have been held to define SFM for non-European temperate and boreal forests. The dialogue involves inter-governmental consultations between Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and the USA (countries that together represent about 90% of the world's temperate and boreal forests), with the additional involvement of a number of technical and policy experts and NGOs. In February 1995 the Montreal Process countries reached agreement on a broad range of recommended C&I, as captured in the *Santiago Declaration*. More recently, Argentina and Uruguay have signed on to the process and the attention has shifted to improving data collection and implementing C&I at the national level.

A progress report on implementing the Montreal Process C&I is planned for distribution at the fourth meeting of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development's Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) in New York during February 1997, with further reporting planned for the eleventh World Forestry Congress in Antalya, Turkey in October 1997. The next meeting of the Montreal Process is scheduled for South Korea shortly thereafter.

Montreal Process (1995):

Criteria (no. of indicators)

1. Conservation of Biological Diversity (9)
2. Maintenance of Productive Capacity of Forest Ecosystems (5)
3. Maintenance of Forest Ecosystem Health and Vitality (3)
4. Conservation and Maintenance of Soil and Water Resources (8)
5. Maintenance of Forest Contribution to Global Carbon Cycles (3)
6. Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Multiple Socio-Economic Benefits to Meet the Needs of Society (19)
7. Legal, Institutional and Economic Framework for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Management (5)

Contact information: Kathryn Buchanan, Montreal Process Liaison Office, c/o Canadian Forest Service, Federal/Provincial Relations Division, 8th Floor, Sir William Logan Building, 580 Booth Street, Ottawa. (An occasional publication called the C&I Newsletter is also published out of this office, and copies are available upon request.)

Tel.: (613) 947-9061.

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Email: kbuchanan@am.ncr.forestry.ca 3

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(c) International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

ITTO member countries emphasize the need to introduce SFM not only in tropical forests, but also in temperate, boreal and other non-tropical ones. While the ITTO made the major initial contribution toward defining SFM using C&I, a greater emphasis on ecological and social considerations has since taken over following UNCED. Among the internationally negotiated processes, the ITTO and Amazonian processes are unique in having formulated C&I at both the national and management unit levels.

The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) was the first organization to undertake an international dialogue leading to the development of C&I for forest sustainability. (Prior to this, ITTO had formulated Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests.) Stakeholders from tropical timber producing and consuming member countries participated, along with conservation NGOs and representatives of the tropical timber trade and industry. The discussions led to a list of suggested criteria and indicators for the measurement of sustainable tropical forest management at both the national and management unit levels (ITTO, 1992). ITTO plans to develop its C&I further in the light of its experiences with their application.

ITTO (1992):

Criterion (no. of indicators)

I. NATIONAL LEVEL

1. Forest Resource Base (5)
2. Continuity of Flow (8)
3. Level of Environmental Control (3)
4. Socio-Economic Benefits (4)
5. Institutional Frameworks (7)

II. FOREST MANAGEMENT UNIT LEVEL

1. Resource Security (5)
2. Continuity of Timber Production (8)
3. Conservation of Flora and Fauna (2)
4. Acceptable Level of Environmental Impact (4)
5. Socio-Economic Benefits (2)
6. Planning and Adjustment to Experience (2)

ITTO launched 'Target 2000' in 1990 - later called the 'ITTO Year 2000 Objective' - as a call for trade in tropical timber and timber products from sustainably managed sources by the turn of the century. This call served as a stimulus for a counterpart commitment by the consumer members of ITTO to achieve sustainable management of their forests (boreal, temperate and non-tropical) by the turn of the century. This statement of commitment is part of the latest International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) of 1994, which was concluded at the UN Conference on Tropical Timber under the auspices of UNCTAD in Geneva on January 26, 1994.

*Contact information: ITTO, International Organizations Centre, 5th Floor, Pacifico-Yokohama, 1-1-1, Minato-Mirai, Nishi-ku, Yokohama 220, Japan.
Tel.: (81-45) 223-1110
Fax: (81-45) 223-1111
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(d) Helsinki Process

The Helsinki Process is strong on ecological aspects, but weaker on socio-economic considerations. Some European countries such as Finland are now in the process of broadening their research on the socio-economic side.

The Helsinki C&I were initiated in 1993, in follow-up to the *Forest Principles* agreed at UNCED in Rio, and they remain in development. A major consideration was the long-term health of Europe's forests given threats such as acid rain and global warming. However, the impetus for launching a European process on C&I was broader, involving the promotion of sustainable forest management in Europe following the Rio *Forest Principles* in 1992 and the 2nd Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in 1993 in Helsinki. The ministerial meeting culminated in a political declaration and four key resolutions on European forests. Since then, European governments have been engaged in technical follow-up discussions on C&I.

Expert-level follow-up meetings led to agreement on six criteria and 27 quantitative indicators in June 1994 (below) and a further 101 qualitative indicators in January 1995. The third major ministerial meeting on European forest protection is scheduled for 1998 in Lisbon.

Helsinki Process (1994):

Criteria

(no. of quantitative indicators)

1. Maintenance and Appropriate Enhancement of Forest Resources (5)
2. Maintenance of Forest Ecosystem Health and Vitality (7)
3. Maintenance and Encouragement of Productive Functions of Forests (wood and non-wood) (3)
4. Maintenance, Conservation and Appropriate Enhancement of Biological Diversity in Forest Ecosystems (7)
5. Maintenance and Appropriate Enhancement of Protective Functions in Forest Management (notably soil and water) (2)

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6. Maintenance of Other Socio-Economic Functions and Conditions (3)

Contact information: Mr. Luis Costa Leal, Liaison Unit of the Ministerial Conference Follow-up, Rua de S. Juliao, 100-º3 Dto, 1100 Lisboa, Portugal.
 Tel.: (351-1) 347-1411 or 342-3946
 Fax: (351-1) 346-9512
 Email: ip001795@ip.pt

(e) Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)

CIFOR is conducting useful work on the practical applications and social dimensions of C&I. Unlike the previous initiatives listed above, which are all more formal internationally-negotiated processes, the CIFOR initiative is independent but internationally funded as part of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) network.

The Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), based in Indonesia, is the first international organization to undertake broad testing of a range of proposed C&I. Field testing has occurred at forest sites in Germany, Indonesia, Côte d'Ivoire, Brazil and Austria. The findings indicate a substantial degree of commonality in criteria and indicators across all test sites. A 'core' subset of C&I which emerged for the tropical sites (see below) was subsequently found to also be widely applicable or adaptable to temperate forests. CIFOR concluded that it should be possible to develop 'generic' global C&I, at least for closed canopy forests. Another conclusion was that 'core' C&I apply as much to management processes as to site-level performance measures of sustainability.

Subset of Criteria Common to CIFOR'S Tropical Test Sites (1996):

Principles

Policy

Policy, Planning and Institutional Framework are Conducive to Sustainable Forest Management

Ecology

Maintenance of Ecosystem Integrity

Social Environment

Forest Management Maintains Fair Inter-generational Access to Resources and Economic Benefits Stakeholders, including Forest Actors, Have a Voice in Forest Management

Production of Goods and Services

Yield and Quality of Forest Goods and Services are Sustainable

Criteria (no. of indicators)

1. There is Sustained and Adequate Funding for the Management of Forests (5)
2. Ecosystem Function is Maintained (4)
3. Impacts to Biodiversity of the Forest Ecosystem are Minimized (4)
4. The Capacity of the Forest to Regenerate Naturally in Ensured (2)
5. Stakeholders/Forest Actors' Tenure and Use Rights are Secure (3)
6. Stakeholders/Local Populations Participate in Forest Management (2)
8. Management Objectives are Clearly and Precisely Described and documented (1)
9. A Comprehensive Forest Management Plan is Available (4)
10. The Management Plan is Effectively Implemented (4)
11. An Effective Monitoring and Control System Audits Management's Conformity with Planning (4)

CIFOR is also conducting research into the social dimensions of C&I. Five key questions were recently identified:

1. Should social concerns be included in forest sustainability assessments at all or should there be a separate category of social sustainability?
2. If the standards for social conditions are specific to a particular

cultural and locational context, can social standards be set at all?

3. Should criteria measured at the forest management level include factors beyond the control of forest managers, for example, land tenure policies or population settlement programs?
4. How far should the boundaries of assessment extend?



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5. How can good quality information about social conditions be acquired in a short time period?

CIFOR is also working on the question of how to meaningfully identify relevant stakeholders in forests and how to 'rank' different groups. The research team recently proposed a system for 'scoring' stakeholder groups along six dimensions: proximity to the forest, pre-existing rights, forest dependency, indigenous knowledge, forest/culture link and power deficit.

Contact Information: CIFOR, P.O. Box 6596, JKPWB, Jakarta 10065, Indonesia. Tel: (62-251) 34-3652 Fax: (62-251) 32-6433 Email: cifor@cgnet.com <http://www.cifor.or.id/> ③

It is difficult not to be overwhelmed by the various international initiatives on C&I, to which but a brief introduction has been provided here. Though the various processes are by and large occurring simultaneously, there has been a considerable degree of cross-communication between them. Despite their differences, an element of globalism and convergence seems to be creeping in as socio-economic and ecological variables receive increased attention, and national management unit level C&I receive a growing mutual emphasis. A recent meeting in Helsinki, for example, concluded that the international community should pursue the further development and harmonization of C&I on the international, national and management unit levels as a tool for defining and improving sustainable forest management. Other recommendations of the Helsinki meeting included that C&I should become an integral part of National Forest Programs throughout the world, and that those countries requiring assistance in developing C&I should be actively encouraged and assisted to do so by the rest of the international community. ③

2. CERTIFICATION

In this section we review three major international initiatives on certification (the last also mentions an international conference on C&I). The first is the most elaborated one to date, the second was formally launched only recently, and the third is not so much a separate alternative as an intergovernmental attempt to clarify an 'international position' on certification through conferences and negotiations. As in the previous section, a brief description is followed by relevant contact information.

(a) Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

The FSC approach to certification is the only major international process that aims to set site-specific performance standards for certifying good forest management. While there is a high level of endorsement of FSC certification among non-governmental organizations and wood products buyers, some industry groups nonetheless remain skeptical of the FSC approach or feel excluded by it. Doubts also persist regarding the feasibility of site-level certification, given the practical difficulties of tracing wood product sources.

The FSC was founded in Toronto in 1993, with the aim of promoting environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of forest worldwide. The FSC promotes voluntary, third-party certification of forest management by accrediting independent certifiers of forest management. It does this through ten Principles and Criteria (P&Cs) of forest management (below), developed after a long consultation process. These P&Cs are a global framework intended to serve as a

basis for the development of national standards. It is these national standards that, when ready, are used by accredited certification bodies for certification along with other elements of certification evaluation such as stakeholder consultations, peer reviews and applications of draft standards. The Principles themselves are quite general and apply to tropical, temperate and boreal forests alike.

The first four independent certification bodies were accredited as of February 1996, including the Smartwood Program of the Rainforest Alliance, the Forest Conservation Program of Scientific Certification Systems, the Responsible Forestry Program (Woodmark) of the Soil Association, and the Quality Forest Management program of SGS Forestry. Four more certification bodies from Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica and the Netherlands are currently being evaluated for accreditation. The FSC approach stresses compliance with appropriate site-level performance standards. Though the standards are expected to vary from country to country, their development must, in each case, involve multi-stakeholder consultations and be consistent with the FSC Principles.

The FSC is a membership organization with three voting chambers: economic, environmental and social (the latter two were split at the FSC's First General Assembly in June 1996). Each chamber enjoys a third of the voting weight. Equal voting weight is given to the 'North' (representing high income countries) and the 'South' (representing middle and lower income countries) within each chamber. To date, the FSC has 141 members from 31 countries. The majority of the members are non-governmental organizations (such as

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the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the National Wildlife Federation, the Natural Resources Council and Friends of the Earth), retailers (such as Home Depot in the USA and B&Q in the UK), and timber trade organizations and woodworkers groups.

FSC Principles (June, 96):

1. *Compliance with Laws and FSC Principles:* Forest management shall respect all applicable laws of the country in which they occur, and international treaties and agreements to which the country is a signatory, and comply with all FSC Principles and Criteria.
2. *Tenure and Use Rights and Responsibilities:* Long-term tenure and use rights to the land and forest resources shall be clearly defined, documented and legally established.
3. *Indigenous People's Rights:* The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories, and resources shall be recognized and respected.
4. *Community Relations and Worker's Rights:* Forest management operations shall maintain or enhance the long-term social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities.
5. *Benefits from the Forest:* Forest management operations shall encourage the efficient use of the forest's multiple products and services to ensure economic viability and a wide range of environmental and social benefits.
6. *Environmental Impact:* Forest management shall conserve biological diversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes, and, by so doing, maintain the ecological functions and the integrity of the forest.
7. *Management Plan:* A management plan - appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operations - shall be written, implemented, and kept up-to-date. The long term objectives of management, and the means of achieving them, shall be clearly stated.
8. *Monitoring and Assessment:* Monitoring shall be conducted - appropriate to the scale and intensity of forest management - to assess the condition of the forest, yields of forest products, chain of custody, management activities and their social and environmental impacts.
9. *Maintenance of Natural Forests:* Primary forests, well-developed secondary forests and sites of major environmental, social or cultural significance shall be conserved. Such areas shall not be replaced by tree plantations or other land uses.
10. *Plantations:* Plantations shall be planned and managed in accordance with Principles and Criteria 1 - 9, and Principle 10 and its Criteria. While plantations can provide an array of social and economic benefits, and can contribute to satisfying the world's needs for forest products, they should complement the management of,

reduce pressures on, and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests.

Contact Information: Dr. Timothy J. Synnott, Executive Director, FSC, Avenida Hidalgo 502, 68000 Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Mexico
Tel.: (52) 951-46905/63244
Tel./Fax: (52) 951-62110
Email: fcoax@antequera.antequera.com
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<http://antequera.antequera.com/FSC/>

Swedish certification

"In Sweden, industry, environment organizations and the forest owners organization are right now, in consensus, working on national certification standards. Swedish industry will probably be first to market [FSC-] certified softwood on a large scale."
 - from UN Association of Sweden, q2000 intervention, IPF-2 3

(b) ISO 14000

ISO 14000 may serve as a vehicle for improving international benchmarks for the sustainable management of forests. Support tends to come mostly from the private sector, with strong historical ties to the ISO product standard development process and a high comfort level with ISO's well-established institutional support structure. Criticism comes mostly from non-governmental organizations for being weak on site-specific performance standards and 'chain of custody' (or wood source) tracking, and for involving little participation from developing countries, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations and small-scale forest owners.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is the main world body devoted to developing and promoting international product or management standards. It functions through the national standards

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bodies of over 100 nations, and develops voluntary standards which individual governments and companies can then choose to adopt. A new series of environmental management standards known as ISO 14000 (or TC 207) is now under development, including benchmarks of sustainable forest management. ISO 14000 certification implies a goal-orientated approach to continual managerial improvement, a substantial global institutional infrastructure for implementing certification, and strong support from industry, trade groups and many governments.

The ISO 14000 work on forest management systems is still very much under development. The current goal is to prepare a bridging document on how ISO 14000 principles of sound environmental management should be applied to forestry, without specifying anything in the way of performance standards as such. Following numerous preliminary discussions, a formal decision was taken at a meeting in June 1996 to establish these ISO forest management guidelines. In the communiqué of the meeting it was expressly stated that neither product labels nor specific performance standards or levels were to be developed. The ISO 14000 working group on forestry - formally known as 'ISO TC 207 Working Group 2 (Forestry)' - is intended to function as an "open and inclusive consensus process which should seek to involve all affected and interested parties". The first meeting of the working group is in Toronto from November 4 to 6, 1996.

*Contact Information: c/o Standards New Zealand Secretariat for the International Study Group on SFM/ISO, Private Bag 2439, Wellington 6020 New Zealand
Tel: (64-4) 498-5990
Fax: (64-4) 498-5994* ☎

(c) Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)

The UN's IPF dialogue has generated a number of governmental and extra-governmental meetings and discussions on C&I (and certification), for which some excellent and informative papers have been written. It is still too early to say whether the IPF process will generate an alternative approach to forest certification, or whether it will restrict itself to helping the international community enunciate an 'international position' on certification issues and initiatives more generally.

The IPF dialogue on certification proceeds at both formal IPF meetings in Geneva and New York, and at inter-sessional meetings sponsored by member governments. To date, the major substantive discussions on the subject have occurred at a number of inter-sessional meetings, including:

1. Australian initiative to develop options for action on certification and labeling. (May 1996 - Brisbane). For more information and background documentation, visit the following World Wide Web site on the Internet: <http://www.dpie.gov.au/dpie/conference/icocal/>
2. Indonesian-German initiative on the links between certification and international trade (August 1996 - Bonn). For more information and documentation, contact Hager Frost, German Federal Ministry of Economics.
Tel.: (49-228) 615-3947
Fax: (49-228) 615-3993
3. Finnish initiative on promoting international comparability and national implementation of C&I (August 1996 - Helsinki). For more information and

documentation, contact the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry - International Seminar on Criteria & Indicators (ISCI) Secretariat at:
Tel.: (358 0) 160 2405
Fax: (358 0) 160 2430
Email: mmm.agrifin.mailnet.fi
Internet: <http://www.mmm.fi/isci/home.htm>

*For further information on these IPF-related inter-sessional meetings, contact the IPF Secretariat at:
2 UN Plaza, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 963-6208
Fax: (212) 963-3463
Email: dpcsd@un.org
Internet:
<http://www.un.org/dpcsd/dsd/ipf.htm> ☎*

There is simply so much happening in forest certification at the international level that it is sometimes difficult to separate important insights or advances from mere information. This is even more so when one considers not only the international but also the national level initiatives, including the efforts of groups such as the Indonesian Ecolabeling Institute and the Canadian Standards Association. Nonetheless, a trend can be detected in the growing emphasis on both performance standards and management processes, suggesting a possible convergence of FSC- and ISO-style approaches. In an effort to make sense of the international initiatives, the Universiti Pertanian in Malaysia and the University of British Columbia in Canada held a conference in May 1996 in Kuala Lumpur on the ecological, social and political issues of forest certification. The conference generated a number of thoughtful papers on certification as well as C&I, copies of which are available on the World Wide Web (see 'Further Readings on the Internet' at the back of this issue). The following selection highlights what one author had to say about the political and institutional aspects of certification. ☎

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Analysis: Political and Institutional Aspects of Certification

Rachel Crossley, an environmental consultant based in New York, provided a useful overview of the political and institutional aspects of forest certification at a conference in Kuala Lumpur in May 1996. In the following section we reprint a selection from her paper, 'A Review of Global Forest Management Certification Initiatives: Political and Institutional Aspects' (2nd draft). Reprinted with permission.

“Consumers may be concerned about ‘deforestation’, and therefore try to change their buying habits either away from wood altogether or towards more ‘sustainably ‘ produced products, but then may be confused by the variety of ‘green labels’ and environmental claims on wood products, others may simply be uninterested. Timber producers lie along a spectrum, from those who view certification as an assault on their managerial autonomy and technical competence, to those who embrace it as a way to improve every aspect of their operation. Wholesalers and retailers are generally either wary, cynical of the potential of certification as a tool to significantly influence markets, or see it as a good opportunity to increase their market share. Policy makers or pressure groups usually represent a particular constituency; they may therefore dismiss the certification movement outright and lobby against it, or support it wholeheartedly and become actively involved in the debate ...

“The pattern of development of certification activities per se is fairly standard around the world. NGOs are spearheading efforts to form

groups and initiate discussion with a wide range of stakeholders in most countries. Industry is generally resistant, apart from a few progressive companies, and does not view the development of third-party, independent certification very favorably. In general it is therefore not participating very actively in such initiatives but instead is either trying to block them or develop schemes itself that rely on the performance systems approach, and that do not necessarily involve independent verification. Some governments support certification and are either leading or actively participating in certification efforts; others have not taken a position and prefer not to get involved.”

“IN DIALOGUE”

This section captures some of the wide range of opinions which prevail on the subject of C&I and certification in the international forest dialogue. It features quotes on the subject gathered from interviews, written records and public statements which serve to further highlight the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches.

Are C&I an irrelevant diversion?

“C&I and trade are not so important. Many delegations seem to be making a fetish out of them.”
- from interview with Green Earth Organization representative, Ghana

- or a useful tool?

“C&I are a tool and a language for defining sustainable forest management.”
- from interview with Canadian delegate, IPF-2

Certification debate is confused

“There exists great confusion regarding the meaning and merits of certification. Voluntary certification is risky and undesirable because of the possibility of non-tariff barriers (NTBs). Certification could become a catalyst for deforestation - those without market access may be motivated to clear their forests ...”
- from Colombian intervention, IPF-2

“Certification is a highly confused issue. It is not at all clear what the meaning and merits of certification are ... Should the *object* of certification be the process of management, the product, or the forest management practice? Should the *purpose* of certification be to increase market share, provide consumer information, or apply political pressure? *Who* should do it - the public or private sector, exporters or importers? Should the *level* of certification be the production unit, company or concession, or [the] national or international level? Should the *governance* of certification relate to other agreements and governments?”
- from US intervention, IPF-2

Expand the scope

“Forests are more than just timber. The scope of the [current intergovernmental/IPF] document [on C&I and certification] needs expansion.”
- from Ugandan intervention, IPF-2

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C&I and Certification Require Meaningful Participation

Participation needed for C&I in South America ...

"Governments must include indigenous peoples, local communities and NGOs in defining criteria for valuation."
- from Fundacion Natura (Ecuador) intervention, IPF-2

... and certification in Asia

"Although we appreciate efforts which FSC and [a] number of NGOs have made to initiate [a] voluntary independent certification system, as you may know, some of the countries in the region control two-thirds of the global tropical timber exports and imports. Timber interests are so strong that we might not be able to have objective and meaningful wood certification. ... Some of those fundamental obstacles are: a) domination [by] timber business and power elites; b) no or little recognition of communities' rights (indigenous peoples, farmers); c) very little government will to increase public participation; d) ... little sense of independent professional performance ... ; e) inefficiency of [the] timber industry; f) ... high illegal logging rates, [and] g) lack of consumer initiatives in the East Asian market (the major timber market) ...

"So far, mostly small-scale community-based timber operators or [environmentally] conscious companies are the beneficiaries of the scheme in other parts of the world. In this part of the world, local [communities] cannot have rights to sell their forest products to [the] international community since their basic rights are suppressed ... Transparency, democracy and real peoples' participation [are a] pre-condition for ... certification schemes ..."
- from intervention by CASA/Japan Tropical Forest Action Network representative, IPF-2

"Every initiative for eco-labeling or certification of forest products should pass a transparent process involving important stakeholders, and guarantee a measurable monitoring system which continuously monitors improvement of the managers at the management unit level, as well as of governments at the policy level."
- from *Contribution of Indonesian NGOs to Asia Region Public Hearing of the World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development*, Jakarta, March 1996.

Consider all forest values

"This discussion [on C&I and certification] should occur within the wider context of the full range of forest benefits, goods and services [that today go unrecognized]."
- from Costa Rican intervention, IPF-2

"Certification is Not the Answer to Tropical Deforestation"

"Tropical deforestation will continue with or without certification unless the international community seriously addresses the problems of poverty and underdevelopment which are universally acknowledged to be the fundamental causes of deforestation in the tropical countries ... Taking three tropical countries, i.e. Indonesia in Asia, Cameroon in Africa and Brazil in Latin America as [an] illustration, some 91% to 98% of tropical deforestation had taken place because of shifting cultivation, agricultural development and other requirements of land use."
-from *Malaysian Timber Bulletin*, May 1996

Address underlying causes of deforestation

"Certification can only play a partial role and more fundamental solutions are required in most cases. Comprehensive policy packages would be needed at national level to address the root causes of forest degradation in many countries."
- from Markku Simula, *International and Institutional Arrangements for Certification of Forest Management and Eco-labeling of Forest Products* (final draft), presented at Kuala Lumpur conference, May 12-16, 1996 (see Internet readings).

Add social factors

"The consideration of social factors in these methodologies [of forest certification] represents an undeniable advance for the construction and consolidation of models of good forest management."
- from Leticia Merino Perez, *Analysis of Social Elements in Forestry Certification* (2nd draft), presented at Kuala Lumpur conference, May 12-16, 1996 (see Internet readings).

Certification must be practical and cost-effective

"Malaysia and other tropical countries are not averse to certification if it can be shown to be a marketing tool to create a level playing field for all types of timber, i.e. including temperate and boreal timbers ... The requirement by some quarters to trace every piece of timber product from the market place to its origin of forest production could turn out to be very complex, costly, and difficult for certification to be



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implemented ... Malaysia is ready to implement certification if that is what consumers want, so long as certification does not become burdensome in terms of both costs and procedures to both producers and consumers alike."

- *Malaysia Timber Bulletin* (May 1996) description of speech by Dato Seri Dr. Lim Keng Yaik, Minister of Primary Industries, Malaysia at *Conference on Ecological, Social and Political Issues on the Certification of Forest Management*, May 13, Kuala Lumpur.

ISO critiqued ...

"The current structure of the International Standards Organization (ISO) prevents it from designing effective, credible, performance-related standards for forest management. This is primarily due to ISO's generic, systems-based, non-performance orientation; the essentially untested status of its entire series of environmental management standards; its permission of some types of "self-certification"; its perceived barriers to the effective participation of key forest stakeholder groups; and its inexperience in defining sustainable management criteria for living ecological systems. However, generic approaches to ensuring integrity, quality and consistency in standards for eco-labeling content, life-cycle assessment, etc., such as those currently being discussed in the ISO arena, may be helpful."

... and FSC praised

"The Forest Stewardship Council is a positive initiative that has incorporated the following fundamental components into its structure, statutes and principles: wide consultation, participation and transparency, including significant opportunities for national, regional and local stakeholder involvement in the design and implementation of certification standards and programs; wide geographic breadth encompassing all types of forests, including plantations, as well as non-wood forest products; extensive on-the-ground experience through its accredited certifiers; a balanced systems/performance-based approach to designing and applying its principles and criteria for forest management; and a checks-and-balances system of monitoring and appeals procedures to ensure verification and integrity."

- from Global Forest Policy Project intervention, IPF-2

... and FSC critiqued

"We have ... witnessed the appearance of a variety of self-proclaimed certifiers, some lacking basic technical background, with questionable objectivity, independence and transparency. The credibility of some certifiers has been further eroded by their issuing of certificates of 'good forest management' on questionable grounds. One such case relates to a certificate issued by the Rainforest Alliance, [an FSC-accredited] certifier based in the USA, to a Dutch owned company in Costa Rica by the name of Flor y Fauna."

- from Julio Cesar Centeno, June 20, 1996. *The Elusive Credibility of Forest Management Certification Claims*. (For further information, please email the author at jcenteno@ciens.ula.ve.) ☞

Further Readings on the Internet

Papers from the Conference on *Economic, Social and Political Issues in Certification of Forest Management*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, May 12 - 16, 1996. Conference co-sponsored by the Universities of British Columbia, Canada and Pertanian, Malaysia.

<http://www.forestry.ubc.ca/concert/ubcupm.html>

Papers on C&I from the International Seminar on Criteria and Indicators in August, 1996

<http://www.mmm.fi/isici/document.htm>

Julio Cesar Centeno (March 12, 1996). *World Record on Teak Yield: Truth or Trickery?*

<http://cfs.colorado.edu/mail/elan/mar96/0036.html>

Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), including *C&I Updates* <http://www.cifor.or.id/>

Tarapoto Proposal <http://www.spt-tca.org.pe>

Forest Stewardship Council

<http://antequera.antequera.com/FSC/>

Intergovernmental Panel on Forests

<http://www.un.org/dpcsd/dsd/ipf.htm>

World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development

<http://iisd1.iisd.ca/wcfsd/> ☞

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