

PRESS RELEASE

Forest Policies from six countries shortlisted for Future Policy Award

Top candidates found in Bhutan, The Gambia, Nepal, Rwanda, Switzerland and the USA

New York / Montreal / Hamburg / Rome, 5 July 2011 – Policies from six countries are now shortlisted for the 2011 Future Policy Award. Bhutan, The Gambia, Nepal, Rwanda, Switzerland and the USA are still in the running for the most inspiring, innovative and influential forest policies worldwide. The Future Policy Award is granted by the World Future Council, an international policy research organization that provides decision makers with effective policy solutions. The three winning policies which contribute best to the conservation and sustainable development of forests for the benefit of current and future generations will be announced on 21 September 2011 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The announcement will be followed by an awards ceremony hosted by the World Future Council, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat, the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Wildlife Conservation Society. These partners look forward to the participation of government representatives, high level officials of international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as well as media and civil society.

The Future Policy Award celebrates the world's most exemplary national policies that create better living conditions for current and future generations and that produce practical and tangible results. The award's theme, in which policy progress is particularly urgent, is chosen on an annual basis. This year's focus is forests as 2011 has been declared the International Year of Forests by the United Nations, with the central theme "Forests for People", to raise awareness of the multiple values of forests and highlight success stories and challenges faced by many of the world's forests and the people who depend on them.

Alexandra Wandel, Director of the World Future Council, says, "With the Future Policy Award we want to cast a spotlight on policies that lead by example. The aim of the World Future Council is to raise global awareness of visionary policies and speed up policy action in the interests of present and future generations."

"Recognizing innovative forest policies is a vital component of raising awareness of the role forests play in delivering essential benefits and services for people everywhere," says Jan McAlpine, Director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat. "This year's Future Policy Award is particularly timely given its links to the first ever International Year of Forests 2011 and its message "Forests for People". Since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, forests have been viewed largely through the lens of environmental concerns; it is time that we also focus on the other tangible values forests provide, from economic benefits, including livelihoods for 1.6 billion of the poorest of the poor, to social and cultural values."

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Honorary Councillor of the WFC comments "These six shortlisted candidates all demonstrate leadership towards the achievement of the 2020 Biodiversity targets: halving deforestation, restoring forests worldwide and ensuring that all forests are managed sustainably. Through the implementation of these policies, we can achieve the 2050 vision, which is a future of life in harmony with nature."

Eduardo Rojas Briales, Assistant Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization, says "The Future Policy Award presents an excellent opportunity to emphasize the important role of national policies in restoring and preserving the vital functions of forests for people and to shed some light on the world's best practices in governing forest resources. FAO would like to encourage countries and organizations to take action on forests during the International Year of Forests and share knowledge and successful experience in forest governance."



Factsheet of Shortlisted Policies

Bhutan: The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, especially Article 5 (Environment) (2008) and forest related policies

Article 5 of Bhutan's Constitution states, "Every Bhutanese is a trustee of the Kingdom's natural resources and environment for the benefit of present and future generations." Bhutan has adopted a constitutional provision stipulating that a minimum of sixty percent of the country's land is to be maintained under forest cover at all times and that ecologically balanced sustainable development shall be secured. With its national goal of living in harmony with nature, Bhutan has the highest proportion of forest cover (69%) and protected areas (39.6%) of any Asian nation, allowing indigenous people to live freely in these areas. Bhutan has shown great foresight by including provisions on forests in its constitution.

The Gambia: Community Forest Policy, initiated in 1995

The Gambian model of community forest management is an innovative success. It aims to achieve sustainable forest management and poverty alleviation by handing control of forests to the communities that use them. Despite being one of the world's poorest countries with a rapidly growing population, Gambia has managed to buck a strong deforestation trend in the Western and Central African region by showing a net increase in forest cover of 8.5% over the last two decades. Using a phased approach, the policy includes a far reaching tenure transition of forest land from state ownership to permanent ownership by communities (which currently stands at 12% of forest lands). The policy has also achieved a reduction in illegal logging and the incidence of forest fires in community forest areas as well as contributing to the development of new markets for branch wood and other forest products which benefit women and rural populations economically.

USA: The Lacey Act with its amendment of 2008

Illegal logging and the international trade in illegal timber has been recognised as a major global problem causing environmental damage, costing producer countries billions of dollars in lost revenue, promoting corruption, undermining the rule of law and good governance and funding armed conflict. The United States have become the first country in the world to place an outright, criminally enforceable ban on the import of illegally harvested timber. The issue is addressed both nationally and internationally from the demand side by requiring that importers of wood products and subsequent handlers in the supply chain exercise due care to ensure that wood in their possession is of legal origin. The Lacey Act amendments have forced importers to take responsibility for their wood products and have already produced positive results in increasing due diligence assessments and demand for certified wood products. The Act also has the potential to significantly reduce illegal logging by withdrawing the huge rewards received by illegal loggers from the international market.

Nepal: Community Forestry Programme, initiated in 1993

Nepal's community forestry programme has evolved towards a broad-based strategy for sustainable forest use that empowers local communities to manage forests for livelihoods while also improving forest conservation. While the government still owns the forests, decisions about income-generating activities, methods of wildlife protection and rules about forest use are made by community forest user groups which are autonomous, self-governing local institutions comprised of village residents using common forests. The forestry programme has produced a range of positive impacts, improving forest coverage and conditions in community managed areas, nurturing democracy at the grassroots level, improving employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for forest-dependent people and providing promising examples of biodiversity protection. By 2009 about 1.6 million households or 32% of the country's population took part in the Community Forestry Programme, directly managing more than 25% of the country's forest area and providing significant income streams to rural communities.



Rwanda: National Forest Policy, initiated in 2004 and Law N° 57/2008 relating to the prohibition of the manufacture, import, use and sale of polythene bags in Rwanda

Rwanda's environment suffered tremendous pressure after the genocide and breakdown of law and order in 1994 due to sky-rocketing demand for wood to reconstruct the country. But despite continuing population and land pressures, Rwanda is one of only three countries in Central and Western Africa to achieve a major reversal in the trend of declining forest cover. A new National Forest Policy, aiming to make forestry one of the bedrocks of the economy and of the national ecological balance, was implemented in 2004 and Law N° 57/2008 introduced a ban on plastic bags. Massive reforestation and planting activities that promoted indigenous species and involved the local population were undertaken, and new measures such as agro-forestry and education about forest management were implemented with a variety of ecological, social and economic benefits. As a result Rwanda is on course to reach its goal of increasing forest cover to 30% of total land area by 2020.

Switzerland: Federal Act on Forests (1991) and Swiss National Forest Programme 2004-2015

The objectives of the Swiss forest policy are to promote the multi-functionality of all types of forests, guarantee sustainable forest management and by conserving forests ensure that they continue to provide benefits and services to society well into the future. The law integrates a wide-ranging set of political instruments and prohibitions, including a ban on deforestation and clear-cutting, environmentally hazardous products and the genetic modification of trees. The civil society is closely involved in forest planning and conflict resolution at different levels. Since the late 19th century the forest area has grown by about 45% and continues to expand (by 5% from 1985 to 2006) with total forest cover at 30% (56% of which is certified). There have also been beneficial impacts on green jobs, with 4.3% of those employed by the primary sector working in forestry. Through the programme the Swiss government also provides financial incentives for defence against natural hazards and the enhancement of protective forests and forest biodiversity.

Background information on the Future Policy Award

20 forest policies from 16 countries were nominated for the Future Policy Award. International organizations, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) members such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as well as others including the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) submitted the nominations.

The jury is composed of experts on sustainability and forests from all five continents and include Jan McAlpine, Director, United Nations Forum on Forests, Professor Marie Claire Cordonier Segger, Director, Center for International Sustainable Development Law, Jakob von Uexkull, Chair, World Future Council and Right Livelihood Award, Tewelde Berhan Egziabher, Director General, Environmental Protection Authority, Ethiopia, Simone Lovera, Managing Co-ordinator, Global Forest Coalition and Pauline Tangiora, Maori elder from the Rongomaiwahine tribe. In the International Year on Biodiversity the Future Policy Award 2010 went to Costa Rica's Biodiversity Law of 1998.

Notes to Editors

The World Future Council

The World Future Council brings the interests of future generations to the centre of policy-making. Its up to 50 eminent members from around the globe have already successfully promoted change. The Council addresses challenges to our common future and provides decision makers with effective policy solutions. The World Future Council is registered as a charitable foundation in Hamburg, Germany. For more information, visit www.worldfuturecouncil.org
For information on the Future Policy Award: www.worldfuturecouncil.org/future_policy_award.html
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The International Year of Forests

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness of management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The theme of the Year is “Forests for People” celebrating the central role of people in sustainable forest management. The Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, based in NY, serves as the focal point for the implementation of the International Year of Forests. The Secretariat works in cooperation with governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and international, regional and sub-regional organizations and processes, as well as relevant major groups. For more information visit www.un.org/forests. For additional information, please contact Mita Sen at sen@un.org or Sylvia Chen at chen14@un.org.

The United Nations Forum on Forests

The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) is an intergovernmental policy forum which promotes the “management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and strengthens long-term political commitment to this end”. The Forum was established in 2000 by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and is composed of all Member States of the United Nations. In 2007, UNFF adopted the landmark UN Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (Forest Instrument). The instrument provides a comprehensive framework for national action and international cooperation to reduce deforestation, prevent forest degradation, promote sustainable livelihoods and reduce poverty for all forest-dependent peoples. The Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) is located at United Nations Headquarters in New York. For more information, visit www.un.org/esa/forests/. For additional information, please contact Mita Sen at sen@un.org or Sylvia Chen at chen14@un.org.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 193 Parties onboard, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders. This includes indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is a subsidiary agreement to the Convention. It seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 160 countries plus the European Union have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal, Canada. For more information, visit www.cbd.int. For additional information, please contact David Ainsworth at david.ainsworth@cbd.int or +1 514 287 7025, or Johan Hedlund at johan.hedlund@cbd.int or +1 514 287 6670.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO is also a source of knowledge and information. FAO helps developing countries and countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices and ensure good nutrition for all. Since the founding in 1945, FAO has focused special attention on developing rural areas, home to 70 percent of the world's poor and hungry people. For additional information, please contact Maria De Cristofaro at Maria.Decristofaro@fao.org or +39 06 570 52120 / + 39 345 499 6331, or Irina Utkina at Irina.Utkina@fao.org or +39 06 570 52542 / +39 34 88 967 961.