

academic community. In addition, science and technical panels were used to ensure that the indicators are scientifically based and reflect the best knowledge available.

Current information systems offer some of the data required for national reporting on these criteria and indicators. However, the reporting on others will evolve over time. They may require new types of data, new techniques, or further research. In cases where there are no reasonable quantitative measures, descriptive indicators should help describe the status of the value being assessed or trends in its maintenance.

These criteria and indicators form the basis of a flexible framework within which to capture the diverse ecological, social, economic, and cultural conditions in Canada. They must be used in a way that adequately reflects the range of forest conditions across Canada. Some indicators need further elaboration and interpretation within the context of the different jurisdictions, legislation, and policies of the provinces and territories. Thus, implementation may vary because of differences in the availability of data, expertise, and resources. Canada expects to release its first report, using available data, at the end of 1996.

Canada's forest criteria and indicators will evolve as we learn more about forest ecosystems, including their social and economic dimensions. With the release of a scientifically based framework, Canada has taken another significant step toward fulfilling forest-related commitments made during the UNCED process.

With regard to the International Model Forest Program, also noted in last year's report, some changes have occurred. The secretariat recently moved to IDRC. The United States has also joined Canada, Mexico, Russia, and Malaysia as a partner. Discussions are continuing with several other countries interested in participating in the program.

Information for Decision Making: The Role of Indicators

Since Canada's last report to the CSD, governments and organizations have expanded the development, testing, and use of indicators to track progress toward sustainable development goals. This section summarizes some of that activity. Additional examples are mentioned in other sections of this report.

Environment Canada continues to lead a federal effort to develop a comprehensive national set of environmental indicators. By the end of March 1996, it will have published additional bulletins on indicators of timber harvesting, urban air quality, acid rain, stratospheric ozone depletion, climate change, energy consumption, and passenger transportation. Those indicators will be available via the Internet.

Indicators will be featured prominently in Environment Canada's comprehensive state-of-the-environment report on the St. Lawrence River scheduled for publication in May 1996. Work continues on a project to test the application of sustainability indicators in the Fraser River Basin of British Columbia. It uses future scenario modelling to help decision makers.