

Intergovernmental Working Group on Forests

At UNCED, the debate on global forest issues was the most controversial, polarized along North-South lines. No international forum attempted to resume the dialogue on forest policy priorities until Malaysia and Canada established the Intergovernmental Working Group on Forests (IWGF) to examine key questions and to contribute to the review on forests at the CSD in April 1995. The group met in Malaysia in April 1994 and again in Canada in October 1994. At this latter meeting, 32 countries, 5 intergovernmental and 11 non-governmental organizations developed options and approaches for consideration by the CSD on seven policy priorities. The IWGF was instrumental in engaging the international forest community to move beyond UNCED and in narrowing the gap between the views held by developing and industrialized nations in these areas.

Forest Renewal and Codes of Practice

In April 1994, British Columbia legislated its Forest Renewal Plan in the B.C. Forest Renewal Act. It is one of the few major timber producers in the world to establish in law the government's long-term commitment to restore and protect the health of its forests, safeguard thousands of forest-dependent jobs, and increase economic benefits from each tree harvested. An estimated \$2 billion will be spent over the next five years to improve silviculture, restore the environment, retrain workers, provide value-added incentives, and stimulate economic development. A new Crown agency will oversee investment in the provincial forests, of funds collected from the forest industry through an estimated 80 percent increase in stumpage and royalty fees. The Forest Renewal Plan is a partnership between the province, the forest industry and its workers, environmentalists, Aboriginal people, and communities.

In July 1994, following months of public and professional input, British Columbia passed one of the most stringent pieces of codes of practice legislation in the world. Among other stipulations, the Forest Practices Code of B.C. Act protects a range of forest resources, including fisheries, wildlife, biodiversity, cultural heritage, soils, and watersheds. The new Code also provides for tough enforcement, backing standards with fines of up to \$2 million per day for repeat offenders. It also requires violators to clean up and pay for damages and prove that they have changed their ways before the government will approve any further operations.

Similarly, the province of Ontario passed the Crown Forest Sustainability Act to replace the Crown Timber Act, in place since 1952. The Act will facilitate moving toward sustainability of Crown forests in Ontario. Among other features, it includes provisions for forest management planning prior to operations; trust funds for forest renewal; licensing; and a range of remedial and compliance measures.

In 1994, private woodlot owners in two provinces adopted codes of practice as well. In Quebec, the Guide to Sound Forest Management Practices for Private Woodlots serves to