

GLOBAL AGENDA

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CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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Canada's Commitment to Sustainable Forest Management

Achieving sustainable management of Canada's and the world's forests is clearly one of the most important and challenging environmental foreign policy issues now facing Canada. It is an issue driven as much by our domestic economic and social interests as by environmental concerns. The importance of forests to our domestic economy is well-known; valued at approximately \$20 billion annually, Canada's forest products are the largest net contributor to our balance of trade and hence are a major contributor to our nation's prosperity. From an environmental perspective, forests play an important role in slowing climate change, maintaining biodiversity, and protecting watersheds. Beyond the link to social well-being through economic viability, forests are part of the cultural fabric of Aboriginal communities and indeed Canadian society as a whole.

The events over the past year in the Clayoquot Sound region of the Canadian province of British Columbia demonstrate the difficulty of merging these different visions and perspectives into a land management regime that satisfies all those concerned. At the same time, there is no broadly agreed international yardstick to measure the B.C. land decision for Clayoquot Sound, or to assist governments in attempting to achieve a reasonable balance among competing interests.

The challenges facing Canada and the Government of British Columbia extend equally to the international arena, because forests represent different values in different countries. For some countries, forests are a link to a bygone age of unexplored wilderness, while for others they are the basis for a significant part of a modern economy, like Canada. Again

for other countries, they are an important source of fuel and shelter, and a means of rapid economic development.

The foundation of Canadian environmental foreign policy suggests that forests must be managed in a sustainable manner, ensuring that the multiple values of forests are respected.

Canada's diplomatic efforts are aimed at building a shared understanding of sustainable forest management that takes into consideration the different circumstances of all nations. At present, while there are many visions of what constitutes sustainable forest management, there is no clear, scientifically based, broadly agreed definition of how to manage forests sustainably.

At home, Canada has a new National Forest Strategy, entitled "Sustainable Forests: A Canadian Commitment", to achieve its goal of sustainable forest management. It was developed through extensive public discussion. This five-year strategy contains over 90 commitments to action, and has been endorsed by over 30 organizations including provincial and federal governments, representatives of industry, wildlife, nature and conservation non governmental organizations (NGOs), Aboriginal groups and foresters.

Agreement on the many and diverse aspects of the global forests issues can only be reached through a global commitment to work together. The adoption of the Guiding Principles on Forests at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro is an important step toward this agreement. Since then,

there has been a proliferation of forests-related initiatives, and this trend will accelerate as the 1995 review of forests at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) approaches.

This issue of Global Agenda focuses on where and how Canada is active on global forests issues. Highlighted is our role in the global dialogue on forests at the CSD, and in the technical dialogue on forests starting with the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) Seminar on Temperate and Boreal Forests, hosted by Canada in Montréal in September 1993. Also highlighted is how Canada is working at a practical level with other countries to establish a global network of "model forests" as a channel to share information and technology on sustainable forest management. All of these efforts are geared toward stronger international agreement and co-operation on sustainable forest management, to preserve global forests resources and to set out predictable and environmentally sound rules on their commercial exploitation.

The debate on how to define and implement sustainable forest management will influence related discussions on trade and environment, development and environment, and conservation and exploitation. The debate is being carried out in the United Nations, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and on bilateral agendas. In all these venues, Canada's goal is to reach a shared understanding of the competing interests and philosophical visions about where forests fit into our social, cultural, environmental and economic lives. 



Working For Progress: CSD's Review of Global Forest Issues

By The Honourable John A. Fraser, P.C., Q.C.
Canada's Ambassador for the Environment

Canada is one of only a few nations to have an Ambassador for the Environment, so my recent appointment to the position is an honour that I have accepted with great enthusiasm. It is the natural extension of personal and professional interests that began in my youth. I worked on environmental issues during my legal career, then as a parliamentarian. As Environment Minister, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Speaker of Canada's House of Commons, I have had a long involvement in environmental issues at a domestic and international level.

I have taken this role on at a critical time. We have truly come to understand the complexity of sustainable development, and the need for balances that respect our long-term environmental and economic needs. One issue that is close to home for me is improving our forest policies and practices. My home is British Columbia, a province with some of Canada's most spectacular forests. Large areas have been set aside because we value forests for recreation and understand the need to preserve wilderness. That process has accelerated as we have learned more about the importance of forests to concerns such as biological diversity, global warming, and fish habitats. At the same time, forests have been a traditional engine of our economy, a source for lumber, pulp and paper. The efforts to find a balance among these values has been a focus of domestic policy.

Our foreign policy agenda has included a goal of international rules on sustainable forest management. These would form a

global framework that can help all countries move toward better forest policies and practices. At a practical level, these would guide local decision makers as they define, implement and measure sustainable forest management. We had hoped to achieve these rules at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). That effort broke down over serious disagreements between developed and developing countries. UNCED did achieve a set of non-binding "Forest Principles" and a chapter on forests in Agenda 21.

Since UNCED, many governments, international organizations and NGOs have attempted to move the debate ahead. Examples include the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) Seminar on Temperate and Boreal Forests in Montréal, the second Ministerial Meeting on Forests in Europe, the Indo-British Initiative, follow-up work by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the renegotiation of the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), the work of the Forest Stewardship Council and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and recent meetings of environment ministers in India, Italy and my home community, Vancouver. While all are potentially valuable, we believe their impact will be most significant if they can contribute to the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) when it reviews forest issues in 1995.

Canada and Malaysia have already begun to look ahead to that meeting. We are working to create a basis for progress on forest issues by identifying as much common

ground as possible beforehand. We have invited 14 countries, three intergovernmental organizations and five NGOs to participate in an Intergovernmental Working Group on Forests. The Working Group will first meet in Kuala Lumpur in April 1994, and will meet in Canada later in the year. Its objective is to lay the basis for a productive review of forest issues at the 1995 CSD meeting by renewing the global policy dialogue around six issues: Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management; Trade and Environment; Financial Resources and Technology; Forest Conservation; Enhancing Forest Cover and Productivity; and Links to Other International Processes.

We expect to present the results of the first meeting of the Working Group during the high-level session of the 1994 CSD meeting. This should pave the way for CSD support of the Working Group. We will also be able to determine how other international initiatives will relate to the next stage of the Working Group's discussions.

Forest issues offer a good example of the balance that sustainable development policies seek. They also offer a sense of the cooperation needed among all countries for international efforts to work. Canada and Malaysia will cooperate on this important issue because we believe we can help the CSD act as a catalyst on this critical sustainable development issue. 1995 gives the world another chance at progress on forests. We can't afford to do less than our best to make the most of this opportunity.

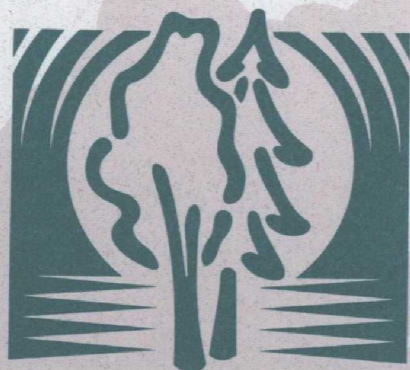
Canada's Model Forests Go International

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Canada committed \$10 million from the Canadian Green Plan International Partnerships Fund to establish international model forest sites in three countries. This initiative builds on the domestic Model Forests Program, established under the National Forest Strategy, and serves as the first step toward a global network for the exchange of information and technology on sustainable forest management. Canada's Model Forests Program includes 10 sites from coast to coast. It covers over six million hectares, representing the principal forest regions in Canada.

A model forest is a working forest managed on sound environmental principles by a partnership of industry, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government, indigenous and community groups. The forest may be used for a variety of purposes, including timber production, conservation, wildlife habitat and ecotourism. In balancing these and other activities, model forest sites demonstrate sustainable forest management in action by meeting both the economic and environmental goals.

The International Model Forests Program supports key Canadian foreign policy objectives. It fulfills a number of commitments made as part of Agenda 21, including the provision of additional financial resources and the promotion of technology transfer. The program also addresses a fundamental obstacle to progress toward a Global Forests Convention: the absence of a clearly understood definition of

sustainable forest management. The program does not promote any one definition; rather, it proposes criteria such as multiple forest values (e.g., protection of wildlife habitat, watershed protection, cultural values, harvesting) and the need to develop local solutions through participatory decision making that includes all parties with an interest in the forest.



The long-term objective of the International Model Forests Program is for nations to arrive together at a better understanding of sustainable forest management through international co-operation, both in building working-scale projects and in maintaining an interactive network among all participants.

The first country to join Canada in the program is Mexico, where two sites are being established. One site is located in a temperate forest region in the state of Chihuahua, while the other site is in a tropical forest region in the state of Campeche.

Russia was the second country to join in the program. The Gassinskoe model forest site in Russia's Khabarovsk Territory will include over 270 000 hectares of forest land, primarily consisting of

pine and broad-leaved trees. Discussions are now taking place with Malaysia to be the third partner.

Canadians respect the role forests play in the global context, and understand the need to work with international partners to ensure that sustainable forests stand worldwide. At this stage, the focus is on building a strong international network of model forests that will serve as a framework for nations as they work toward agreement on what constitutes sustainable forest management. Over time, the goal is to expand the network into a self-sustaining global network, involving both developed and developing countries.

The Model Forest of Chihuahua

The Chihuahua Model Forest, with an area of 110 067 ha, is located in the state of Chihuahua, in the northern part of the Western Sierra Madre Range. The model forest area includes more than 47 178 ha of commercially productive forest lands, limited agricultural land, small-scale fishing and hunting activities, and the opportunity for increased tourism and recreation development.

The Chihuahua Model Forest partners outlined some of their goals for the Model Forest Program:

"We want to preserve the future of the forests of Sierra Tarahumara by improving forest management techniques that will in turn allow for greater growth and development. At the same time, we shall be seeking to tap other resources, such as ecotourism, fish, farms, improved regional crops, tree nurseries and



handicrafts, so that the rural people of Chihuahua can find sources of income that represent alternatives to the forest itself. In this way, we hope to systematically reduce the impact of man on the forests."

"We wish to protect the environment by means of remedial practices such as the control of urban garbage in rural areas, and conservation of the biodiversity of the region. We intend to give special importance to certain threatened plant and animal species, notably the *Picea Chihuahuana* [an endangered species of spruce]."

"We will raise cultural awareness of the environment among both residents and visitors, through educational outreach activities aimed at all levels of society."

The Chihuahua Model Forest involves the participation of environmental, aboriginal, community, government, industry

and academic partners with interests in the forest.

The Model Forest of Calakmul

The 380 000-ha Model Forest of Calakmul is located in the southwest of Campeche State and includes or is adjacent to the largest remaining area of tropical rainforest in Mexico. The forest is a mix of high and low tropical rain forest, depending on the drainage and soil conditions. Like all tropical rain forests, the area contains hundreds of plant and animal species, and has among the highest levels of biodiversity in the world.

The Calakmul Model Forest partners highlighted some of their key activities for the project:

- the examination of alternative economic development opportunities and their potential impact on environmental quality and social benefits;

- expanded research into forest ecology, water quality, and wildlife habitat; and
- the expansion of silviculture techniques to ensure a healthy and productive integration of agricultural and forest production.

The Calakmul Model Forest will also be a central focus for the collection and integrated analysis of information about communities, economic activities, and the forest ecosystems of the area. The establishment of proper surveys of the area and biological inventories will be undertaken.

The Calakmul Model Forest project includes the participation of environmental, aboriginal, community, government, industry and academic partners with interests in the forest.

Sustainable Forest Management: From the Philosophical to the Practical

The need to manage the world's forests sustainably is immediate and one of global concern. If the discussion of sustainable forest management is to deal with the practical challenges, then agreement will be necessary on the environmental and socio-economic elements of sustainable development and the basis for their integration. Concepts and ideals now must be translated into specific "criteria and indicators" that can be practically applied in the development of sound ecosystem management.

Criteria are measurable facets or features that must be considered in setting objectives or policy. All criteria involve an element of change, and it is this change that provides a guide as to whether the objective—sustainable forest management—is being achieved. **Indicators** are designed to measure and provide quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the progress made toward meeting policy objectives.

The criteria would include specific subject areas such as the maintenance of forest productivity. In this case, the indicators might include measurement of such factors as total biomass and area of a forest; rates of disturbance due to fire, insects, forest harvesting or natural forces; status of soil nutrients; and relative productivity of managed and natural stands by eco-region.

Monitoring such indicators would show if forest productivity was improving, staying the same or deteriorating. This would assist in determining whether certain forest practices needed to be modified to attain sustainable management of our forests.

At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the urgency for scientifically based and internationally accepted criteria for sustainable forestry was clearly identified by nations involved in forestry, in both the Forest Principles and Chapter 11 of Agenda 21. Following UNCED, these nations have continued their efforts to define sustainable management and develop national criteria and indicators for sustainable forestry.

Canada recently organized the CSCE Seminar of Experts on the Sustainable Development of Boreal and Temperate Forest to provide a high-level forum that would:

- 1) advance discussions of measurable criteria and indicators for evaluating progress toward achieving sustainable forest management; and
- 2) examine the state of data collection and monitoring activities, as they relate to the criteria and indicators identified.

The deliberations of the more than 50 delegations representing non-governmental organizations, international organizations such as

the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), and both developed and developing countries, resulted in broad agreement on 12 criteria for the sustainable management of boreal and temperate forests. These criteria represent the current scientific understanding of sustainable forestry and the broad ecological and socio-economic forest values that must be sustained over time. By discussing criteria and indicators in an ecosystem context, the CSCE seminar reinforced the ideas expressed in the Forest Principles developed at UNCED, especially that forests need to be seen as integrated ecosystems, covering a full range of values.

Canada has now created a domestic process to develop, by early 1995, scientifically based, measurable criteria and indicators for Canada. This parallel process underscores Canada's commitment to the development of these criteria and indicators, and to the success of the international process. Proposals for follow-up work to the Montréal meeting are now being discussed by a key group of countries, and it is hoped that the next meeting will take place by mid-1994.

Canada's hope is that its domestic initiative will converge with the international process to feed into the review on forests in 1995.



Criteria for Sustainable Management of Boreal and Temperate Forests

Biological/Environmental

- Biodiversity
- Ecosystem productivity
- Soil and water conservation
- Forest ecosystem health and vitality
- Contribution to global ecological cycles
- Ability of the forest ecosystem to fulfil socio-economic function

Social/Economic

- Recognition of the full spectrum of forest functions and uses
- Long-term supply of social benefits
- Long-term output of multiple economic benefits
- Institutions and infrastructures to provide for sustainable forests
- Recognition of and respect for indigenous rights and knowledge, history and archaeological sites

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Facts & Figures

- Among major forest nations, Canada is unique in that most of its forests (94 percent) are publicly owned. Provincial governments own 71 percent of the forests and the federal government 23 percent, most of it located in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. The remaining 6 percent belongs to more than 425 000 private landowners.
- Canada is the world's largest exporter of wood products. However, only about 27 percent of the total forest land base, or 112 million hectares, is currently managed for timber production.
- In 1992, the forestry industry provided employment for one out of 17 Canadians, or a total of 729 000. Nearly 350 communities depend on forestry.
- In the pulp and paper industry, environmentally related research is now estimated to represent 40 to 50 percent of total research efforts.
- The area of forest depleted by natural causes, such as fire, insects and disease, continues to exceed the annual harvest.



Sources: Forestry Canada

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