

## **SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF APFNET FOCAL POINTS**

**Xinhai Jinjiang Hotel  
Beijing, China  
2 June 2011**

### **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Opening**

Mr. Ben Mitchell, APFNet focal point for Australia, Manager of International Forest Policy of Australia's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests, chaired the meeting. He welcomed participants and, as the first order of the day, invited Mr. Philip Antweiler, APFNet focal point for the U.S., Deputy Director of the Office of Ecology and Natural Resources Conservation, US Department of State, to brief the group on outcomes of discussions of the Interim Steering Committee which took place the previous day.

Mr. Antweiler thanked the APFNet Secretariat for its excellent organizational and logistic support to both meetings. He explained that the decision to establish an Interim Steering Committee was based on a desire to systematize input to APFNet with regard to operational and other matters. Members to date consisted of Australia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, United States, Viet Nam, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP), and The Nature Conservancy. He noted that participation from other economies and organizations would be welcome, up to a maximum of 16 members, and suggested that the revised rules of procedure be circulated to focal points for their feedback.

By way of summary, Mr. Antweiler then indicated that the Interim Steering Committee discussed APFNet's draft charter for a longer term governance structure, highlighting the need to avoid overly bureaucratic procedures. The final portion of the meeting was devoted to providing initial comments on the draft strategic plan which will be reviewed in greater detail at today's session.

#### **Overview of APFNet activities**

Ms. Lu Qian, Acting Director of Institutional Development, APFNet Secretariat, gave an overview of the organization's current and projected activities for the period covering July 2010 to November 2011, which fit into institutional development, capacity building, demonstration projects and information sharing. Highlights are as follows:

- launch of an Interim Steering Committee to advise on future direction (1 June 2011)
- meeting of an expert panel to draft a 5-year strategic plan (September 2010)
- first annual meeting of focal points (June 2010)
- establishment of focal point working mechanism

- finalization of documents and procedures for project management
- implementation of 3 pilot projects (Nepal, Viet Nam and FAO)
- organization of workshops on forest resources management and forest mapping
- acceptance of 8 students under APFNet's scholarship program
- meeting of forestry deans of colleges and universities
- production and dissemination of several publications
- updating of website
- staffing of booths at key regional and international events
- establishment and strengthening of partnerships

In terms of the remainder of 2011, Ms. Lu Qian noted APFNet's plans to finalize the draft strategic plan and improve its interim governance structure. In addition, two more workshops will be convened (community forestry in June and forest management in October or November). Other activities include the granting of scholarships to eight new students, the appraisal and selection of projects, and the production of an annual report for 2011. Other events which involve APFNet's active participation are the ASEM Symposium on Sustainable Forest Management to Address Climate change; the First APEC Forestry Ministerial Meeting; and the 24th session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Forestry Week.

### **Forest restoration and sustainable forest management in Viet Nam**

Ms. Nguyen Tuong Van, Deputy Director of Viet Nam's Department of Science, Technology and International Cooperation in the Forestry Administration, described the objectives and progress of the 2-year pilot demonstration project which is co-funded by APFNet (US\$ 499,750) and her government (US\$ 67,250).

Long and short term goals are to improve livelihoods in local communities, enhance forest ecological services, increase forest quality, diversify forest products, raise the economic value of natural forests, and help local authorities and farmers to better understand how to restore and manage forests as well as how to plant suitable species and process non-timber forest products (NTFP). The project uses an integrated and participatory approach to identify local needs through socio-economic assessments. It also uses professionals to develop methodologies that take into account these needs and draws on village institutions to promote good practices of forest restoration and sustainable forest management, including enrichment planting and silvicultural techniques.

To date, baseline inventories and socio-economic assessments have been conducted in two communes. Findings in both areas show degraded natural forests which contain few commercial species and are occupied by poor ethnic minorities whose agricultural crop systems are under developed. The project expects to plant 50 ha with native timber species and NTFP seedlings by the end of June. Technical guidelines and leaflets have also been produced, including for 6 native and 6 NTFP species, in addition to training materials. Regular activity reports are submitted and a system to monitor and evaluate progress has been developed, with strong support from the Administration of

Forestry, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Finance, and others.

Despite significant steps forward, challenges remain: high prices for agricultural crops such as casava continue to place pressure on forest land; the allocation of forests to individuals reduces the incentive to adopt community approaches for their management; high slopes are generally not suitable for planting many valuable NTFP species; and the inexperience of the executing agency in fulfilling reporting requirements delays project implementation. These obstacles are being overcome by introducing NTFP species which yield products in the short term; ensuring communities are involved in all project activities and share in the benefits; selecting the best species and determining the best planting techniques; and engaging the support of a technical team to assist with reporting.

### **Community participation in sustainable forest management in Nepal**

Mr. Ram Prasad Lamsal, Joint Secretary of Nepal's Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, informed participants of a project which APFNet is also supporting, the purpose of which is to improve the livelihoods of forest-dependent poor people through their participation in forest management. Other objectives are to build the capacity of community forest user groups (CFUG) with regard to governance and biodiversity conservation; promote community forest enterprises and green jobs; and document/disseminate best practices with a view to influencing the development of policies to support SFM and community forest enterprises.

Since the project's inception, pilot districts and user groups have been selected, staff has been recruited, a steering committee has been established, meetings with key stakeholders have been held, and several workshops have taken place at central and regional levels, including to adopt criteria and indicators for SFM. In addition, local people received training to help CFUGs to draft constitutions and prepare forest plans. Potential areas for enterprise development have also been explored and discussions with stakeholders to support their establishment are ongoing.

As a result of project activities, coordination has been strengthened between the Federation of Community Forest Users of Nepal (FECOFUN) and the Department of Forests. Collaboration has also improved among district offices that are involved in implementation as well as among project personnel at various levels. CFUGs are increasingly becoming interested in forest enterprise development and are willing to mobilize funds for this purpose. In terms of challenges, a fluid political environment and frequent strikes hinder progress. Moreover, although the potential is high for new businesses to succeed in hilly areas, weak infrastructure makes it difficult to attract staff and market products. To overcome these and other obstacles, efforts will continue to build the capacity of local resource people through training and workshops; conduct additional feasibility studies to determine promising enterprises; improve governance of CFUGs through participatory assessments and public hearings; enhance collaboration with key partners, including government and the private sector.

## **Making forestry work for the poor in Asia and the Pacific**

Mr. Patrick Durst, Senior Forestry Officer with FAO RAP provided an overview of APFNet's third pilot project in the region. It runs from March 2010 to September 2011 and, in addition to FAO, the Asia Forest Network (AFN) is also a partner.

The objectives are to gather experiences with respect to forestry and poverty reduction in Asia and the Pacific, build national capacity to address poverty issues through forest-related interventions, and integrate poverty aspects into forest policies. Eleven countries are participating in the project: Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Consultants were hired to draft national poverty assessments and a regional workshop was convened in March 2011 to discuss and guide the studies. Seven countries have submitted reports which FAO and AFN are currently reviewing. The remaining four are expected in June.

Two short courses on forest policy were held in March 2010 and May 2011. The first was entitled "Enhancing Forest Policy in the Greater Mekong Subregion" and the project sponsored four participants. The second - "Forest Policy Analysis, Development and Implementation in China" - drew 25 forestry officials from national, provincial and county levels, 10 of whom received project support. The focus of the latter session was on forest policy analysis at the international level; participatory forest policy analysis and development; and lessons from policy implementation in China.

Lastly, 7 policy briefs on the following topics are being prepared for publication:

- forestry and poverty alleviation
- forest governance
- investment in forest resources
- field-level forestry
- forest biodiversity conservation
- policies and institutions
- training and education

## **Forest conservation to mitigate climate change in Peru**

Mr. Elard Escala, Director of APEC in Peru's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, thanked the Chair for allowing him to make a short unscheduled presentation on Peru's efforts to conserve forests as one of the means to mitigate climate change. As background, he noted that Peru's constitution recognizes that its people have a fundamental right to a balanced and adequate environment to support life. In this regard, the State is obliged to promote the conservation of biodiversity and natural protected areas within the national territory as well as the sustainable development of the Amazon area.

In 2008, the Ministry of Environment was created as the administrative authority of the sector at local, regional and national levels. The National Environmental Policy, which was approved in May 2009, consists of 4 pillars: conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity; integrated management of environmental quality;

environmental governance; and international environmental commitments and opportunities.

The forest sector is undergoing extensive reform, including a new law, a policy to transfer functions and responsibilities to sub-national governments, and a national program which began in 2010 to conserve 54 million ha of forest as a contribution to mitigate climate change. This program supports the efforts of native and farmer titled communities as well as people who live in and around Amazonian and dry tropical forests to conserve resources. Communities that voluntarily participate receive funds after deciding on the forest area to be conserved, defining an investment plan, and committing to take action.

In closing, Mr. Escala outlined several potential areas for cooperation with APFNet, including innovative forest financing, community based forest management, integration of bamboo in forest management, etc.

### **APFNet project plan and arrangements**

Mr. Zhuang Zuofeng, Director of Project Development at APFNet, explained that four types of projects could be supported under current provisions, for various lengths of time and various levels of funding: those related to policy development, capacity building, silviculture, and specific themes. So far, APFNet has transferred US\$ 800,000 to implementing agencies and the following 6 submissions were approved to start in 2011:

- Comparative Analyses of Transitions to SFM
- Adaptation of Asia-Pacific Forests to Climate Change
- Restoration of Degraded Forest in North Cambodia
- Demonstration of Sustainable Upland Agroforestry Systems in Chinese Taipei
- Demonstration of Multi-function Forestry
- Forest Cover and Carbon Mapping in GMS Countries and Malaysia

Milestones for 2012 include a 31 March deadline for submission of concept notes; a meeting of the Expert Panel in June to appraise them; the development of full proposals of select concept notes from July to September; a second meeting of the Expert Panel in October to recommend approval of proposals; and the preparation and signature of agreements in December.

Mr. Zhuang Zuofeng also outlined the process by which projects were selected. Upon receipt, the Secretariat conducts a preliminary assessment of the concept notes and forwards those which meet criteria to the Expert Panel for review. Following discussion, the Panel recommends which applicants should be invited to develop a full proposal and it meets again to determine the ones members believe are most worthy of support within the funding available. Authors of the submissions are then notified of outcomes.

The principles on which project selection is made includes the extent that they comply to APFNet's mission and objectives; conform to forest legislation, policy, and strategy of the locality; use participatory and community development approaches; include realistic and achievable outputs; and have the potential to apply positive results more broadly. He added that priority will be given to projects that focus on capacity building, forest education, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, demonstration of multiple forest functions, climate change mitigation and adaptation, community development.

With regard to the selection process, he highlighted the need to achieve a balance among:

- 1) APFNet's objectives (forest rehabilitation, forest quality, biodiversity conservation);
- 2) project types (technical support, capacity building, demonstrations, policy development); and
- 3) the geographic distribution of regional economies (APEC, non-APEC, GMS countries and Latin America).

He further indicated that preference is given to small and medium scale projects, those that cover more than one country/economy, and those that contribute approximately 25% of total costs, either in funds or in-kind. For additional information, he encouraged focal points to consult APFNet's website.

### **APFNet draft strategic plan (2011-2015)**

In his introductory remarks, Mr. David Cassells, facilitator of the meeting, explained that the purpose of the strategic plan is to identify key priorities to guide APFNet's operations so that it can best meet its mission, purpose and objectives. A first draft was produced in September 2010 and reviewed in Beijing and Rome. Based on feedback received, a second version was discussed in New York and Beijing in early 2011 and written comments were submitted shortly thereafter by Cambodia, Indonesia, the United States and individual experts. The Secretariat completed the current version in May 2011.

Mr. Cassells invited focal points to provide preliminary comments at this meeting and suggested that discussion focus on thematic areas and approaches. Agreement was then reached to submit written feedback to the Secretariat by 30 June, after the Secretariat issued a summary of the points which members of the Interim Steering Committee made the day before. As background, Mr. Antweiler added that the strategic plan will evolve as an iterative process and that it represents an attempt to boil down a number of priorities where APFNet can add value. He noted that the document was not meant to reflect all issues of importance in the region.

During ensuing discussions, the following points were raised:

- add a section that analyzes the current environmental situation in the Asia-Pacific region as context to the proposed strategic direction
- before finalizing a strategic plan, it would be important to first have operating procedures in place to clarify, for example, who will be consulted on annual plans, strategies and other documents; how decisions will be made; and the role of governments (advisors or communicators)

In response to a question about the composition of the interim steering committee, Mr. Cassells confirmed that current draft operational guidelines (charter) stipulate that it could consist of up to 16 members, at least 8 of whom should be from regional economies. Since this number had not yet been reached, the focal point from Peru informed the Secretariat of Peru's interest in joining the committee.

### **Working mechanism for APFNet focal points**

Participants indicated their preference to submit written comments to the Secretariat by 30 June, given that some of them had not received the document prior to the meeting.

### **Final points for discussion**

*Chair of future meetings:* It was agreed that focal points would chair future meetings and that vice-chairs would also be identified as back-up. Malaysia agreed to take on this task, with Australia (current chair) serving as vice-chair.

*Calendar of events:* As noted in the draft working mechanism dated June 2010, the Secretariat intends to produce an annual work plan for distribution before the end of each calendar year so that focal points have sufficient notice of upcoming activities in order to effectively plan their participation in events.

### **Closing remarks**

Mr. Lu De thanked participants for sharing their views on how the APFNet Secretariat could better assist them to carry out their role as focal points. He stated his intention to improve communications, including by posting all relevant documents on the website in a timely manner and by maintaining regular contact through email. He also undertook to send all focal points copies of the presentations that were made on the three projects now being implemented in Nepal, Viet Nam, and the region (with FAO RAP as executing agency).