IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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ABBREVIATIONS
ADB Asian Development Bank
AIDAB Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (now renamed AusAID)
AusAID Australian Agency for International Development
CIFOR Center for International Forestry Research
CITES Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species
CSD Commission on Sustainable Development
DANIDA Danish International Development Agency
ILO International Labor Organization
ITTO International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN World Conservation Union
IUFRO International Union of Forest Research Organizations
ODA Overseas Development Administration
FOREWORD

An old Chinese adage has it that "as the forests go, so will go the land." That is as true today it was hundreds of years ago. And it is perhaps more true for the vast lands of Asia and the Pacific than it is for any other region. Why? Here are a few facts that should make clear this vital relationship between the land, its inhabitants, and the forests:

Asia and the Pacific are home for more than half the entire human race.

The per capita area of land and forests in Asia and the Pacific is the lowest in the world—an extremely precarious situation even under the best of circumstances.

Asia and the Pacific has some of the world’s most extensive tropical forests but, unfortunately, the region also has the world’s highest rate of deforestation.

Rapid deforestation is occurring exactly at a time when much of the region is facing a chronic and growing water shortage that has already reached frightening proportions. The first and most indispensable step in protecting our farm lands and the crops that feed us all is to protect our forests, and even to increase them whenever and wherever practical. For it is our forests that hold the precious moisture that assures the health of our watersheds and slows or prevents the deadly advance of erosion and the loss of irreplaceable topsoil. Over the long run, it is clearly impossible to maintain a healthy and adequate agriculture without healthy and adequate forests.

For these reasons, as well as for a host of other social, economic, aesthetic, environmental, and spiritual purposes, we have, in recent years, begun adopting the long overdue policy of "sustainable forest management." In layman’s terms this means to simply manage the forests in such a way that all their benefits, not just their annual yields of commercial timber, are assured and protected for the health and welfare of present and future generations. This concept is at the core of sustainable forest management. The concept itself is not new. Its practice, however, especially in our vast region, unfortunately is very much so. In many ways, we have a long way to go.

In a television interview some years ago, a well-known forester was asked: "Which people actually depend on the forests?"

His answer was: "All people depend on the forests."

If you will read carefully the papers presented in this publication, you will quickly become convinced of the truth of that reply.

The following papers were presented at a Regional Expert Consultation jointly organized by FAO RAP and ITTO in late 1995. The Consultation drew together leading experts from Asia and the Pacific to discuss what steps countries of the region are taking to implement sustainable forest management. While it is apparent from these experts that much remains to be done, it is also apparent that many encouraging initiatives are underway. It is essential that these initiatives are nurtured, expanded, and intensified in the coming years in the interest of all
people who depend on the forest—all of us.

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