



Round Table 3

“ROLE OF ECOSYSTEMS IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION”

Wednesday, 17th June 2009”

ROLE OF ECOSYSTEMS IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: On Wednesday, 17th June, Ibrahim Thiaw, UNEP, chaired a roundtable on the role of ecosystem management (ESM) in climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

Richard Munang, UNEP, described the interlinkages between ecosystem degradation and climate change, and their combined effects on the most vulnerable communities. Noting that this is a reversible process that can be tackled through reduced emissions from deforestation in developing countries (REDD), he urged collective responsibility at the local, national and global levels on the basis of “shared vision and knowledge.”

Sam Hettiarachchi, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, said that although there have been several attempts to integrate ESM, DRR and CCA, much still needs to be done to integrate them at the national level.

Anders Wijkman, Member of European Parliament, Sweden, lamented that many people continue to live by the myth of endless resources and an endless capacity for the environment to absorb man-made emissions. He reiterated the need to involve policymakers in scientific processes to ensure better informed decisions in relation to ESM, DRR and CCA.

Jim Leape, Director General, WWF International, stressed engagement with those responsible for resources and finance at the national and regional levels and emphasized the need for intersectoral cooperation to deal with the three issues. He reiterated that for progress to be made on ESM, DRR and CCA there needs to be a strong agreement at the climate change talks in Copenhagen.

Neville Ash, IUCN, highlighted that the world recognizes the direct and indirect benefits that ecosystems provide but has failed to link DRR to ecosystem degradation. He called for a stronger evidence-base to link the two and noted the need for greater investment to restore and maintain ecosystems.

The chair summarized the discussions as followed:

- ISDR, UNEP, IUCN and WWF should develop a joint policy paper ahead of the Copenhagen negotiations to put forward a convincing case to policy makers and negotiators regarding the importance of including ecosystems management in the negotiations. The policy paper should be backed by relevant scientific evidence.
- The inclusion of ecosystems management in DRR and climate change adaptation / mitigation policies and negotiations cannot be adequately addressed by any single government agency. A collaborative effort is required, with a responsibility resting on each and every Global Platform participant to lobby forcefully for the inclusion of ecosystems management considerations in the national and global climate change agenda.
- The poorest members of society, who have the least resources available to disaster-proof their homes and livelihoods, have the most to gain from healthy ecosystems as a cost effective DRR measure. These communities are at the forefront of climate change impacts. Renewed emphasis is needed on community engagement, both in terms of formulating ecosystem management policies and especially in ensuring that funding reaches the local level.
- Some existing mechanisms should be utilized more effectively to mobilize funding for climate change adaptation and ecosystems management – one example being better application of the “polluter pays” principle. In addition, new market mechanisms and the potential for private sector investments must be exploited fully.