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EXPANDING THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS)
IN NATIONAL FORESTRY PROGRAMS

A REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR ASIA

16-20 February 1987
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SUMMARY REPORT

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SUMMARY REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

Deforestation and unsustainable land use are causing extensive degradation of the natural resource base throughout the developing world. Every year more than 11 million hectares of tropical forests are lost through commercial and subsistence pressures. The negative environmental, social, and economic impacts of deforestation are undermining efforts in developing countries to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable economic growth and development:

- o Food production is being adversely affected in many areas as soil and water resources are degraded; an estimated 1.3 billion hectares of land in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are at least moderately desertified, and more than 300 million people live in areas moderately or severely desertified;

- o 1.5 billion people are experiencing varying degrees of fuelwood scarcity, and some 125 million people cannot find enough wood to meet their needs even by overcutting the forests;

- o Essential sources of food, fodder, medicines, and other forest products are disappearing;

- o An estimate of 160 million hectares of upland watersheds have been seriously degraded, damaging essential water supplies for agriculture and energy and contributing to increased flooding

of lowland areas;

- o Industrial wood supplies are being depleted, leading to declining wood product exports and increasing imports in many countries;

- o At the present rate of tropical rain forest destruction, an estimated 10-20% of the earth's plant and animal species will disappear by the year 2000.

Although the adverse impacts of deforestation on human welfare and the environment are beginning to receive greater attention worldwide, current efforts fall far short of what is needed to adequately address the situation. Convinced of the urgent need to stimulate greater political awareness and action, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), The World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and World Resources Institute (WRI) jointly sponsored the development of a Tropical Forestry Action Plan.

Released in October 1985, the purpose of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan is to raise political awareness of the magnitude of the deforestation crisis, and to provide a framework for a concerted international response by developing country governments, development assistance agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private industry. The Action Plan proposes a five-year, \$8 billion investment program in forestry and related agricultural development that would lay the groundwork for longer-term efforts to reverse deforestation. The Plan also identifies major policy issues that must be addressed if

increased investment in the conservation and sustainable development of forest resources is to have a significant impact. Development assistance will have to account for at least half of the \$8 billion total, or \$800 million a year for five years. This amounts to a doubling of the present level of external aid in the forestry sector.

To advance this process, a meeting on tropical forests involving world leaders from developing countries, bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies, and the private sector will take place in July 1987 at the Bellagio Study and Conference Center in Italy. The Bellagio Meeting on Tropical Forests will focus on key policy constraints to sustainable management of tropical forests, and will explore strategies for mobilizing the human and financial resources needed to implement the Action Plan.

Although political commitment and leadership is critical, success in reversing deforestation and establishing sustainable patterns of forest land use can only be achieved through the active participation of the millions of small farmers and landless people who daily use forests and trees to help meet their basic needs. A balance between "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches is required.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with their knowledge of local needs and ability to work at the local level, have a vital role to play in stimulating grass roots participation and providing a link between governments and local communities.

However, governments and development assistance agencies have not adequately involved NGOs in the planning and implementation of forestry policies and programs. A constructive dialogue is needed between NGOs, governments, and development assistance agencies in order to develop new mechanisms for cooperation.

In response to this need, WRI and the Environment Liaison Centre (ELC), an international networking NGO based in Nairobi, jointly sponsored three regional workshops in Africa (Nairobi, 24-28 November 1986), Latin America and the Caribbean (Panama City, 2-6 February 1987), and Asia (Bangkok, 16-20 February 1987). Participants included representatives from indigenous and international NGOs, governments, and development assistance agencies. This report summarizes the results of the Asia workshop.

II. WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES AND ORGANIZATION

The Asia workshop was held at the headquarters of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok. There were 65 participants, including 25 NGO representatives from 12 Asian countries, 10 Asian government officials, 8 international NGO representatives, and 22 representatives from multilateral and bilateral development assistance agencies and other international organizations (see Annex 1). A number of participants prepared brief background papers on NGOs and forestry (see Annex 2).

There were two major objectives for the workshop: (1) to provide a forum for NGOs to comment on the recommended strategies

and priority actions in the Tropical Forestry Action Plan; and (2) to initiate a dialogue among NGOs, Asian government representatives, and development assistance agencies on expanding NGO involvement in planning, implementing, and evaluating national forestry policies and programs.

The organizers met in a pre-workshop session with the Asian and international NGO representatives to ensure that the workshop agenda (see Annex 3) reflected their needs and desires, and to begin identifying the critical issues that the meeting would address. The workshop formally opened with an address by Mr. Pong Sono, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Thailand. In plenary and small-group sessions the workshop participants: (1) reviewed the Tropical Forestry Action Plan; (2) assessed the capabilities of NGOs in forestry and how they can best complement the capabilities of governments and international aid agencies; (3) identified constraints to expanding the role of NGOs in national forestry programs; and (4) developed specific action proposals to improve the effectiveness of NGO activities in forestry, and to expand their role in the planning and implementation of national forestry policies and programs. The conclusions and recommendations of the Asia workshop, and of the workshops in Africa and Latin America, will provide the basis for discussion of grass roots participation and the role of NGOs at the Bellagio Meeting on Tropical Forests.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. The Tropical Forestry Action Plan

A plenary session was devoted to a review of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan. A draft working paper on the Action Plan, which is being prepared as the keynote paper for the Bellagio Meeting, provided a framework for the discussion. The session began with an overview of the Action Plan and major developments since its release.

The central purpose of the Action Plan is to stimulate a concerted international effort to address tropical deforestation. The Action Plan provides a general framework for coordinated action that is flexible and open to review and change. The challenge now is to translate the Action Plan into specific investment and policy priorities at the national level. The Action Plan is comprised of the following five interrelated areas:

- o Forestry in land use - integration of forestry and agriculture, including forest protection and tree planting, to promote sustainable land use and increased agricultural productivity;

- o Forest-based industrial development - developing appropriate small and large-scale forest industries to generate employment and income, and ensuring a sustainable supply of industrial forest products for domestic consumption and export to earn foreign exchange;

- o Fuelwood and energy - fuelwood conservation, use of alternative fuels, and development of alternative fuelwood resources to meet people's household energy needs;
- o Conservation of tropical forest ecosystems - more effective protection of tropical rain forest ecosystems to maintain biological diversity and climate stability;
- o Strengthening institutions - enhancing the contribution that forests can make to sustainable development through increased investment in forestry research, education, training, and extension.

The Action Plan has been adopted as a common framework for action by the bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies. Many of the aid agencies have substantially increased their financial allocations for tropical forest conservation and development. Total aid contributions to forestry are expected to more than double from about US\$400 million a year in 1984 to over US\$800 million a year in 1988.

FAO has created a Tropical Forestry Action Plan Secretariat to assist national governments and the aid agencies in mobilizing technical assistance support for improved forest sector planning and project implementation. FAO's forthcoming Biennium Work Program has been reoriented to give the Action Plan a high priority, and the Plan has been endorsed by FAO's Committee on

Forest Development in the Tropics.¹

An aid coordination group has been created comprising the Forestry Advisers of all multilateral and bilateral aid agencies. The Forestry Advisers Group has met four times to review progress being made in implementing the Action Plan, and to discuss ways to improve aid coordination and effectiveness. As a first step, multi-donor supported forestry sector reviews are being carried out in collaboration with national governments. The national forest sector reviews are intended to: (1) assess the state of forest land use and its relation to other development sectors; (2) examine major problem areas and the likely costs of failing to take corrective action; and (3) identify major policy issues and priority areas for investment. A major objective is to help governments incorporate proposals for improved forest conservation into their national development plans.

The consensus of the workshop participants was that the Action Plan had made a significant contribution to raising awareness of tropical deforestation issues, and provided a useful starting point for identifying priority areas for investment and policy reform. However, Asian NGOs have a number of important concerns with the Action Plan. Although there was not sufficient time for a detailed review of these issues, the following major points emerged from the discussion.

¹ A Committee comprising the forestry leaders of 89 developing and developed countries that convenes every two years to review global forestry issues and to assist FAO in defining its work program on tropical forests.

The role of NGOs

There was an overriding concern that the Action Plan does not sufficiently recognize the unique nature of NGOs and the many important roles that they can play. NGOs should not be portrayed as a "homogeneous community" as is typically done. The NGOs felt that their heterogeneity and individualism are among their most valuable strengths. The Action Plan needs to be more explicit on priority areas for NGO involvement (see pp. 10-13).

The need for integrated approaches

The Action Plan should place greater emphasis on the need for integrated approaches to addressing forest land use problems. Successful implementation of the Action Plan will require addressing a range of rural development needs, not only those of forestry and agriculture. Forestry programs cannot be conceived in isolation, but only as an integral component of an overall program for socio-economic development that benefits the rural poor.

International economic factors

Related to the need for integrated approaches to forest problems is the need to recognize and address the impact of national and international economic forces on forest land use patterns in developing countries. Many countries have policies and economic incentives, within both the forestry sector and in other sectors such as agriculture, that encourage forest

destruction. International economic forces, such as debt and trade, can also have a significant impact on forests. For example, faced with the burden of mounting foreign debt obligations, many developing country governments turn to forests as a short-term, readily convertible source of foreign exchange.

Social forestry programs

The primary focus of "social" forestry programs should be to meet the basic needs of the rural poor. There is concern that the current emphasis on "farm" forestry approaches in government and aid agency-supported social forestry programs, in which subsidies or other forms of public incentives to plant trees for market purposes are provided, primarily benefits private farmers or land-holders. As a result, the needs of those who are the most dependent on forest resources -- the rural poor and landless -- are not being met. Social forestry concepts and practices should be reassessed in light of past experience, and a clearer distinction made in the Action Plan between the objectives of "farm" forestry and "social" forestry programs. A related issue is the need to give greater emphasis to meeting fodder requirements through the use of multi-purpose tree species in tree-planting programs.

B. The Role of NGOs in National Forestry Programs

Individual presentations by NGO representatives on their programs demonstrated the enormous diversity of NGOs involved in forestry or related rural development activities in Asia. NGOs range from small local-level organizations (such as cooperatives or village development groups), to national-level organizations or coalitions of NGOs, to large international organizations based outside of Asia. They vary enormously in terms of objectives, institutional development and technical expertise, scale and mode of operation, and funding.

NGOs should play a much more active role in national forestry programs because of the strengths and often unique capabilities that they can apply to forestry-related problems, including:

- o the independent and flexible nature of NGOs and their programs;
- o the ability to work in close contact with people at the grass roots, carrying out programs that respond to local needs and emphasize local participation;
- o a strong focus on reaching the poorest sectors of society, particularly women and youth;
- o a more integrative approach to forestry-related problems at the field and policy levels, in which forestry is viewed within a broader rural development context.

Fortunately, both Asian governments and the aid agencies are becoming more aware of the potential contributions of NGOs. With

their grass roots orientation and more integrated approach to rural development, NGOs can undertake activities that governments and aid agencies by themselves are unable or unwilling to undertake. Three interrelated areas were identified in which Asian and international NGOs can assume important roles.

Community-level projects

A major area for NGO involvement is the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of community-based, participatory forest management and reforestation programs that focus on economically and/or socially disadvantaged groups. NGOs can play a particularly important role through extension and public education programs. In addition, they can act as intermediaries between the government and local communities. NGOs can help identify appropriate programs and models for forestry development, and act as facilitators for government programs that are compatible with their own objectives. Some specific areas for NGO field project activities include:

- o tree planting and maintenance, emphasizing agroforestry approaches;
- o decentralized nurseries for seed and seedling production and distribution;
- o fuelwood conservation and improved cook stoves;
- o soil and water conservation;
- o rehabilitation of wastelands;
- o forest conservation;

o participatory planning, monitoring, and evaluation of projects.

Research

More and better information from the local level is necessary if forestry policies and programs are to become more relevant to local needs and conditions. NGOs can play an important role through information gathering and applied research activities at the grass roots.

Advocacy

NGOs have a crucial advocacy role to play in representing local interests. Many NGOs act as "watchdogs," monitoring the environmental and social impacts of government and aid agency programs, particularly with respect to their impacts on the rural poor. NGOs can contribute a "grass roots" perspective to government policy making, advocating policy and institutional reforms that are needed to address forest land use problems and to create a more suitable environment for local participation and NGO field activities. Some of the major issues that NGOs are currently addressing include forest conservation and multiple use forest management, the role of women in forestry, land tenure rights, access to common property resources, the impacts of large-scale development projects on forests and forest-dwelling peoples, and international trade of tropical forest products.

C. An Action Agenda for Expanding the Role of NGOs

There are a number of constraints to expanding the involvement of NGOs in the development and implementation of national forestry policies and programs. The following recommendations were made to address these constraints, and to begin to develop more favorable conditions for building effective partnerships among NGOs, governments, and aid agencies.

Improving NGO/Government/Aid Agency Collaboration

Although there is growing recognition of the potential contributions of NGOs in forestry, collaboration between NGOs, governments, and aid agencies is generally poor. Lack of information is a major barrier. Governments and aid agencies have little information on who the NGOs are and what they do. Thus, they are often uncertain about the administrative and program capabilities of NGOs.

Government relations with NGOs differ from country to country. In some countries, a cooperative relationship already exists between NGOs and the government, whereas in others there is little or no systematic interaction. In some cases, the relationship is characterized by suspicion and mistrust. Government officials may view NGOs that are concerned solely with environmental issues as anti-development, or even anti-government. Because some NGOs are political in nature, governments may be suspect of their motives. Some governments may be fearful that as NGOs gain greater recognition by aid

agencies, they will begin to compete with the government for outside funds.

NGOs often adopt a confrontational stance with the government, considering themselves as "opposition camps" rather than recognizing that they and government agencies ultimately have similar objectives. The tendency on the part of some NGOs to bypass the government in their activities can further strain relations.

Cooperative relationships between NGOs and aid agencies are constrained by a number of factors. A fundamental problem is the conflict between the independent, self-reliant nature of NGOs and the need to meet the requirements and priorities of large aid bureaucracies. Aid agency procedures for application, reporting, and monitoring are very complicated and time-consuming, and can overwhelm the administrative capacity of NGOs. In addition, aid agencies prefer big projects which may be beyond the capabilities of NGOs and incompatible with their style of operation. Another limitation is the tendency of aid agencies to overlook newly emerging or small NGOs in favor of supporting only large NGOs with proven track records.

There was strong agreement on the need for greater collaboration at the national level in order to more effectively address forest land use problems. NGOs, governments, and aid agencies must actively pursue an open dialogue in order to develop constructive partnerships based on mutual trust and an understanding of the complementary roles of each. The following

recommendations were made:

- o NGOs should acknowledge the primary role of the government and the need to establish a cooperative working relationship. The NGOs suggested that they must "overcome their arrogance" and recognize that each party has strengths that can be pooled.

- o NGOs need to clearly define their policy and program objectives, taking into account national priorities and objectives. NGOs must also clearly define their capabilities in order to avoid creating expectations that they cannot fulfill. This information needs to be widely disseminated.

- o NGOs should strive to be politically neutral in order to improve communication with government and aid agencies and gain their trust.

- o Governments should officially recognize in their national development plans the role of NGOs in national forestry planning and project implementation.

- o Governments should establish a legal and policy framework that promotes local participation and is supportive of NGO activities.

- o Aid agencies should play a more active role in promoting the involvement of NGOs in aid agency-funded projects through policy dialogue with the government and by stipulating the involvement of NGOs in project agreements.

- o To facilitate improved communication and collaboration with governments and aid agencies, NGOs within a country should establish some form of a cooperative NGO network. A national NGO

network could function as a clearinghouse, and would help address government and aid agency concerns with NGO stewardship and accountability. Governments and aid agencies should support NGO efforts to establish such networks. Government participants, in particular, endorsed the idea of NGO networks and suggested that "governments could stimulate the formation of national federations of NGOs" (see pp. 20-23).

- o National forestry workshops or "consultations" should be convened to initiate a national dialogue among NGOs, relevant government ministries, and aid agencies on forestry issues and the role of NGOs. Where appropriate, the consultation could be linked to the national forestry sector review process. It was suggested that aid agencies could take the lead in convening the consultations, but this issue was not resolved.

- o Local NGOs should be used in project monitoring and evaluation in order to improve future project design and implementation.

Strengthening NGOs

The Asian NGOs acknowledged that they need to strengthen themselves institutionally if they are to establish credibility, improve collaboration with government and aid agencies, and play an expanded role in addressing forest land use problems. Because of their action orientation, NGOs sometimes give inadequate attention to institution-building. This is often reflected in the ad-hoc nature of NGO programs. Many NGOs lack the

administrative and financial management skills needed to participate in government and aid agency-funded projects. Some are constrained by weak technical skills in forestry and natural resource management. Many NGOs lack trained, experienced personnel, and must rely mainly on volunteer assistance. The following recommendations were made:

- o Governments and aid agencies should make a commitment to long-term efforts to help strengthen the administrative, financial management, and technical capabilities of the NGO sector.

- o Stronger links need to be established between NGOs and the technical branches of the Forestry Department, other relevant government agencies, and research institutions (national, regional, and international) in order to strengthen NGO technical capabilities.

- o Aid agencies should include an NGO training component in forest conservation and development projects, and should support workshops, seminars, and other means to strengthen NGOs.

- o International NGOs should work more closely with local NGOs and place greater emphasis on transferring skills to help strengthen their capabilities.

- o Greater collaboration among NGOs is needed. The formation of a national NGO network (as recommended in the previous section) would provide a means for NGOs to share information and experiences, particularly through workshops and training seminars.

Funding

NGOs face a number of constraints with respect to funding. A major problem is the large scale and short time horizon that typifies government and aid agency projects. Aid agencies prefer funding large-scale projects that exceed the capacity of most NGOs. Funding is often provided on a piecemeal and relatively short-term basis without regard to long-term planning needs, forcing NGOs to seek other funding sources to sustain their activities. This disrupts project activities and can cause a loss of credibility among the people that the NGO is serving. Problems also arise when the government steps in and dictates how NGOs should spend funds. In some cases, only a very small portion of project funds targeted for NGO activities actually reaches the NGOs. The tendency of aid agencies to follow a narrow sectoral approach to funding may conflict with the more integrative approach of NGOs to forestry problems.

There is a general lack of funds available to local NGOs for institution-building, particularly over the long-term. Aid agencies usually focus funding on the target beneficiaries and make no provision for the overhead needs of NGOs. Finally, funding application procedures and reporting requirements are too complicated and time-consuming.

Given the prospect of significantly increased funding levels under the Tropical Forestry Action Plan, new mechanisms must be found to channel funds to NGOs. The following recommendations were made:

o Funding relations between an NGO and government or aid agency must be based on a mutual understanding and trust that respects the autonomy of the NGO, that enables it to achieve its mission, and that strengthens the participation of its members or of the program's target community.

o Aid agencies need to develop funding mechanisms that are appropriate to the needs of NGOs -- that is, longer-term funding to support both project and institution-building activities on a scale that does not exceed an NGO's capacity to effectively use the funds. Direct funding of NGOs is preferable. Alternatively, aid agencies could consider earmarking a certain percentage of development assistance to a country for use by NGOs in government-supported activities. Aid agencies can also use international NGOs as an intermediary for distribution of funds to local NGOs.

o Local NGOs should attempt to raise funds locally so as not to become dependent on external sources of funding. This could also serve to gain the confidence of aid agencies.

o The proposal for national NGO federations could provide a useful mechanism for distributing funds from external agencies to NGOs, and could help meet government and aid agency requirements for financial accountability and project administration.

o Governments and aid agencies need to simplify the application procedures and reporting requirements that NGOs must follow to obtain funding.

National NGO Federations

To facilitate greater NGO involvement in national forestry programs and the TFAP process, the government participants recommended that governments establish national NGO "federations." The NGO members of a national federation would agree to a "code of conduct" that would prescribe basic requirements for accounting and reporting procedures, as well as broad criteria for accountability. The federation would provide a mechanism for distributing funds from external agencies to NGOs. The national government would determine in advance which aid agencies would contribute to the NGO program. A national-level committee would be formed to provide an objective and efficient mechanism for reviewing project funding proposals from NGOs. Project proposals would be channeled through the federation. An effective system for monitoring and evaluating projects would be devised involving NGOs, the government, and research institutions.

A number of potentially positive and negative aspects of the proposed national federations were raised. On the positive side, national governments and aid agencies need such NGO federations in order to: (1) channel national and international assistance to NGOs; (2) develop a coherent strategy and coordinated programs; and (3) control and regulate aid to minimize abuse. On the other hand, NGOs need such federations in order to: (1) serve as a forum for discussing shared problems and experiences; (2) discover ways for expanding collective self-reliance; and (3)

channel and negotiate requests for aid that reflect common goals.

On the negative side, a federation could become a bottleneck in expanding the role of NGOs in national forestry programs. It would not succeed if it was unduly critical and ruled by an attitude of suspicion toward NGOs' actions. Problems could also arise if the dominant attitude were one of control and regulation instead of providing a service and stimulating action, or if the federation were bureaucratic and insensitive.

To be effective, a federation would need to be responsible, responsive, dedicated to understanding the problems that NGOs face, and committed to seeking feasible solutions. National federations must also give some positive endorsement to NGOs' actions, and essentially seek to redirect, rather than discipline them, when necessary. One of the practical roles for such federations would be to provide leadership and voice collective needs and concerns. If carefully planned, national federations could become an effective means for exchange of information and a stimulus for fresh thinking and creative programming. Finally, they could eliminate "ad hocism" in NGOs' actions and lead to the implementation of programs based on a coherent, long-term strategy.

NGOs expressed strong reservations with the federation proposal. Although the NGO participants strongly support the need for some sort of coordinating mechanism for NGOs at the national level, it is their conviction that such a mechanism must evolve from the local level and not be imposed by the government.

It was suggested that NGOs are more likely to unite in an ad hoc way over a particular issue. The Tropical Forestry Action Plan was cited as presenting an opportunity for such temporary alliances.

One problem with the proposal may have been the term "federation," which seemed to connote the loss of independence and individuality in the minds of some NGOs. Furthermore, the example of the current effort in India to establish a national NGO federation, in which the government has played a major role, was perceived as threatening by some NGOs because such extensive government involvement might rob the NGOs of any decision-making power in their own federation.

NGO Involvement in the Tropical Forestry Action Plan

The Tropical Forestry Action Plan process provides a major opportunity to expand the role of NGOs in forestry and improve NGO/government/aid agency collaboration. Both government and aid agency participants strongly endorsed the need for NGO involvement. National forest sector reviews (described on p. 8) are the primary means for translating the Action Plan into increased political commitment and action at the national level. The workshop participants strongly recommended that "NGO representatives should be on each national forest sector review mission and should be involved with all aspects of the mission's work from the preparatory stage to the final report." At least one NGO representative should be a local NGO.

The aid agencies should strongly promote the early and continuous involvement of NGOs in the sector review process. In conducting the sector reviews, the missions should attempt to go beyond the data bases provided by governments and seek additional data such as rural needs assessments and socio-economic surveys, in which NGOs can play a particularly useful role.

To further strengthen NGO participation in the Bellagio Meeting on Tropical Forests, the NGO participants recommended that WRI convene a small NGO "task force" consisting of one representative from Africa, Asia, and Latin America to prepare a succinct NGO "position paper." The statement would be delivered to the Bellagio participants together with the background paper on "Grass Roots Participation and the Role of NGOs," which will be based largely on the results of the three regional NGO workshops.

A Regional NGO Consultative Process

To provide a means for follow-up to the workshop, Dr. Y.S. Rao (FAO) proposed a regional NGO consultative process which was endorsed by the participants. He proposed convening an informal group of about 10 persons from the region, which would meet together once or more a year but maintain frequent contact. The primary purpose of the group would be to generate ideas that could be evaluated, adopted, and applied by action-oriented groups.

FAO funds may be available to support such an effort. The

East-West Center expressed interest in providing assistance, particularly with respect to countries in the Pacific region. The UNEP representative stated that his organization is committed to the formation of networks, and that it might be possible for UNEP to offer assistance to such a regional consultative body.

Looking Ahead

This workshop has provided the opportunity to initiate a constructive dialogue between NGOs, governments, and development assistance agencies on forest conservation and development issues in Asia, and the potential role of NGOs. However, it is only a first step. Many recommendations have been made on what NGOs, governments, and aid agencies can do to increase the involvement of NGOs in addressing forest problems within their respective countries. The challenge ahead is to continue this dialogue and to translate these recommendations into concrete action at the national level.

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