

Charlie Wednesday pm

Report for Theme 2 plenary: CONSERVATION AND REHABILITATION OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Achim Steiner, the executive director of UNEP, introduced the plenary. "What role can agroforestry play in a world of six and a half billion, soon to be 9 billion people?" he asked. Three keynote speakers described how agroforestry can play an important part in the battle against climate change, encourage conservation and promote a new paradigm of multi-functional agriculture.

In a video address, RK Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), stressed that climate change could cause untold misery, with the poorest people on Earth being hardest hit. An expansion of the area under agroforestry could help human communities adapt to climate change and reduce the levels of carbon dioxide. Agroforestry has the potential to yield many other benefits too. For example, it can enhance energy security and restore degraded landscapes. Scientists need to identify and evaluate the benefits of agroforestry, said Pachauri, thus providing the information decision-makers need. He also stressed the importance of educating the public about the benefits of agroforestry, as their support is vital. "The challenge is exciting, the task is clear," he concluded.

Mohamed Bakarr of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) discussed the role agroforestry can play in promoting biodiversity conservation. Although much had been achieved in recent years, for example by the creation of an extensive network protected areas, much remains to be done. Many species are threatened with extinction; resources continue to be used unsustainably;

there are many problems associated with the equitable access to natural resources. However, Bakarr is heartened the changing nature of conservation activities. There has been a shift towards multi-scale management, cross-boundary co-operation and adaptive management. The importance of conserving biodiversity in agricultural landscapes is widely recognized now. This is where agroforestry comes in: it has the potential to reduce pressures on the environment and increase biodiversity in 'production landscapes.' He echoed Pachauri in asserting that we urgently need to quantify the benefits of agroforestry.

The last speaker, Roger Leakey, focused on multi-functional agriculture and the opportunities for agroforestry, with particular reference to the recent report of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), which called for what Leakey described as "an evolution of agricultural development."

Instead of focusing exclusively on food production, agriculture should fulfill many other functions – social, economic and environmental. In many ways, the goals of multi-functional agriculture are similar to the goals of agroforestry, which can improve soil fertility, rehabilitate degraded land, enhance biodiversity and sequester carbon. Agroforestry also provides tree products which can improve farmers' livelihoods. Roger Leakey concluded his presentation with a 'safari' through three successful agroforestry programmes.

The plenary concluded with a vigorous question and answer session.