

Montréal Process on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests

Remarks by Canada at the Fourth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE)

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to share with this conference the progress being made by the 12 member countries of the Montréal Process on "Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests". As many of you may know, the Montréal Process has developed concurrently with the Pan-European Process on criteria and indicators initiated under the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE).

Launched in 1994, the "Montréal Process" includes 12 countries spanning the globe: Australia, Argentina, Canada, Chile, China, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Uruguay and the United States of America. Together these countries account for 90% of the world's temperate and boreal forests, 60% of all forests and 45% of world trade in forest products. Russia's contribution to these statistics is of course shared with the Pan-European Process since Russia – with both European and Asian forests – is a member of both processes.

Like the Pan-European process, members of the Montréal Process are seeking to implement criteria and indicators to guide forest monitoring, assessment and reporting and to institute forest policies and practices that foster progress toward sustainable forest management. To this end, each of the 12 countries is now finalizing its first ever *Country Forest Report* on sustainable forest management using the 7 criteria and 67 indicators adopted by Montréal Process countries in the Santiago Declaration of 1995.

These *Country Forest Reports 2003* are designed for policy makers and interested publics. The reports present the state of and trends in forests at the national level based on contemporary scientific understanding of forest ecosystems and their values to society. All 12 reports will be released at the XII World Forestry Congress in September in Quebec City.

At the 14th meeting of the Montréal Process Working Group hosted by Uruguay in Montevideo earlier this month, we also agreed to release a *Montréal Process First Forest Overview Report 2003*. This *Overview Report* will present sample data available from all 12 countries for one indicator under each of the seven Montréal Process criteria. These criteria, which are very similar to the MCPFE criteria, are: (1) Biological diversity, (2) productive capacity of forest ecosystems, (3) forest health and vitality, (4) soil and water resources, (5) forest contribution to the global carbon cycle, (6) socio-economic benefits and (7) legal, institutional and economic framework.

By illustrating the data on indicators that can be found in individual country reports, the *Overview Report* will highlight for policy makers, other stakeholders and the

international community the progress and challenges reflected in the *Country Forest Reports*. The report will also outline a set of next steps for the Montréal Process.

I would now like to say a few words about what we have learned in preparing our first *Country Forest Reports* and where we go from here.

First, the country reports reveal that all Montréal Process countries have made progress in reporting forest information since 1997 when countries prepared our *First Approximation Reports*.

Second, despite vast differences in our forest ecosystems, land ownership patterns, economic development and government structure, many countries show some similar trends over the past few decades. These include decreased conversion of forests to agriculture or urban land, increased regulation or other actions to protect soil and water, and small decreases in forest employment as a percent of overall employment.

Third, while the capacity to collect and report on indicators varies greatly among countries, no country is able today to report on all 67 indicators. This is because: (1) The data has not been traditionally collected (e.g., non-wood forest products), (2) there is no scientific agreement on how the data should be collected, creating data gaps at sub-national levels (e.g., soil and water conservation) or (3) there is little or no scientific understanding of how to measure an indicator (e.g., forest fragmentation).

Fourth, considerable improvement in the ability of countries to report on forests using the Montréal Process criteria and indicators is expected over the next five years. In addition, we anticipate criteria and indicators will be used increasingly as a framework for strategic planning, expanding forest inventories, involving stakeholders in sustainable forest management, and communicating progress to policy makers at national and sub-national levels. They may also provide a useful model for monitoring, assessment and reporting on other natural resource conditions, such as rangelands, mining and freshwater.

Finally, member countries agree that the Montréal Process Working Group has provided many benefits as an international forum for collaboration, including catalyzing national efforts and promoting a shared view about what constitutes sustainable forest management and how to measure it. The exchange of information and experience has enabled our countries to identify common goals for implementing criteria and indicators, consolidate technical know how related to indicator measurement and data collection, foster bilateral and regional cooperation among members, and enhance national capacities to report on sustainable forest management.

In a sense, one era of the Montréal Process is coming to a close and another is about to begin. With the completion of the *Country Forest Reports*, we have demonstrated that we can assess our forests using the Montréal Process criteria and indicators. We have also developed a better understanding of the challenges that remain. In future, all 12 countries will be looking first and foremost for ways to increase our capacity to report using criteria and indicators and to better inform our policy makers.

To launch this new era, Canada will host a Special "High Level" Session of the Montréal Process Working Group this September in conjunction with the XII World Forestry Congress. At this Special Session, ministers, vice ministers and other heads of delegation of the 12 Montréal Process countries will officially launch the *2003 Country Forest Reports* and *Overview Report*; reaffirm their political commitment to the Montréal Process and to using criteria and indicators to assess, monitor and report on forests; and set the vision and course for the Montréal Process Working Group for the next five years.

We consider this an exciting time for the Montréal Process. We look forward to working closely with the MCPFE process, ITTO and other criteria and indicators processes in the coming months and years to increase global recognition of the contribution of criteria and indicators to sustainable forest management, as well as enhance international cooperation to further develop, implement and use criteria and indicators.

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention.