

## **Millennium Assessment Update** **June, 2000**

Dear Friends,

Since March, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) has moved several significant steps closer to becoming a reality. While there are still more organizational, institutional, and fundraising challenges ahead, it seems likely that the substantive operations of the MA will be able to begin sometime near January 2001. This e-mail (or fax) provides an update on progress over the past three months.

### **Institutional Arrangements**

At the May 2000 meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) formalized a role for the Millennium Assessment in contributing to the Convention's assessment needs. The parties designated the Executive Secretary and Chair of SBSTTA to represent the CBD on the MA Executive Committee and requested SBSTTA to work with the MA to identify where it could contribute to the assessment needs of the Convention. With this decision and the previous actions taken by the secretariats or parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), and the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), the MA is now authorized as a joint assessment undertaken for the CBD, CCD, Ramsar and other users. The Assessment will be conducted under a partnership arrangement of these Conventions, several UN Agencies (FAO, UNESCO, UNDP), the World Bank, GEF, Framework Convention on Climate Change, CGIAR, and ICSU under the governance of a Board (see below) and facilitated by UNEP.

The Millennium Assessment also received a solid endorsement from the United Nations in April. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's April 2000 "Millennium Report" to the United Nations General Assembly featured the MA as one of five key action items related to environmental sustainability. The Secretary General stated that: "The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is an outstanding example of the sort of international scientific and political cooperation that is needed to further the cause of sustainable development... I call on Member States to help provide the necessary financial support for the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and to become actively engaged in it."

### **Governance**

The work of the exploratory Steering Committee, established in 1998 by WRI, UNEP, UNDP, and the World Bank, is now ending. A new Board will assume oversight of the MA process, holding its first meeting on July 17-18, 2000 in Trondheim, Norway. The Board is comprised of formal representatives of the institutions listed above (under "Institutional Arrangements") and a set of 13 "At Large" members serving in their personal capacity. The "At Large" members will help to ensure that the process is shaped to meet the needs of a broad array of users, ranging from national ministries and local communities to the private sector and NGOs. Members of the Board include: (A) Institutional Representatives: Delmar Blasco, Hama Arba Diallo, Gisbert Glaser, He Changchui, Jorge Jiménez Ramón, Jonathan Lash, Roberto Lenton, Hal Mooney,

Mario Ramos, Cristian Samper, Dennis Tirpak, Klaus Töpfer, Robert Watson, Meryl Williams, Hamdallah Zedan; (B) "At large" members: Phoebe Barnard, Gordana Beltram, Mohammed Hassan, Yolanda Kakabadse, Hubert Markl, Peter Raven, Henry Schacht, Peter Schei, David Suzuki, M.S. Swaminathan, José Tundisi, Xu Guanhua, and A.H. Zakri. At its first meeting, the Board will select additional members to promote geographical balance and adequately represent user needs. Dr. Robert Watson and Dr. A.H. Zakri are currently serving as interim co-chairs of the Board.

The current MA Advisory Group will continue to function in an advisory role to the Board. In addition, linkages will be established to national focal points of the various conventions to provide channels for national input to the MA process and for the dissemination of findings.

### **Operations**

The MA process will now increasingly focus on the actual design and implementation of the substantive activities of the Assessment. A set of working groups and committees will conduct the actual assessment. These will include a "Design Committee", three global working groups ("Condition", "Scenarios", and "Response Options"), a local assessment working group, and 4-5 national and regional assessments (which may also be clustered into a working group). The Board is soliciting nominations for individuals to both chair and participate in these working groups. The working group chairs should be appointed by October 2000. We expect the working groups to be fully constituted by March 2001.

The "Scenario" working group will likely be established in collaboration with the International Council for Science (ICSU). At its April Executive Committee meeting, ICSU/SCOPE (Scientific Committee on the Problems of the Environment) approved the establishment of a new project – the International Programme on Ecosystem Change (IPEC) – and understood that this SCOPE project would be proposed to serve as the "Scenario" working group for the MA. SCOPE expects that IPEC would fully engage the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program (IGBP) as well as other ICSU global change programs, and work with other partners in shaping the program to meet the needs of the MA. The Board will consider this arrangement at its July meeting.

Members of the Design Committee will interact extensively with "users" of the MA to ensure that decision-makers benefit directly from the information produced and the strengthened capacity. The Design Committee will also work closely with existing networks of experts (such as the network of institutions involved in the Global Environmental Outlook, the Global Observing systems, the IGBP, GCTE, IUCN, GIWA, IPCC, and others) to be sure that the MA provides added value to and avoids duplication of ongoing activities. The Design Committee will also draw on various preparatory studies undertaken for the MA. These include a pilot local ecosystem assessment conducted in the Mala village cluster in Karnataka, India under the direction of Madhav Gadgil, and the "Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems" (PAGE) described below.

A workshop on "The Contribution of Remote Sensing to the Millennium Assessment" will be held early in the design process to help identify remote sensing information that will be available

for the process and opportunities for analyses to meet particular information needs of the MA. Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Management has offered to host this workshop.

The Board will also review candidate regions, countries, and communities for the "catalytic" assessments described within the MA framework. Candidate locations for the local assessments include communities in Sweden, Turkey, South Africa, India, Brazil, and Canada. Candidate sites for the national and regional assessments are now being explored. Short concept papers presenting ideas for any of the catalytic assessments (local, regional, national) are welcome and should be sent to Walt Reid (contact information below.) Final proposals for the initial set of catalytic assessments are expected to be developed by November 2000.

### **Financial Support**

The budget for the MA is \$21 million over four years. At its May Council Meeting, the Global Environment Facility approved the inclusion of the MA in its workprogram and will contribute \$7 million to the project once the remaining funding is assembled. UNEP will contribute an additional \$800,000. The UN Foundation is now considering a proposal for \$4 million. The bulk of the remaining funding need of more than \$8 million is for the costs of the regional and national "catalytic" assessments (approximately 1/3 of the budget) and for the costs of the "scenarios" working group. None of the major grants for the process will be available until the bulk of the funding has been raised. For this reason, it is unlikely that the MA will be able to begin its operations until January 2001 at the earliest. During calendar year 2000, the Government of Norway, World Bank, UNEP, WRI, Summit Foundation, and Wallace Global Fund have all provided "bridge" support to the process pending the completion of the overall fundraising.

### **Outreach**

TIME Magazine featured the findings of the Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems (PAGE) and "*World Resources 2000: People and Ecosystems, the Fraying Web of Life*" in its April "Earth Day" special issue.. PAGE was conducted by several institutions on the MA Steering Committee (WRI, UNEP, UNDP, the World Bank, and IFPRI) to help demonstrate the value and need for an integrated assessment of ecosystem goods and services and begin to establish links with institutions that would participate in such an assessment. The key findings of PAGE will appear as a chapter in *World Resources*, to be released in September 2000. The Executive Summary of *World Resources*, which contained initial findings from PAGE, was released in April 2000. The summary includes the partners' editorial that calls for the establishment of the MA. Links to PAGE information, *World Resources*, and the TIME article can be found on <http://www.ma-secretariat.org>. The description of the pilot local ecosystem assessment (Gadgil M., et al. 2000. Participatory Local Level Assessment of Life Support Systems: A Methodology Manual. Technical Report No. 78, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India) and can be downloaded at: <ftp://ces.iisc.ernet.in/pub/mg/method.doc>.

PAGE and *World Resources* will also be the focus of an upcoming documentary being produced by Bill Moyers.

Juan Mayr Maldonado (Environment Minister of Colombia), Klaus Töpfer (Executive Director of UNEP), Robert Watson (Interim MA Board Co-chair), and Jonathan Lash (WRI, President) gave a lunch briefing on the MA at the April meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York.

Briefings on the MA were also presented at the CBD COP in Nairobi to the Africa Group, the G-77 Group, and during the noon side events.

The article "Ecosystem Data to Guide Hard Choices," which provides an overview of the MA, appeared in the Spring 2000 issue of *Issues in Science and Technology*.

**Looking Ahead**

July 17-18, 2000

MA Board Meeting, Trondheim, Norway

***What You Can Do***

We welcome your input into this process at any time. Please feel free to provide comments on the material posted on the website and to suggest people or institutions that should be involved in the MA process. In particular:

***For Specific Questions:***

Dr. Walter Reid

Acting Science Director

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

731 N. 79<sup>th</sup> St.

Seattle, WA 98103

Tel: (206)782-7963

Fax: (206)782-5682

e-mail: [waltreid@attglobal.net](mailto:waltreid@attglobal.net)

***For General Information:***

Valerie Thompson

Program Assistant

World Resources Institute

10 G St. NE

Washington, D.C. 20002 USA

Tel: (202) 729-7794

Fax: (202) 729-7610

e-mail: [valeriet@wri.org](mailto:valeriet@wri.org)

Please visit the website at

<http://www.ma-secretariat.org>