



# MAnews

The Newsletter of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

## Around The World: the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Sub-Global Working Group

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If there is one feature of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) that makes it stand out from previous international scientific assessments, it is the set of a dozen or more "MA Sub-Global Assessments" now being carried out around the world. Global environmental change is increasingly understood to have causes and effects that span multiple scales, from the local to the global. Accurate and informed assessments of what is taking place, and what to reasonably expect in the future, are therefore critical for decision-makers. Yet, until recently, international scientific assessments typically focused more on global phenomena than on processes at sub-global levels or on interactions across scales. Designed as a multi-scale assessment, the MA includes a global assessment – conducted through the Conditions and Trends, Scenarios, and Responses working groups – as well as sub-global assessments at regional, sub-regional and local scales. In 2005, the MA Sub-Global Assessment working group will publish an Assessment Report drawing on the experiences of the sub-global assessments that will provide a careful analysis of how integrated assessment methodologies being used at the global scale can be adapted and applied to community, national and other assessments.



Photo: Tim Lynnam

*Sorghum, fish, reeds, baskets, thatching grass, fibre, poles, and firewood. This rural scene highlights the importance of natural resources to household well-being in Southern Africa.*

Currently, there are eight sub-global assessment activities underway that have been formally approved as part of the MA: pan-tropic Alternatives to Slash-and-Burn (ASB) benchmark sites; coastal British Columbia in Canada; urban and semi-urban sites in Sweden; regional, basin and local assessments in southern Africa; local villages in India; the region of western China including sub-regional sites; the Laguna Lake basin in the Philippines; and small islands in Papua New Guinea.

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Many other “candidate” assessments are in various stages of development, with a view to becoming approved components of the MA. In the Americas, these include the Salar de Atacama in Chile; the Vilcanota sub-region in Peru; the urban area and green belt of Sao Paulo; coffee-growing regions in the Colombian Andes; the Chirripo basin in Costa Rica; the Northern Range in Trinidad; and the Caribbean Sea. In Asia: the downstream Mekong wetlands of Vietnam; the Hindu Kush-Himalayas region; the eastern Himalayas in India; the Pamir and Tyan-shan mountains in Central Asia; the Altai-Sayan ecoregion; selected areas in Indonesia; and the Arafura and Timor seas. Elsewhere, activities are also underway in Portugal and in the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt.

Each of these sub-global assessments is being coordinated by local institutions in the respective regions, and all engage users and stakeholders in each location. These assessments are not “case studies” of the global assessment, but instead are designed from the bottom-up to meet the information needs of their respective users, and to focus on the specific issues that are of greatest importance in each locale. At the same time, as components of the MA, all the sub-global assessments will seek to apply the MA

conceptual framework, including its focus on ecosystem services and human well-being, and will address the three basic assessment components of the MA: conditions and trends, scenarios and responses.

The primary goal of each of the MA sub-global assessments is to contribute directly to decision-making where the assessment is being conducted. At the same time, the MA’s emphasis on cross-scale interactions is expected to enhance the assessment findings overall, and contribute to the development of multi-scale assessment methodologies that can be applied in other processes. The global distribution of the various assessment activities helps to strengthen expert networks, provides lessons from the application of methods in different contexts, and will help to develop capacity to undertake integrated ecosystem assessments in various countries. Once established, this capacity to undertake integrated ecosystem assessments will contribute to improved decision-making at every level, beyond the timeframe of the MA.

As one of the four MA working groups, the Sub-Global Working Group includes representatives from each sub-global team, and a number of independent experts not associated with any particular sub-global assessment. This working group, like the others, will produce an assessment report as one of the formal MA publications. The working group report is expected to synthesize the experiences and findings of the sub-global assessments, incorporating specific examples and outcomes from the completed or ongoing sub-global assessments.

In addition to the working group report, each sub-global assessment will also be producing reports and other publications targeted at their respective user audiences. Each of these reports will undergo a rigorous review process according to guidelines established by the MA Board and will be recognized as a sub-global contribution to the overall MA effort.

The next working group meeting will take place in late June, 2003 and will provide an opportunity for the assessment teams to learn from each other’s experiences and to begin to draft the Sub-Global Assessment report. Some preliminary results are already available. For example, the Southern African Millennium Assessment (SAfMA) released a report on its first “pilot” assessment at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg last year. Efforts continue apace to maximize the learning opportunities from the process, through

*Due to the SARS epidemic and the uncertainty surrounding it, the June, 2003 international conference organized by the MA on "Bridging Scales & Epistemologies," in Kunming, China has been postponed. The issues that were to be discussed, relating to cross-scale interactions, as well as the incorporation of local, traditional and indigenous knowledge in scientific assessment processes, remain important themes within the MA and central to the sub-global assessment group. The conference will likely take place in February 2004, in the same location of Kunming, China.*

training courses and by establishing on-line and other mechanisms for exchanging experiences, lessons, and examples of completed work.

The MA adopted a bottom-up approach in developing the network of approved sub-global assessments, encouraging the development of assessment activities in any region where there was both interest and need, providing small amounts of seed funding, and helping to identify additional sources of funding. The MA provides a framework for integrated assessments that allows for meaningful exchange and interaction, while also accommodating the sheer diversity of circumstances among the sub-global assessments. Although the Working Group is no longer able to accommodate more assessments, a new category of "affiliated assessments" will be established to strengthen linkages with ongoing or planned assessments that share similarities with the MA or seek to benefit more directly from the lessons learned in the MA. The growth in the number of sub-global assessments has been extremely encouraging. With the current momentum, integrated assessments may become even more common around the world.

*The MA Sub-Global Working Group is co-chaired by*

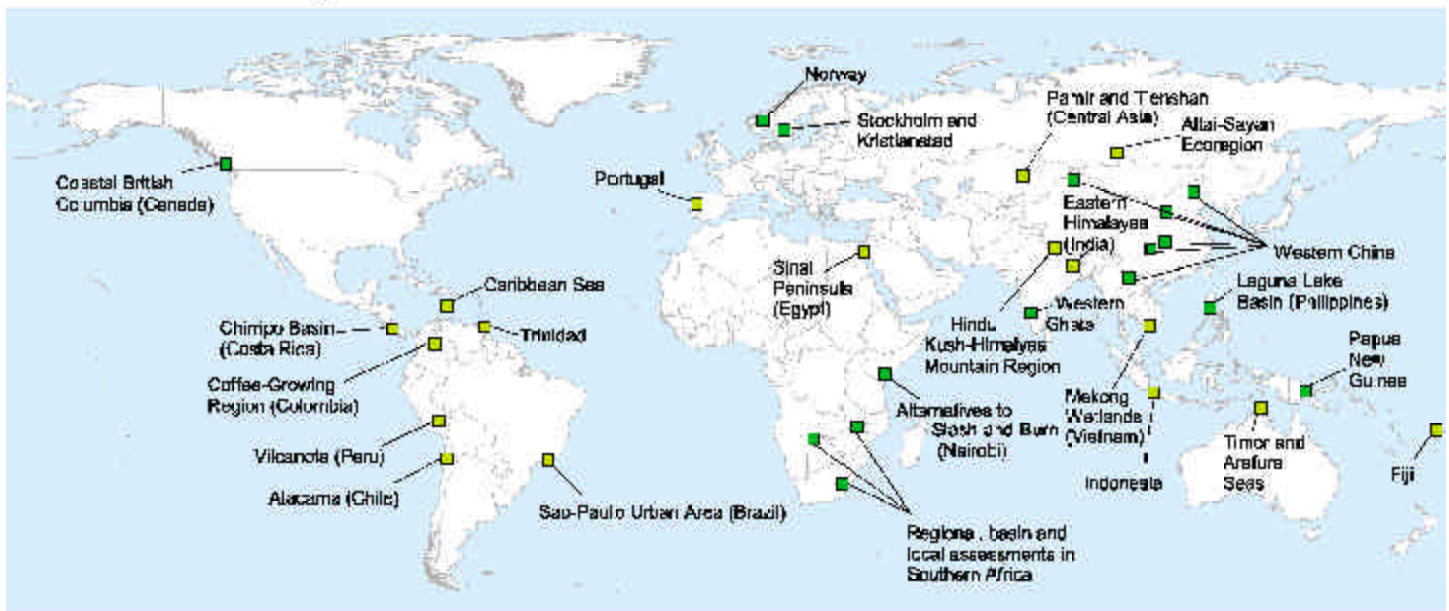
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## Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Around the World



**■ Sub-Global Assessments: Approved Assessments**  
Africa (southern regions), Canada (Coastal British Columbia), China (western regions), India, Kenya, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Sweden

**■ Sub-Global Assessments: Candidate Assessments**  
Arafura and Timor Seas, Asia (central regions), Brazil, Caribbean Region, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Egypt, Central Asia, India, Indonesia, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Trinidad, Vietnam

# Activities Report

## 2003 BOARD MEETING: APPROVAL OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The third meeting of the MA Board was held on February 11-12 2003 at the Gland, Switzerland headquarters of IUCN- The World Conservation Union and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Secretariat. The meeting's primary objectives were to revise and review the MA Conceptual Framework Report (*Ecosystems and Human Well-being: A Framework for Assessment*) and review progress of the MA workplan.

Several members of the Assessment Panel and authors of the Conceptual Framework joined the Board meeting for the first day's discussion of the report. The Board approved the report, subject to the incorporation of the revisions discussed during the Board meeting. The Board also decided that the Secretariat should undertake production of a separate document for use in outreach to better describe the rationale for undertaking the MA, what it will produce, and how it is being conducted.

Other actions taken by the Board included:

### Approved Subglobal Assessments

The Board approved the Laguna Lake Basin Assessment in the Philippines as a full assessment in the MA.

The Board also decided to change the selection criteria related to financing, to enable Assessments that have strong prospects for co-financing and otherwise meet the full set of MA selection criteria to be "approved, subject to obtaining the remaining co-financing." The full selection criteria can be found on the MA website: [www.millenniumassessment.org](http://www.millenniumassessment.org)

## Convention on Migratory Species joins MA Board

The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) was invited to join the Board of the MA as an institutional member after discussion of the mutual interests of the CMS and MA. At its 2002 Conference of Parties (COP) meeting, the CMS took several decisions related to the MA. More specifically, the COP recognising that migratory species are components of the ecosystems being studied, and that they rely on the integrity of habitats across their migratory range, and invited the MA to integrate migratory species and their habitats where possible in the assessment. CMS Parties involved with the MA's sub-global and other assessments have been encouraged to integrate migratory species considerations into their work. The Board concluded that CMS and the MA could take advantage of synergies within existing assessment reports and through existing expertise within the convention. The chairs of the MA Assessment Panel concluded that the MA would be able to provide CMS with information on:

- Habitat extent, quality, and trends;
- The forces of change, e.g., pollution, climate change, human needs and pressures on species; and
- How ecosystem changes affect species, including migratory species.

With CMS's involvement, the MA Working Groups will also take steps to increase the emphasis given to such issues as the role of migratory species in ecosystem structure and function, migratory species as indicators of ecosystem condition, and migratory species' contributions to human well-being.

### MA News

*The newsletter of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*

Please direct questions or comments regarding the contents of this newsletter to Valerie Thompson:

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You have received this information because of a request submitted via the MA website.

If you do not wish to continue receiving updates on the MA, please send an e-mail to [postmaster@millenniumassessment.org](mailto:postmaster@millenniumassessment.org), including "remove from list" as the subject of the message.



## MA BOARD ANNOUNCES PUBLISHER SELECTION

The MA is pleased to announce the selection of Island Press as its publisher. Island will publish *People and Ecosystems: A Framework for Assessment* (in 2003), an edited volume of papers presented at the "Bridging Scales and Epistemologies: Linking Local Knowledge to Global Science in Multi-Scale Assessments" conference (2004), the four Assessment Reports (2005), and the Summary (2005).

## PRIVATE SECTOR AND SCENARIOS WORKSHOP

On February 13, 2003 the MA Scenarios Working Group and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) hosted a workshop in Geneva, Switzerland that provided an opportunity for private sector reaction and input to the storylines being developed by the Scenarios Working Group. Participants, from all over Europe, reacted to the four primary Millennium Assessment scenarios based on their experience with developing scenarios for business and from their perspective as representatives of the private sector. This workshop had mutual benefits: there was some recognition from participants that current thinking within the private sector about planning for the future might need to be viewed differently based on outcomes of the four scenarios; and the scenarios will be further developed with attention to the role that business might play in each based on comments from the participants.

## ADDITIONAL USER FORUM PARTICIPATION

Three additional user forums were held in January and February 2003, in Malaysia, Tanzania, and the Philippines. As with previous activities, participants were provided with MA overview materials and also connected via videoconference with experts involved in the MA to discuss progress and address issues identified in the national workshops. The exception to this format was the User Forum held in Malaysia, hosted by the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Malaysian Academy of Sciences, which was a stand-alone event with presentations from MA Board Chair A.H. Zakri and MA Secretariat members Walter Reid

and Marcus Lee. The User Forum with Tanzania (coordinated with the World Bank's Global Development Learning Network Distance Learning Center in Dar Es Salaam) and the Philippines (coordinated with the Department of Environmental Forestry, University Los Banos) was held in conjunction with the MA Board meeting. MA Director Walter Reid, Assessment Panel member Rik Leemans, and Convention to Combat Desertification Committee for Science and Technology Vice Chair, and MA Board delegate Moussa Hassane of Niger participated in this videoconference.

## INTERACTION WITH THE CONVENTIONS

### *Convention on Biological Diversity Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (CBD SBSTTA)*

Sub-Global Working Group co-chair Cristian Samper made a presentation on progress of the MA during the plenary session of the Eighth Meeting of the SBSTTA on March 10, 2003. In addition, a side-event was convened to highlight the work being done within the MA that focuses on mountain ecosystems, which were one of the working areas for SBSTTA-8. Plans for SBSTTA-9, include a report to plenary and side event, and will include a one-day training course open to a number of SBSTTA delegates that will focus on the application of the MA approach and tools to assessment activities within countries.

### *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)*

Habiba Gitay and Valerie Thompson from the MA Secretariat represented the MA at the April 2003 meeting of the STRP in Gland, Switzerland. On the first day, they gave an overview presentation of the MA and detailed the ways in which the MA might help STRP address the priority issues of their workplan in preparation for their next Conference of Parties.

### **Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD)**

The MA is planning to participate in the upcoming Fifth meeting of the CCD Parties, which will be held in late August 2003 in Havana, Cuba. Plans call for a report to the plenary, a side event, and a one-day training course prior to the COP focused on applying the MA approach to drylands issues.

### **SCENARIOS WORKING GROUP CONVENES THIRD MEETING**

The Scenarios Working Group convened in San Jose Costa Rica, March 3-7, 2003 to further develop the scenario storylines, provide feedback to the modeling team, and to further the drafting of

the various components of their report. This third meeting of the Scenarios group was hosted by The Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad (INBIO), and Director Dr. Rodrigo Gamez addressed participants to open the meeting. Primary objectives for the meeting included harmonization of the storylines with the work of the quantification teams; development of event sequences of the four existing scenarios; and exploration of developing a 5<sup>th</sup> "Rosy" scenario based on the Millennium Development Goals.

During the week-long meeting, some working group members took advantage of an opportunity to visit the Organization for Tropical Studies' La Selva Research Station. La Selva, located at the confluence of two major rivers in the Caribbean lowlands of northern Costa Rica, comprises 1,600 hectares (3,900 acres) of tropical wet forests and disturbed lands. Over 240 scientific papers are published yearly from research conducted at the site.

### **SUB-GLOBAL TRAINING FOR SCENARIOS DEVELOPEMENT**

Thirty individuals from various MA Sub-global Assessments participated in a four-day workshop on scenarios methodologies, held in Penang Malaysia on April 1-4, 2003. The course was facilitated by Walt Reid, Rik Leemans (Responses Working Group Co-chair) and Marcus Lee and the materials for the course were prepared by Habiba Gitay.

### **WHAT ABOUT CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES IN THE MA?**

*A review of the MA Cross-cutting approach and a special series of meetings*

While each of the MA working groups is tasked with evaluating a specific aspect of the relationship between ecosystems and human well-being, there are certain issues that have important implications across all of the Working Groups. Over the course of the past year, members of the MA Scientific Assessment Panel grew increasingly aware of several thematic issues which could be usefully assessed across working groups: Health, Biodiversity, Marine and Coastal systems, Food and Cultivated systems, Freshwater and inland

## **CALENDAR OF CROSS-CUT MEETINGS**

11-12 DECEMBER 2002

**"Drivers of Ecosystem Change: A Cross-cutting Approach"** San Francisco, California, USA

30-31 JANUARY 2003

**"Addressing Health issues within the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment"** Co-hosted by the Western Pacific Regional Headquarters, World Health Organization, Manila, Philippines.

13-14 FEBRUARY 2003

**"Addressing Biodiversity issues within the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment"** Co-hosted by: IUCN / Ramsar Headquarters, Gland, Switzerland

7-11 APRIL 2003

**"Addressing Marine and Coastal issues within the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment"** Co-hosted by: Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

12-14 MAY 2003

**"Addressing Food and Cultivated Systems issues within the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment"** Co-hosted by: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, D.C. USA

4-7 JUNE 2003

**"Addressing Freshwater and Inland Water systems and services within the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment"** Co-hosted by: National Centre for Tropical Wetland Research, Darwin, Australia

18-22 AUGUST 2003

**"Challenges for Drylands in the New Millennium: A Cross-cutting Approach for Assessment"** A joint UNU-MA-ICARDA International Workshop. Hosted by the ICARDA Regional Office, Tashkent, Uzbekistan



Photo: Jackie Alder

*Participants at Marine and Coastal Cross-cut meeting, Vancouver, BC, Canada*

waters, Drylands and desertification, and a slightly more specialized cross-cut on the Drivers of ecosystem change. A series of meetings has been established to address these thematic issues, incorporating a cross-cutting, multi-faceted and creative approach to ensuring these issues are adequately represented and key stakeholders and user needs are addressed.

The cross-cutting teams that come together at the meetings contribute their knowledge and expertise in review of draft outlines and early draft text produced by the MA Working Groups. The participants of these special meetings include Coordinating Lead Authors and Lead Authors from different working groups, other individuals who engage as experts in the particular thematic area, as well as Technical Support Unit staff, working group co-chairs, and the MA Director.

The recommendations generated from these meetings are intended to increase awareness, provide resources and guide the authors of the chapters within the assessments to ensure that these important themes are adequately addressed as the assessment drafts evolve. The Crosscutting teams provide clarification on conceptual issues, terminology, data and indicators that are

specific to the particular theme. The teams also provide suggestions for contributing authors in particular sections, as well as relevant graphics and case studies to assist in the illustration of issues. Sub-Global assessment coordinators who could potentially benefit from these cross-cuts are also included as part of the team and exercise.

For further information on the MA Thematic cross-cutting meetings, please contact:

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### APRIL 27–MAY 1

**MA Conditions and Trends Working Group**  
 Washington, DC USA

### MAY 19–23

**MA Responses Working Group**  
 Frankfurt, Germany

### MAY 18–23

**May 19, MA Symposium**  
 International Forum on Ecosystem Approach  
 for Human Health  
 Montreal, Canada

### JUNE 26–30

**MA Sub-Global Working Group**  
 TBD

### JULY 19–25

**IGBP Open Science Conference**  
 Banff, Canada

**The International Conference “Bridging Scales  
 and Epistemologies”**

has been postponed.

Please see page 3 for details.