



MAnews

The Newsletter of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

Common Interests: Private Sector Engagement with the MA

A multinational agribusiness is trying to decide whether aquaculture activities are worth long-term investments. A national mining company needs to make strategic decisions regarding where to invest their limited exploratory resources. An entrepreneur, provided with the opportunity to obtain micro-financing, wants to develop a business based on creating a market for local fruits. All of these private sector decision-makers stand to gain direct benefit from the results of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA). How? The Assessment will provide insights and information that will illuminate the complex interactions between ecosystems and people, information invaluable when considering choices such as those above. In addition to providing data regarding current trends and the nature of these interactions, the MA will assess the effectiveness of policy and decision-making responses and make suggestions for how responses can be applied more effectively in the future.

The fundamental conceptual underpinning of the MA is better understanding of the interrelationships between human well-being and the goods and services provided by ecosystems. Understanding these linkages can strengthen decisions taken in the private sector. But as much as the MA can provide beneficial information, private sector involvement in the MA process is in fact critical to the success of the Assessment. From the outset of the design process that led to the formal launch of the MA by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in June 2001, involvement of representatives of the private sector has been a high priority in the MA process.

Based on consultations with private sector representatives, several specific aspects of the MA have been identified from which the private sector can benefit:

Establishing Benchmarks

Business plans and decisions require attention to detail concerning current market climate and future predicted conditions. The MA will provide information on the current state of ecosystems. These benchmarks will include information about current characteristics of ecosystem processes and how ecosystem conditions and processes have changed over time and might be expected to change into the future. Such information can be of critical importance in the context of site assessment processes and cost-benefit analyses.

Methodological Development

The design and implementation of the multi-scale scenario approach of the MA provides valuable opportunities for "lessons learned" and general insights that are applicable to business strategy development. Specifically, the MA will be pioneering new methods of incorporating changes in ecosystem goods and services into global models and scenarios. The MA scenarios will provide important new perspectives regarding the interplay between ecosystems, economics and social dynamics.

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Option Generation

The MA process will clarify how consideration of ecosystem goods and services can affect decision-making within the private sector. It will also assist private sector decision-makers to gain insights into potential response options that might be considered and implemented by governmental decision-makers (e.g., use of markets to manage water services from forest lands).

There are also a number of reasons why private sector engagement in the MA is crucial to the success of the Assessment. Most obvious, perhaps, is the capacity of decisions taken by private companies to affect ecosystem goods and services. Because of research and development funding, for example, industry associations and companies are important sources of data, expertise, and methodologies. The private sector is also experienced and essential for defining scenarios or “plausible futures” concerning changes in driving forces such as technology development and deployment. Private sector perspectives can certainly help inform assumptions made in the development of scenarios regarding the use of markets to influence the use of ecosystem goods and services. Last but not least important, the private sector has the capacity to assist in the implementation of policy options that will be developed by the MA.

The World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD) was an early proponent of the Assessment and has played a central role for the MA in the coordination of outreach and engagement with the private sector. WBCSD participation began with the exploratory steering committee that established the MA, and continues through the participation of three individuals on the Board who are affiliated with the WBCSD through their companies or organizations. In addition, the WBCSD has hosted two workshops that brought private sector leaders together with the leaders of the MA. The first took place during the technical design phase and the second, held in January 2003, focused on providing private sector input into the scenario development process, a key element of the MA.

Outside the WBCSD, the MA has gained valuable input toward its development from other Board members and advisors with private sector connections. The MA has also been providing information and briefings for a number of international business networks and associations including the International Chamber of Commerce, the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association, International Forestry Roundtable, the Electric Power Research Institute, the American Petroleum Institute, and the International Council on Mining and Metals.

Key opportunities for involvement of private sector representatives in the MA will be forthcoming as the formal peer-review process commences in early 2004. The MA organizers are extremely interested in soliciting review comments from private sector representatives. If you have interest in reviewing all or part of the forthcoming MA reports, please contact Valerie Thompson (thompson@millenniumassessment.org).

— **John Ehrmann, Senior Partner Meridian Institute, MA Engagement and Outreach,**
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FAO photo by G. Bizzarri

In Ecuador, special nets are used to fish shrimp larvae.

Millennium Assessment Around the World: National and Regional Engagement

By reaching out directly to stakeholders in countries and regions, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) seeks to share its work and expertise at different scales, promote multisectoral dialogue, bring the assessment closer to regional and national priorities and concerns, and support the work of the international conventions it serves. With the support of various partners, the MA has established ongoing interaction with government officials, civil society and indigenous organizations, universities, business associations, and others in a number of countries.

A series of 25 videoconferences and discussions in developing countries and regions around the world sparked the development of multiple national and regional user networks, intended to bring the MA closer to local concerns and public agendas. The MA and its partners have prepared the ground for more in-depth and formal dialogue between the Assessment and national or regional decision-makers. At the same time, the relevance of the MA to the national and regional scene, and hence the utility of MA products over the next years, is becoming stronger. Finally, in many cases,

these dialogues have been synergistic with MA sub-global assessment activities.

Through the establishment of the MA national and regional user networks, stakeholders from government, regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations have identified local concerns that could be usefully addressed through the MA conceptual framework:

West Africa is one region where the connection between ecosystem change and human condition is especially clear and palpable. One critical issue in this region is land tenure. The MA is exploring with the intergovernmental organization CILSS and the West Africa regional IUCN office various ways the MA might contribute to ongoing regional policy-making processes around land tenure issues.

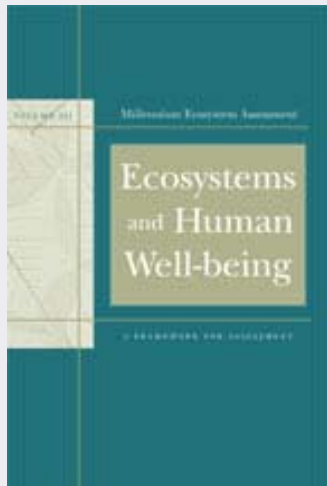
The national environmental authority in **Argentina** is considering declaring the MA of "national interest" and engaging in an effort to disseminate the process and its products throughout the country. The **Chilean** government has now fully incorporated the MA sub-global assessment in that country (in Salar de Atacama) into its program of drylands-related initiatives nationwide and has brought this experience to the attention of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

The MA is taking place at a time when the **Arab world** is especially hard hit by a recession. Stakeholders in this region believe that the MA's contribution to sustainable development would be especially relevant if it recognizes this context. Together with Bibliotheca Alexandrina and Suez Canal University (which is conducting an assessment of the Sinai Peninsula) and with support from the UNEP regional office for West Asia, the MA will coordinate a regional seminar featuring the MA conceptual framework to support efforts to develop integrated approaches to ecosystem assessment and management in the region.

Indonesia is preparing a national summit on sustainable development (ISSD) to follow up on the results of World Summit on Sustainable

Ecosystems and Human Well-being

Ecosystems and Human Well-being: A Framework for Assessment, the first report for the Millennium Assessment, was published by Island Press in August 2003. The report will be available in PDF format from www.millenniumassessment.org in late September, 2003. Translations of the Executive Summary of this report will be made available in the following languages: Spanish, French, Russian, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and Bhasa Indonesian. These translations will be available on the web site, and combined with the full report and other materials on a multimedia CD-ROM.



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Photo: Sanzhar Mustafin

Participants at the Central Asia User Forum Meeting, August 14, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

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Development and make them a national commitment. The MA will be discussed in a workshop prior to this summit and will become an input to ISSD.

The republics of **Central Asia** are pursuing sustainable development strategies through the Central Asian Agenda 21. These countries have agreed that sub-regional cooperation in Central Asia is an essential component of any effort to address problems of environmental degradation and associated issues. The MA conceptual framework and its application to achievement of the Central Asian Agenda 21 was the topic of a regional workshop to be held in August 2003.

The MA has also been planning and undertaking outreach and engagement activities in developed countries during the last year. Some of these activities include:

- In the **United States**, the State Department hosted a briefing on the MA in May 2003 to identify and coordinate the agencies that would participate in the review of the Assessment reports. In addition, the MA welcomed additional groups to the Affiliated Scientific Organizations (ASO) group. The Crop Science Society of America (CSSA) and the Agronomy Society of America (ASA) are the first ASO members from the **United States**.

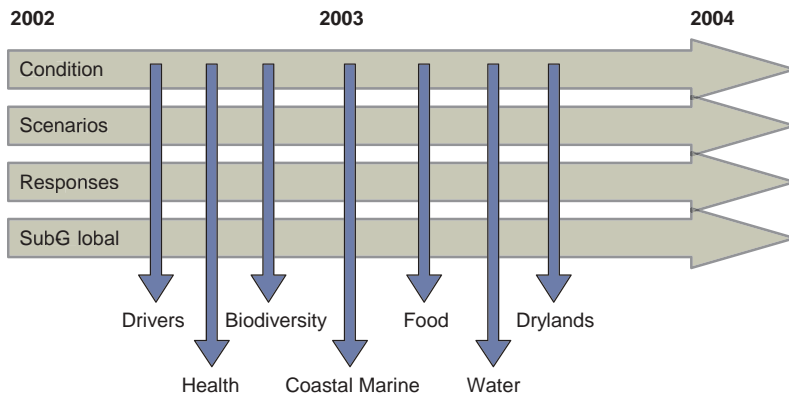
- **Japan** will host a dialog on the MA conceptual framework in October 2003. This event will be similar in scope and format to those held as part of the user forum activities with involvement of multiple stakeholders and critical discussion.

What next? By working with local institutions on locally defined priorities, the MA can demonstrate its effective relevance and therefore build a sounder basis for further exploration of the linkages between the global assessment process and local issues. In September, the MA will release its first product: *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: A Framework for Assessment*. We want to share this work broadly. And we also want to encourage a critical discussion, by and for stakeholders in each country or region. Between September and November, a number of workshops and seminars will take place around the world, which will lead to continuing multi-stakeholder discussions of MA findings next year. In 2004, the review process of the full MA reports will take place, which will provide a new opportunity to share information and deepen policy dialogue concerning ecosystems and human well-being.

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Cross Cut Meetings: Results and Next Steps

As described in the previous edition of *MAnews*, the MA cross-cutting meetings were developed to address several issues of importance to each working group: drivers of ecosystem change, human health, biodiversity, food and cultivated systems, freshwater and inland water systems and services, and drylands (see diagram). These meetings were convened between December 2002 and August 2003.



The final MA Cross-cut meeting was held on the topic of drylands. The meeting “Drylands in the New Millennium” was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on August 12–15, 2003. United Nations University (UNU) supported this meeting as part of its series of annual workshops on drylands issues. Participants were invited to submit papers on drylands topics, and these

papers with the proceedings of the workshop will be prepared for publication by UNU. The ensuing volume will be the sixth in UNU’s series, and is expected to be published by the end of 2003. Local organization of the meeting and invaluable support was also provided by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA).

In each cross-cutting meeting, MA authors and independent experts reviewed working group chapters relevant to each cross-cutting theme. The results of the reviews have been captured in “Cross-Cut Reports” with specific recommendations for MA authors and working groups. In October 2003, the MA will coordinate a special joint meeting of all working groups in Prague, Czech Republic. At this meeting, a special review will be made of the existing assessment draft chapters in light of recommendations from the cross-cut meetings.

Cross-cutting meetings for biodiversity, freshwater and inland water, and drylands also set the stage for the preparation of synthesis reports originally planned for the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the Convention to Combat Desertification. The meeting on food and cultivated systems exposed significant interest in the development of an additional synthesis report dealing with agriculture, which may eventually be incorporated into the workplan of the MA.



BRIDGING SCALES AND EPISTEMOLOGIES — *RESCHEDULED!*

The international conference on “Bridging Scales and Epistemologies” has been rescheduled for March 17–20, 2004 in Alexandria, Egypt. The meeting will be held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Library and Conference Center.

The MA Secretariat will consider a limited number of additional proposals or abstracts for papers, panels, workshops, and other activities. Those interested in more information about submission of proposals should contact Wai Leng Chan, chan@millenniumassessment.org

Photo: Bibliotheca Alexandrina, site of the March 2004 Bridging Scales Conference

Sub-Global Second Working Group Meeting

The Sub-Global Working Group held its second meeting in Stockholm, Sweden in late June. The meeting was hosted by the Centre for Research on Natural Resources and the Environment (CNM), Stockholm University. In attendance were more than 70 participants from the sub-global assessment teams, as well as coordinating lead authors (CLAs) of assessment report chapters, and MA fellows. The main objectives of the meeting were to share the lessons learned from the sub-global assessments and to ensure

progress on the working group report, which will synthesize the major findings and lessons on methodologies and approaches from the sub-global assessments.

The first part of the meeting was spent in thematic breakout groups in which various sub-global teams shared experiences on lessons learned and key findings. These themes correspond with chapters in the working group report as well as the main elements of the MA conceptual framework. The agenda provided significant time for meetings of chapter teams, which worked on draft outlines for their chapters, refining key questions for sub-global inputs and, where necessary, identified additional authors for chapter sections.

The working group meeting also provided opportunities for discussion of issues related to outreach and engagement with Secretariat staff. Participants helped to further develop a program for associated assessments, which will allow for other assessment activities that use the MA methodologies to be affiliated with the MA. There was also a special session devoted to planning communication and outreach strategies and needs. Sub-global assessment participants also discussed plans for the Bridging Scales and Epistemologies International Conference. Postponed from June of 2003, the conference will now be held March 17–20, 2004 in Alexandria, Egypt.

Finally, a half-day field trip was coordinated to visit sites in the Stockholm City Park and allotments — especially valuable as these sites are being assessed as part of the Swedish local assessments led by CNM. More information on the Sweden sub-global assessments, and all the other sub-global assessment activities, can be found at <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/assessments/index.htm>

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

AUGUST 25 – SEPTEMBER 5

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MA-UNU Capacity Building Workshop, August 24

MA Plenary Presentation, August 27

Cuba

AUGUST 27 – 30

TWNSO - GEF/UNEP International

Conference on Biodiversity

Morocco

SEPT 8 – 14

World Parks Congress

Durban, S. Africa

SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER

User Forum Conceptual Framework Workshops and Book Launch Events

Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Nicaragua, India

SEPTEMBER 23

Communications Committee Meeting

Washington, DC

SEPTEMBER 24

Island Press/MA Book Launch

Washington, DC

OCTOBER 12 – 17

Combined Working Group Meeting

Prague, Czech Republic

MARCH 17–20, 2004

Bridging Scales and Epistemologies International Conference

Assessment Review Process

Scientific credibility is essential to the success of the Millennium Assessment. Each chapter of the four assessment reports will undergo a rigorous, two-stage review process that will ensure the scientific credibility of the MA findings. The deadline for final submission of chapters is December 15, 2003 to prepare for the review process that begins in early 2004. Review comments will be sought from a wide range of scientific experts, governments, and other parties including NGOs, civil society and indigenous organizations. This will ensure that the findings presented by the MA are accurate, complete, and balanced and that the treatment of areas of uncertainty or controversy fully reflects the range of relevant opinions and perspectives.

An independent review board has been established to oversee the review process. This review board is co-chaired by José Sarukhán of UNAM, Mexico and Anne Whyte of LEAD International/Mestor Associates, Canada. Each MA chapter will have two review editors, who will be tasked with ensuring that all substantive review comments are afforded appropriate consideration by the authors, and will advise

authors on the handling of controversial issues so that these are adequately reflected in the text. The MA Secretariat is currently putting in place operational plans for the review process. Each round of review will allow 10 weeks for the submission of review comments and will be followed by collation of the comments and responses from the authors thereafter. National focal points of the international conventions, as well as the MA's Affiliated Scientific Organizations and national user forums, are among the wide range of contacts that the MA will approach in seeking review comments. By early 2005, two rounds of review will be complete and the final drafts of the MA reports will be submitted for approval by the MA Board prior to publication.

The MA publishes this on-line newsletter every quarter. If you are not already and would like to be added to the email distribution list, please send your contact information to info@millenniumassessment.org.