



PRESS RELEASE

FOR INFORMATION
MEDIA

RAP 08/08

NOT AN OFFICIAL
RECORD

Members of the Asia and
the Pacific region:

Afghanistan
Australia
Bangladesh
Bhutan
Cambodia
China
Cook Islands
Democratic People's
Republic of Korea
Fiji
France
India
Indonesia
Islamic Republic of Iran
Japan
Kazakhstan
Kiribati
Republic of Korea
Kyrgyzstan
Laos
Malaysia
Maldives
Marshall Islands
Micronesia
Mongolia
Myanmar
Nauru
Nepal
New Zealand
Niue
Pakistan
Palau
Papua New Guinea
Philippines
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Sri Lanka
Tajikistan
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Tonga
Turkmenistan
Tuvalu
United States of America
Uzbekistan
Vanuatu
Viet Nam.

**Regional Office for Asia and the
Pacific**

Maliwan Mansion
39 Phra Atit Road
Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Tel: (66 2) 697-4000
Facsimile: (66 2) 697-4445
E-Mail: FAO-RAP@fao.org

NO FOREST CONSERVATION MINUS THE PEOPLE

Hanoi, 23 April 2008 - **Forest conservation in Asia and the Pacific cannot succeed without the direct involvement of local people, a gathering of the region's forest managers concluded today in Hanoi.**

Throughout the region, there are millions of indigenous and rural people dependent on forests for their basic daily needs.

“The remaining pockets of intact tropical forests in Asia and the Pacific overlap almost perfectly with the geographical distribution of poverty,” said Sunita Narain, well-known social activist and director of the India-based Center for Science and Environment. “The conservation agenda has to be the forest agenda and the forest agenda has to be the ‘people’ agenda.”

Appanah Simmathiri, forestry officer with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, concurred, “Unless forests and poverty are dealt with jointly, both the forests and the poor are further threatened.”

Neglecting the basic needs of rural poor, including food security, puts at risk global common goods such as the environment.

Yam Malla, Director of the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), organizer of the day's session asserted, “The price of rice is on the rise, as are prices for most commodities. This has not only triggered riots in several countries, it may also shape the future of our forests.”

Along with food prices hikes, competing demands on land are escalating. Biofuel crop production and changing dietary trends in rapidly developing Asian countries are among the factors leading to increased pressures on forests.

Asia-Pacific Forestry Week, organized by the Vietnamese Government and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, is being held over 21-26 April in Hanoi. It addresses a wide range of forestry issues, including forests and human livelihoods. Decision-makers, practitioners, the private sector and civil society from more than 50 countries have come together to develop strategies for addressing the vulnerability of the region's forests and people.

For more information on this press release contact:

Yam Malla (RECOFTC) email yam.malla@recoftc.org
Regan Suzuki (FAO) cell +84 (0)944 017 838 ; email regan.suzuki@fao.org

For more information on Asia-Pacific Forestry Week please visit the website:
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/44755/en/>