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A periodic update on the Geneva Environment Network and the International Environment House, Geneva

Basel Convention hosts World Forum on E-Wastes

By Sachiko Kuwabara-Yamamoto, Executive Secretary, Basel Convention



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The member governments of the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal met at the United Nations Office in Nairobi from 27 November to 1 December to seek solutions to the world's rising tide of hazardous wastes.

An important backdrop to the meeting was the recent tragedy in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, where the illegal dumping of hazardous wastes killed 10 people, poisoned tens of thousands of others and led to the resignation of the national government.

Like the climate change treaties, the Basel Convention promotes clean technologies and processes that minimize unwanted by-products. It provides tools and incentives for both empowering and motivating the producers and consumers of goods that generate hazardous wastes to pursue innovative solutions.

A growing reality

The highlight of the Nairobi meeting was a high-level "World Forum on E-Wastes". The Forum confronted the growing reality that, in addition to its many benefits, the global consumer goods revolution is generating massive quantities of end-of-life computers and other obsolete electronic equipment.

Some 20 to 50 million metric tonnes of e-waste are generated worldwide every year, comprising more than 5% of all municipal solid waste. When the millions of computers purchased around the world annually (183 million in 2004) become obsolete they leave behind lead, cadmium, mercury and other hazardous wastes. In the US alone, some 14 to 20 million PCs are thrown out each year. In the EU the volume of e-waste is expected to increase by 3 to 5 per cent a year. Developing



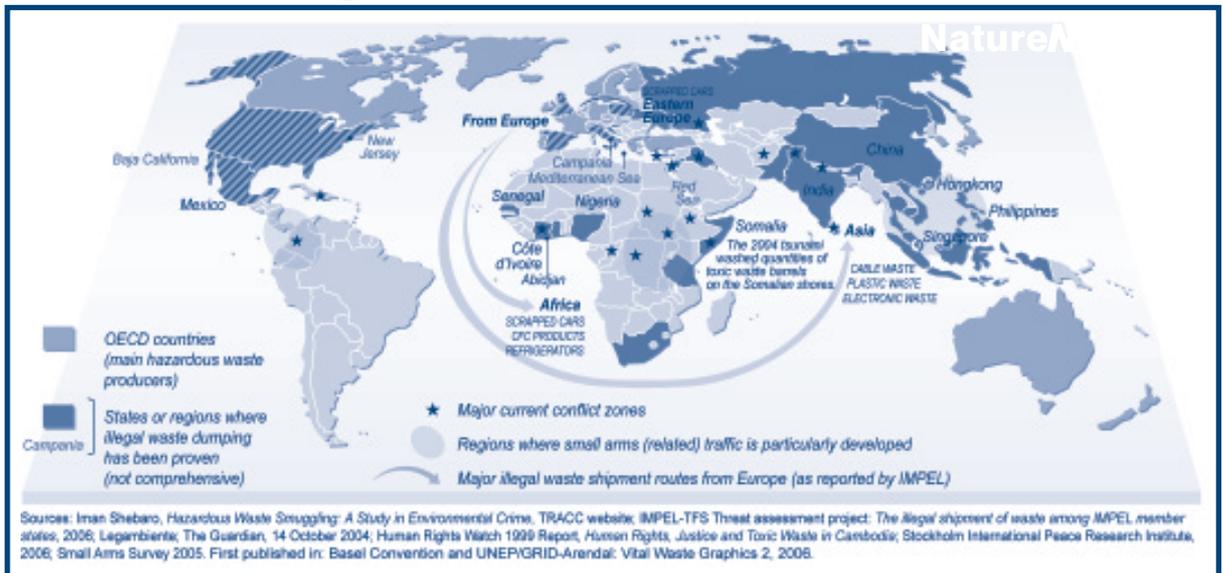
countries are expected to triple their output of e-waste by 2010.

Similarly, the use and disposal of mobile phones – which like PCs barely existed 20 years ago – is increasing dramatically. According to Nokia, the number of cell phone users around the world is projected to reach some two billion by the year 2008. Leading cell phone manufacturers, which are collaborating through the Basel Convention's Mobile Phone Partnership Initiative to find better ways to reduce and manage this growing waste stream, were active participants in the Nairobi conference.

Lessons learned from efforts to improve the management of e-wastes could also be applied to other obsolete consumer goods and end-of-life equipment, such as batteries, automobiles and ships. The key to success will be the creation of a global framework for managing wastes that renders waste flows transparent, predictable and traceable. Because we can only manage what we can measure, we need to shine a brighter



Waste trafficking stories



light on hazardous wastes – on where they come from, and on where they end up.

The meeting also recognized that more and better information about waste is needed to help us to tackle the growing challenge of illegal trade (see diagram). A 2006 report by the European Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) indicates that illegal trade is on the rise. A joint enforcement operation carried out in 17 European seaports examined 3,000 shipping documents and physically inspected 258 cargo holds. Of these, 140 were waste shipments, of which 68 – or some 48% – turned out to be illegal.

With some 94% of the materials extracted for manufacturing durable products becoming waste before the product is manufactured, reducing waste at source can clearly promote economic and industrial competitiveness. The E-wastes Forum considered such social and economic benefits of sound waste management as job creation, skills development and reduced clean-up and public health costs.

The Basel Convention offers Governments a framework within which to develop partnerships with industry, the public sector and civil society aimed at reducing hazardous wastes at source and promoting recycling and re-use. It also produces an expanding series of technical guidelines for the environmentally sound management of specific kinds of wastes.

Our future success in tackling hazardous wastes will have to be based on the “environmentally sound management” of wastes and the “integrated life-cycle approach” to industrial production and consumption. These principles involve minimizing the generation of wastes, treating wastes as

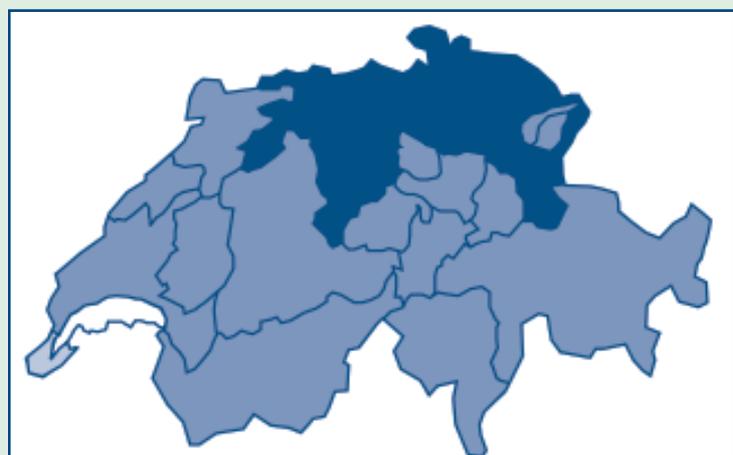
near as possible to where they were generated, and minimizing international movements of hazardous wastes. Only by reducing wastes at source can we minimize the financial incentives that drive the illegal dumping that inspired the Convention’s adoption 17 years ago.

NatureNotes

No hunting

As local hikers well know, autumn is hunting season. The Swiss government encourages regulated hunting, in keeping with the principles of sustainable development. However, thirty-two years ago the citizens of Geneva voted to ban hunting in their heavily urbanized Canton.

Elsewhere hunting is allowed under individual or group permits.



Hunting zones in Switzerland

- lease of hunting areas to local hunting groups
- licensing according to annual quotas
- hunting forbidden



Geneva's new environmental diplomacy programme

By Arthur Dahl, Coordinator,
UNEP/UNITAR/University of Geneva
Environmental Diplomacy Programme

A new training programme leading to a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Environmental Diplomacy was launched in August of this year at the beautiful Chateau de Bossey near Geneva. The success of this collaborative effort promises to add a valuable new dimension to Geneva's role in promoting international environmental action.

The programme has been developed by the University of Geneva and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in collaboration with UNITAR, the University for Peace and LEAD International. It has received financial support from the Swiss Confederation, UNEP and the OSCE/UNEP/UNDP Environment and Security Initiative.

The course attracted a large number of highly qualified applicants, from which a balanced group of 30 participants from 25 countries was selected. The participants included mid-career diplomats, officials from ministries of environment, staff of international organizations, presidents of non-governmental organizations and a distinguished journalist. In addition, the Caspian Environment Programme supported the attendance of representatives from each of its member countries. The diversity of this talented group of men and women was itself one of the special strengths of the course.

The course provided an intensive immersion in the latest political issues on the international environmental agenda. It covered the scientific knowledge, political sensitivity and practical negotiating techniques relevant to the development and implementation of both legal and voluntary international agreements. It dealt with environmental concerns and objectives in the broader context of sustainable development. It addressed the full range of potentially conflicting views and made links to issues such as trade and human rights.

The specific topics covered included sustainable development; ethics, religion and science for environmental diplomacy; policy and law; climate change; biodiversity; trade and environment; human health, chemicals and wastes; forests; environmental security and environmental governance.

The course started with a two-month e-learning component based on background reading relevant to the course topics. Participants prepared exercises on line and interacted in electronic forums. They then gathered at the Chateau de Bossey in the quiet village of Celigny for the two-week intensive course. This part of the programme was structured like a Master's class and featured lectures by high-level speakers and practical negotiation exercises. It succeeded in balancing academic rigour with political relevance.

This year's speakers included leading figures in the field such as Jean

Fournet, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Scientific and Environmental Affairs; Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP; Philippe Roch, former Director of the Swiss Federal Office of Environment; Michael Zammit Cutajar, former Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; Gabrielle Marceau, Counsellor, Cabinet to Director General Pascal Lamy, World Trade Organization; Pekka Patosaari, Director of the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat; as well as a number of diplomats who have played leading roles in international environmental negotiations.

The participants are now preparing or finalizing their theses on topics of their choice under the supervision of one of the programme's managers. Those who successfully complete the programme will earn a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Environmental Diplomacy from the University of Geneva. Plans are now being made to continue the course in Geneva on an annual basis and to explore the possibility of additional courses in other locations. The programme's modular format allows it to be adapted to the requirements of different target groups.

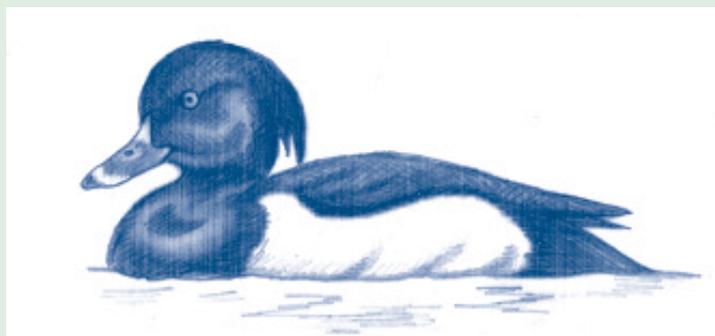
For more information, see

[www.unige.ch/formcont/
environmentaldiplomacy.html](http://www.unige.ch/formcont/environmentaldiplomacy.html)

NatureNotes

The waterbirds are back

The lake and the Rhone river within city limits have been no-hunting zones for more than 100 years. Nevertheless, the effects on the Rhone of the 1974 canton-wide hunting ban have been dramatic. The number of waterbirds staying the winter has grown from just a few to more than 10,000 – enough to make the river a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. Most abundant among them is the tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*.





GEN roundtable:

Global Environmental Goals

As part of the World Environment Day celebrations, on 2 June 2006, the GEN organized a roundtable on the topic of Global Environmental Goals. Panel presentations were made by Claude Martin, former Director General of WWF International, Amb. Thomas Kolly of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, Hilary French of the Worldwatch Institute and Jean Fabre of UNDP. The roundtable was chaired by UNEP European Regional Director Frits Schlingemann and attended by the Geneva international and environmental community. Some of the points raised in the presentations and discussions are summarized below.

Despite the growing number of treaties, environmental degradation continues at an alarming pace. There is a need to create policy tools to arrest this trend. Common goals can help governments to formulate the framework for their cooperative action.

Focus on sustainability

The 7th Millennium Development Goal (MDG) explicitly addresses environmental sustainability. Some felt that this goal could benefit from being more focussed, while environmental considerations could be better integrated in the implementation of the other MDGs. Others called for examining action needed at the local level in order to meet existing goals.



Environmental targets are included explicitly in multi-lateral environmental agreements, including the climate change convention.

There was agreement that the MDGs themselves are important achievements of the international community. They have raised public awareness and focussed political attention on targets.

Two years later, the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development took additional steps by articulating targets on several environment-related topics, such as biodi-

versity, chemicals, fisheries, marine protected areas and basic sanitation. In addition, several targets are included explicitly in multi-lateral environmental agreements, such as the climate change convention.

In order for goals to be achievable, they must be measurable, time-bound, and have milestones or indicators to measure progress. Political will, adequate funding and the right institutional partnerships are important features for success. If goals are not met, this could undermine the credibility of the institutions setting them.

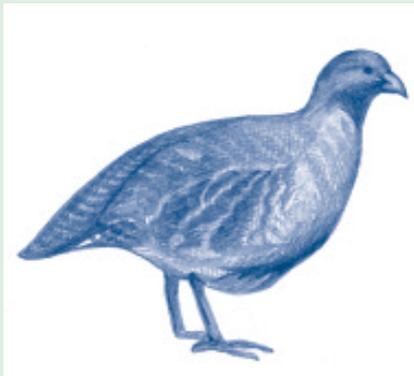
Goals should be simple enough to be understood easily, but should not over-simplify complex processes. Goals can ensure the continuity in policy that will outlive any changes in governments and leaders.

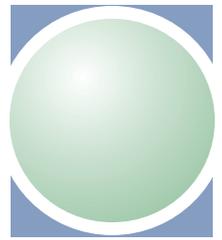
Collating existing environmental goals into a coherent package could reduce fragmentation of environmental topics, promote ratification of environmental treaties, streamline the environmental system, and give greater focus, visibility and political commitment to the goals.

Project partridge

The grey partridge *Perdix perdix*, a farmland bird, is near extinction in Switzerland. Geneva authorities are trying to save the local population through *Projet perdix*, working in cooperation with the Swiss ornithological institute, conservation groups and the farming community to rebuild and preserve habitat and reintroduce the species into the Geneva countryside.

NatureNotes





GEN roundtable:

Towards a new international forest regime

A high level panel of forest experts came together on 5 July 2006 to discuss ongoing efforts to formulate an international regime on forests. Panel presentations and subsequent discussions described the troubled history of such efforts, and highlighted the many unresolved issues that remain.

Panel members included Amha bin Buang, Assistant Director of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Pekka Patosaari, Director of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), Wulf Killmann, Director of the Forest Products and Economics Division of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Christopher F.L. Prins, Chief, Timber Section of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and Juergen Blaser, Deputy Director of the Swiss development NGO Intercooperation. Franz Xaver Perrez, Head of the Global Affairs Section of the Federal for the Environment of the Swiss Confederation, moderated the panel. A welcoming statement was made by Frits Schlingemann, Director and Regional Representative for Europe of UNEP.

The challenge to the group was to consider how to balance the various interests involved in forest management in a way that complements past achievements and coordinates the activities already undertaken by a multitude of institutions and processes. The following is a summary of some of the ideas presented.

2006: an important year

Although proposals for an international forest convention were unsuccessful in 1992, they did lead to creation of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), followed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF). These processes led to formation of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in 2000, with a mandate to implement IPF proposals, provide policy guidance and coordination, and entertain further discussion on a possible convention.

The current year (2006) has been very important for forestry, with a new ITTO agreement and the decision of the UNFF to launch negotiations on an international, non-legally binding instrument (non-LBI).

The main questions to consider are (1) whether a new global forest regime is really necessary, (2) whether the institutions and structures already in place are adequate to the task, and (3) whether a strong central pillar is required.

ITTO: expanding scope and objectives

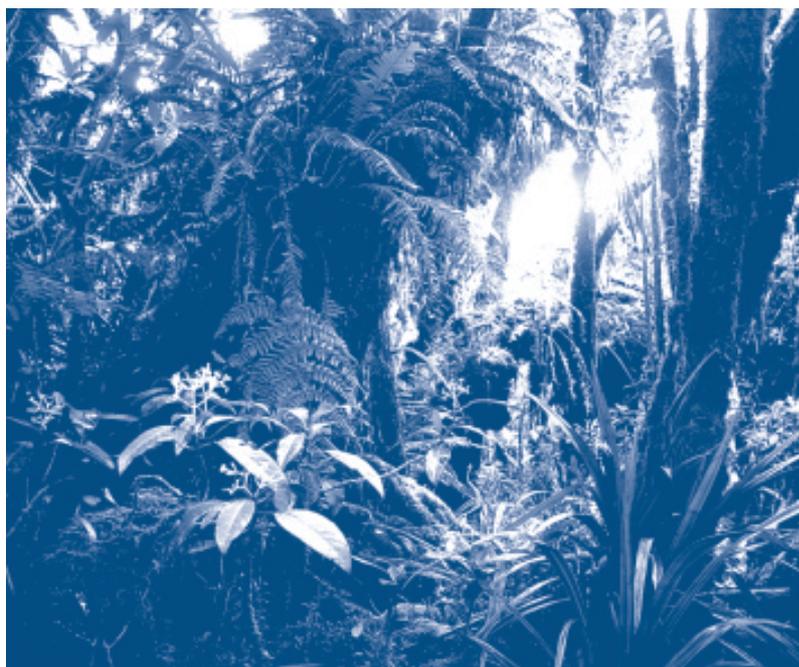
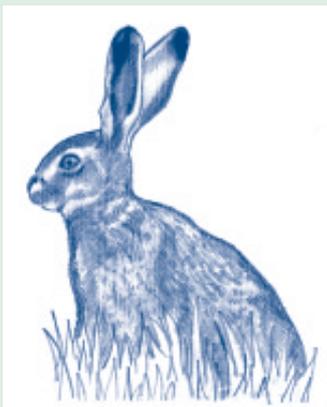
The three key areas of activity of the International Tropical Timber Organization are the promotion of the expansion and diversification of trade in tropical timber; the promotion of processing of timber in the producing countries; and the promotion of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM).

The first International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) adopted in 1983 was designed to pursue a balance between developmental and environmental objectives. The ITTO has since extended its membership, its

NatureNotes

Hare today, here tomorrow

Today the density of hares *Lepus europaeus* in the canton is among the highest in Switzerland, as a result of the hunting ban and cooperative efforts with the farming community to restore their habitat.



The ITTO is expanding its scope and objectives, but maintaining its niche in tropical forest management.

MICHEL SCHNEIDER/PANOS/TILL PICTURES



scope, its financial mechanisms, and its objectives. The ITTA of 2006 covers emerging issues such as forest law enforcement, illegal logging and trade, non-timber forest products and environmental services, leaving it better able to meet future challenges while retaining its niche on tropical timber and forests.

UNFF: finding consensus

The establishment of the UNFF in 2000 promised to open a new era for global forest policy dialogue and decision-making. However, its initial five-year programme was beset by uncertainty, indecision and differences of opinion regarding proposed creation of a global, legally-binding agreement (LBI). Only with the decision in 2006 to set aside the idea of an LBI in favour of a 'soft' or non-binding agreement did reaching a consensus seem possible.

The 2006 meeting greatly broadened the scope of UNFF to address the linkages between the forest agenda and the broader development agenda. In the future, UNFF should work to ensure that any non-binding agreement:

- takes stock of the development already made within several regional processes, as well as other initiatives and partnerships related to illegal logging and associated trade;
- addresses the desire of member states to come to a clear mutual understanding of what is meant by global SFM as the basis for any coherent future action;
- incorporates sustainable development and poverty alleviation as crucial components of the new agreement, in order to make forests part of the broader development process;
- ensures that the rights of indigenous people and rights of individuals and communities are respected;
- takes into account principles of equitable access to natural resources and sharing of benefits;
- supports awareness raising to bring about the necessary political commitment;
- maintains close linkages to trade and access to markets;
- facilitates cross-sectoral planning and coordination, building upon

existing national forest programmes;

- supports the harmonized global monitoring assessment and reporting framework already under way.

FAO: working at all levels

Forestry has been part of the FAO mandate since its start in 1945. For more than 50 years it has provided a forum for dialogue on forest policy and practices at all levels, assisting international agreements, hosting global interministerial meetings, supporting six Regional Forestry Commissions and National Forest Programmes, and meeting with the private sector. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), chaired by FAO, comprises 40 major international organizations, institutions and secretariats, dealing with forests. It is perhaps this multiplicity of opinions and views that explains why no international agreement on forests has been reached yet. CPF is working with UNFF to support the national implementation of forest management.

Europe: a complicated system

Europe is a place where many varied groups have very different ideas and objectives about how to manage their forests.

Europe is the largest regional exporter of forest products in the world, because of the increase in the industry of paper and wood products and primary wood products.

Half of the forests in Europe are privately owned. A survey has also shown that the priorities of European



Half a century and one million hectares for ProNatura Vaud

In 2006, Pro Natura Vaud celebrated its 50th anniversary, with exhibits, nature walks, and other events.

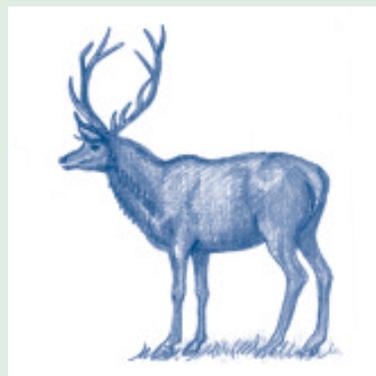


A CD is available describing the organization's history, its accomplishments, and the approximately 100 nature reserves covering a million hectares established in the Canton.

Visit the ProNatura Vaud website at

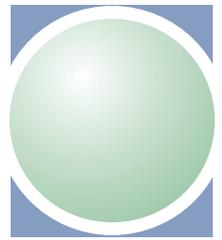
www.pronatura.ch/vd/

NatureNotes



Red deer revival

After a series of re-introductions in the mid-1950s, the large deer *Cervus elaphus* is slowly recolonizing the marshes and forests of the Geneva region. A few dozen deer from the Jura population of several hundred migrate to the lowlands every fall, to mate and pass the winter. Geneva authorities are working with the French to maintain biological corridors through the rapidly urbanizing Pays de Gex.



societies are biodiversity and recreation and not necessarily wood production.

Big issues are wood and energy, the use of biomass, water and forests, payment for ecosystem services, climate change and how European forests can fit into the emissions trading system, and forest law enforcement and governance inside and outside the region.

In many countries forests are a sub-national responsibility at constitutional level. For example, Germany, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and Belgium all officially have forest responsibilities at the sub-national level. Therefore it is quite difficult to implement agreements on forest issues.

The leading policy institution is the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), which in 1993 established the criteria for, and a good definition of, SFM.

The need for a 'central pillar' is questionable: organizations in Europe have different mandates and few are particularly strong, but they cooperate closely with each other as well as with civil society. Although the system is complicated, it has worked well in the absence of a legally binding instrument.

Spreading the global umbrella

Forests play an important role in our society and in the ecosystem. The world's economic and social development is to a great extent dependent on deforestation, which is bound to continue. But deforestation is not efficient from an economic viewpoint. It threatens environmental stability and leads to social inequality and conflicts.

There are fundamental transitions under way, owing to recent important changes in forest ownership, supply and demand for forest products, increased supply of wood out of forest plantations, growing valuation of forest ecosystem services, and in national forest policies.

ITTO is moving away from a trade in commodities organization to address wider considerations, as it tries to strike a balance between economic and environmental interests, linking the policy work of the council with important development work through its projects. It brings together consumers and producers. But there is a lack of commitment to SFM.

NatureNotes



What a boar!

Geneva's 'gardes de l'environnement' observe and regulate animal populations, and deal humanely with those that cause excessive damage to fields and crops. The most troublesome species, and the most carefully managed, is the European boar *Sus scrofa*, well established in Geneva and nearby areas.

The UNFF sees its role in strengthening institutional structures to support the global forest regime. It wants to provide an umbrella for SFM implementation, but it has to work with member states which have their own national policies and which are not necessarily considering global policies.

UNFF also has to consider how to bring the 40 institutions of the CPF under one umbrella. The question is whether the participation, the tools and instruments and the convening power are enough to achieve the objectives of a global forest regime, linking forests to the broader development agenda.

FAO has a very important responsibility of forest resource assessment since its data are used all over the

world. Yet the greatest challenge for the FAO on the forest policy level is probably the coordination of the institutions of the CPF.

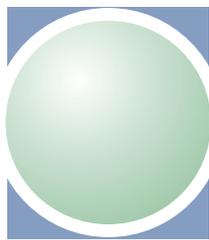
Forests management is a national matter, and a global regime would be a composition of national policy objectives under a global umbrella. The driving forces on the institutional level are the CPF and the UNFF on the technical side, versus the political considerations of the countries. It appears that the debate on forests is becoming more and more politicized.

GEN roundtables are held four to six times a year. Past topics have ranged from biosafety and climate change, to international environmental governance and the environmental impacts of war.



DENNIS LAUVRE/STILL PICTURES

Deforestation, which is bound to continue, is a threat to environmental stability leads to social inequality and conflicts, and is an inefficient use of resources.



Upcoming environment-related events in the Geneva area

Date	Organizer/event/contact
2006	
11-14 Dec	Executive Body for the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, Tel: +41 22 917 1234, air.env@unece.org
13-15 Dec	UNEP Chemicals / Stockholm Convention Secretariat Expert Meeting to Further Develop the Standardized Toolkit for Identification and Quantification of Dioxin and Furan Releases, Tel. +41 22 917 8191, ssc@pops.int
13-15 Dec	UNECE Aarhus Convention, Compliance Committee, Tel. +41 22 917 1234, public.participation@unece.org
15 Dec	UNECE Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, Tel. +41 22 917 0107, public.participation@unece.org
2007	
9-12 Jan	UNECE World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicles, Working Party on Pollution and Energy Committee, Tel. +41 22 917 2401, info@unece.org
17-19 Jan	UNECE First Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health, Tel. +41 22 917 1234, water.convention@unece.org
6-9 Feb	ITU Earth-Exploration Satellite Systems and Meteorological Elements - WP 7C, Tel. + 41 22 730 5111, helpdesk@itu.int
12-15 Feb	Ramsar Standing Committee, 35th meeting, Tel. +41 22 999 0170, ramsar@ramsar.org
14-16 Feb	UNECE 4th meeting of the Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, public.participation@unece.org
1-2 Mar	UNECE Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency Investments for Climate Change Mitigation, Tel. +41 22 917 1234, public.participation@unece.org ,

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and Denis Landenbergue,
wetland conservation manager.

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English and French and is
distributed on the Internet at:

www.EnvironmentHouse.ch

NatureNotes

Nature et paysage

Be sure to visit the official Geneva website, Nature et paysage (Département du Territoire, L'Etat de Genève):

<http://etat.geneve.ch/dt/site/protection-nature/>

Under 'Actualities' you will find links to a recent study, *Le lièvre à Genève, état des lieux*.