

## **PREFACE**

Tropical forests for many years have been subject of debate at all levels of society, ranging from environmental NGO's, scientists and policy makers, to high level politicians. Global warming, depletion of natural resources, violation of indigenous people's rights, biodiversity loss and soil degradation all are major threats affecting tropical forests. It is the policy of the government of the Netherlands to do everything in its power to achieve the conservation and sustainable management of all types of forests.

There is general consensus that tropical forests, as well as all other forests, should be properly protected because of their great value, but the debate on what exactly is this value of tropical forests is still going on at full strength. Tropical forests sustain a wealth of biodiversity, provide a wide range of ecosystems, services and products, and support livelihoods for millions of people. If these biological, economic and social values are acknowledged, then why is the destruction and degradation of forests still continuing? To what extent have appropriate valuation and market mechanisms been developed and implemented? Could they help revert destructive practises?

Tropenbos International organised a two-day seminar on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of March, 2002, to discuss forest values, and to support the development and implementation of appropriate financing mechanisms for the conservation and sustainable use of tropical forests. During this seminar a bridge between policy, management and research was constructed through debate. Science stated facts, interpretation by the different societal players differed and concepts were challenged.

Over 250 scientists, managers and policy makers from 41 countries participated in the seminar and came up with recommendations. These recommendations were presented at the sixth Meeting of the Conference of Parties (CoP 6) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (The Hague, The Netherlands, April 2002) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg, South Africa, August 2002).

The seminar made it clear that new financing mechanisms are rapidly emerging and have potential role to play in forest conservation and management. Payments for carbon sequestration, in particular, appear to be a potentially economically attractive option. Also water funds, like taxes on drinking water and large industrial water users, represent promising financial mechanisms for the conservation of the hydrological function of forests. Another important outcome was that financing mechanisms for biodiversity conservation should generate revenues for local forest users and forest owners. Without their participation and measures for poverty reduction, financing mechanisms for forest conservation cannot be effective.

This seminar was, in my view, a constructive element in the process of achieving the goal of the conservation and sustainable management of all types of forests. The proceedings of the seminar that you will find in this publication are a useful tool for us all in the development of policy to address the challenges of tropical rain forests.

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