

CC4C

Climate For Change needed for Climate Change



Galindo

INSIDE IPS reports from

Canada | Thailand | USA | Kenya | Argentina | Brazil | Vietnam | Philippines | Sri Lanka

Mario Lubetkin
 Director General of IPS



Letter from the publisher

As of today, and for the next ten days, thousands of people are gathering in Barcelona to attend the World Conservation Congress with a shared sense of urgency.

Each and every sunrise is an opportunity to start reversing the process by which our planet looks doomed and yet every morning one also can't help feeling that one more precious day was lost.

IUCN is one of those few organisations capable of sitting governments, NGOs, business, the UN and academia around the same table, "to debate, share, network, learn, commit, vote and decide. The objective: ideas, action and solutions for a diverse and sustainable world," as the Congress website accurately states.

We at IPS News Agency would like to make a modest contribution to this task, by publishing here, and for the entire meeting, our flagship newspaper TerraViva. Our reporters come from all corners of the world, reflecting the variety of cultures and realities at stake in our common battle to preserve planet Earth.

We, like all of you, are committed.

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Polar bears in limbo

BROOKLIN, Canada. A coalition of environmental groups sued the George W. Bush administration for delaying a decision to protect polar bears threatened with extinction due to the melting ice in their Arctic habitat. Polar bears could be the first species officially threatened by climate change.

The huge loss of summer sea ice has caused many scientists to project that the Arctic could be ice-free in summer as early as 2012. Although excellent swimmers, polar bears are not very good at catching seals in the water. Seals comprise the main diet for these giant bears, which are far larger than their grizzly bear cousins.

Rehabilitating mangroves in Myanmar

BANGKOK. In November 2008, mangrove forestry experts from Myanmar (Burma) will join others from the region at a IUCN-sponsored four-day scientific conference in southern Thailand focusing on the country's Irrawaddy Delta, which was devastated by a powerful cyclone in early May. The focus will be on rehabilitating mangroves.

"This will be an opportunity for us to discuss mangrove-related issues with the experts from Myanmar," says Don Macintosh, coordinator of Mangroves for the Future (MMF), an IUCN initiative. "It is an opportunity to bridge the lack of direct contact with Myanmar."

A third of corals face extinction

FORT LAUDERDALE, USA. One third of reef-building corals already face extinction because of climate change, the first-ever global assessment has found.

Reefs are made up of hundreds of coral species, and a two-year study to determine the current status of corals has discovered that 231 of the 704 species assessed will be "red-listed". This means these 231 species meet the IUCN's Red List Criteria for species at risk of extinction in the near future.

Previously, only 10 species of corals had been red-listed, mainly because no proper assessment had been done before.

Most stories published by TerraViva have been abridged for reasons of space. Full versions available at www.ipsterraviva.net/tv/iucn2008.

KENYA

City living costs the earth

► Najum Mushtaq/IPS

NAIROBI - At its source in the hills of the Thogoto Forest, the Mbaghati river adds a gushing noise to the quiet verdant landscape.

Many residents of Karinde, a farming village on Nairobi's northern edge, use the cold sparkling water for drinking and bathing. A hillside pool here is used by priests to baptise their followers.

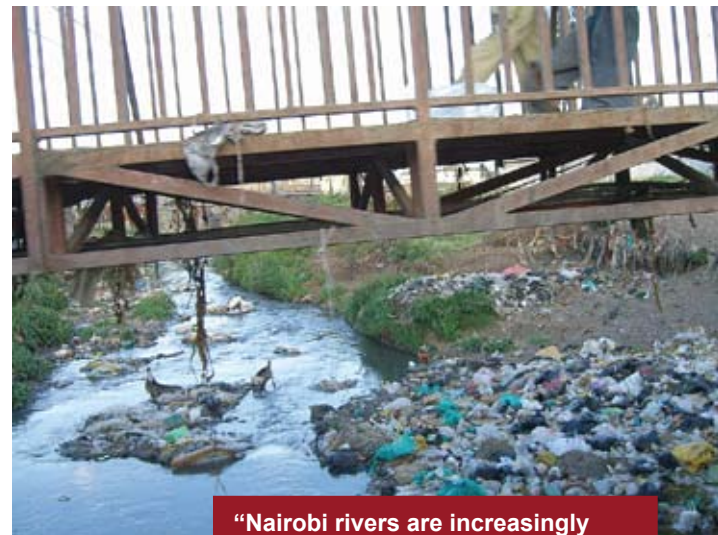
Just downstream, where it merges with other streams to form the Nairobi River and runs through the Kenyan capital, the clear water turns into a muddy brown sewage-like flow, unfit for human use and inhospitable to aquatic life.

It was not always so.

"Older residents of the capital remember a city whose rivers were full of fish, running through an impenetrable thicket of flora and fauna typical of a swamp," says William Wambuga, director of the Botanic Gardens, a project of Nature Kenya, a non-profit organisation working to create public awareness about biodiversity.

Massive urbanisation – Nairobi has grown from 1.3 million people in 1989 to over 4 million today – has taken its toll on the city's environment. Wambuga told IPS that when the Fisheries Department had plans to set up fish farms on different sites on the Nairobi River in 1996, laboratory analyses of water samples revealed increasing levels of pollution leading to cancellation of the project.

Comprehensive sampling to identify sources of pollution was begun in 1999 as part of the Nairobi River Basin Rehabilitation Programme launched by the Kenyan government in collaboration with UN-Habitat, UNDP and UNEP, and funded with money from Belgium and France. The



"Nairobi rivers are increasingly choking with uncollected garbage; human waste from informal settlements; industrial waste..."

baseline results were reported in a 2005 UNEP report which stated:

"Nairobi rivers are increasingly choking with uncollected garbage; human waste from informal settlements; industrial waste... liquid effluents and solid waste; agro-chemicals, and other wastes especially petrochemicals and metals from micro-enterprises and overflowing sewers. This situation has occasioned spread of waterborne diseases, loss of sustainable livelihoods, loss of biodiversity, reduced availability and access to safe potable water, which affects human productivity."

The current phase of the proj-

ect, which finally began – three years late – in June 2008 aims to clean up the river waters and implement projects for solid waste management through a combination of private sector projects for waste management and involving riverine communities in clean-up operations.

Impact on Biodiversity

Wambuga laments flawed urban planning and municipal oversight, as well as a lack of environmental awareness among citizens and decision makers alike.

"I look at the newly-built avenues and think that corridors could

have been left for the birds and insects native to this place to stay in their habitat. If we continue to clear natural habitats, then we'll be talking about how our agricultural lands are no longer productive and be bringing in the fertilisers when the problem lies elsewhere," Wambuga tells IPS.

"There is a wider economic downside of the loss of biodiversity in the cities. But people do not have the information. There is a missing link between scientific information and people's day-to-day life. That interrelationship ought to be established," he says.

He identifies government decision-makers as the key to addressing environmentally unsound urbanisation. In addition to creating awareness among town planners, bureaucrats and developers, Wambuga believes that the education policy both in the formal and the informal sector should be geared to provide the maximum information.

Spreading the Word One place where the message about the need to preserve endangered plant species is being promoted is at the Nairobi Arboretum. Adjacent to State House, the president's residence, the 101-year old arboretum serves a dual purpose: as both a popular recreational site and a conservatory for botanists and researchers.

Constance Muholo of the Friends of the Nairobi Arboretum tells IPS that one of the major activities of her organisation is to engage schools and young students to sensitise them to conservation and environment protection issues. "We arrange lectures in schools, encourage teachers to bring students for visits and complement science teaching which still does not have sufficient syllabi on environmental protection," she says. ●



Garabí: More energy at a huge environmental price.

ARGENTINA-BRAZIL

Planned binational dam under fire

► **Marcela Valente -
Tierramérica/IPS**

BUENOS AIRES - Feeling the pressure of rising energy demand, the governments of Argentina and Brazil are taking a fresh look at old plans for the Garabí hydroelectric dam on the Uruguay River, which environmentalists say would endanger the flow of this already highly exploited water source.

“While they talk about building the Garabí, the Salto Grande (Argentina-Uruguay) dam on the same river is barely functioning due to lack of water,” Jorge Cappato, of the Argentine environmental group Fundación Proteger, told *Tierramérica*.

“Between the dams that already exist and the planned ones, in a few years the Uruguay River will have become a series of ponds. Wetlands and forests will be

flooded, diminishing biodiversity and water quality,” he predicted.

In periods of drought or scant rainfall the reservoirs will accumulate what little water there is and there will be extremely little outflow. “We are going to walk across riverbeds,” said Cappato, who is also coordinator of the Argentine committee of the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

In late February, Argentine President Cristina Fernández and her Brazilian counterpart Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva ratified the decision to relaunch work on the binational Garabí dam, first planned in 1972.

A technical commission was created to oversee the preliminary work and construction is slated to begin in 2011.

The first Argentine-Brazilian dam would have an energy-generating potential of 2,800 megawatts

and would mean flooding 33,000 hectares of inhabited land on both sides of the river. It would be located along the stretch between the far north-eastern Argentine province of Corrientes and the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul.

Also planned are two more Argentine-Brazilian dams along the same river: San Pedro and Roncador.

The river begins in Brazil and flows into the River Plate (Río de la Plata). Its course forms the border between Brazil and Argentina, and, farther downriver, between Argentina and Uruguay. In its initial stretch there are four hydroelectric dams (Itá, Machadinho, Passo Fundo and Barra Grande), and below is the Salto Grande dam, shared by Argentina and Uruguay.

“We need a common water

resource management policy for Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. We warned about this when the Iguazu Falls ran dry in June 2006,” Cappato said. Brazil had closed the sluice gates on several hydroelectric dams on the Iguazu River and the decline in the flow revealed the basalt walls of the otherwise imposing waterfalls shared with Argentina.

A demonstration of what can happen when there is a shortage of rainfall can be found today at Salto Grande. According to its technical commission, in mid-November the energy it supplied was more than 42,000 megawatt hours (MWh), but by December it had fallen to 8,975 MWh.

It is true that “water is very scarce, but even more scarce is energy, and the countries have to function with what they have,” Enrique Topolansky, president of the Uruguayan delegation to the Salto Grande technical commission, told *Tierramérica*.

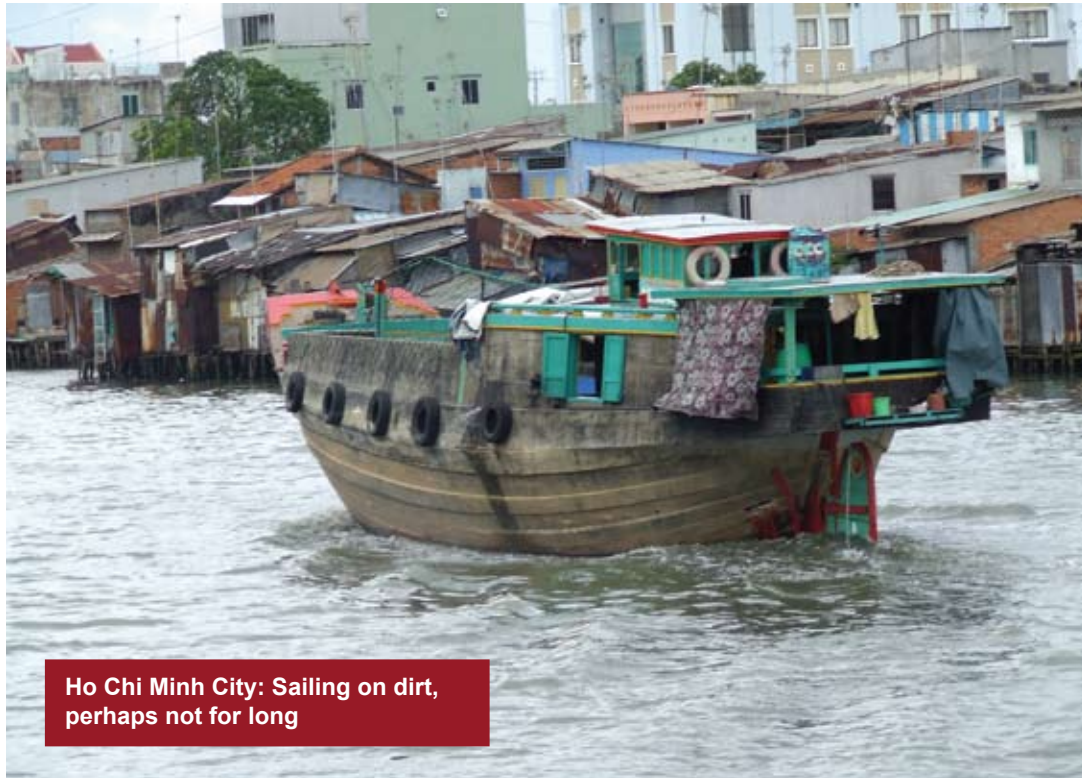
A communiqué released by environmental and citizen groups in Buenos Aires and in Porto Alegre, Brazil, states that the Garabí dam would cause a loss of biodiversity, alter the local microclimate, destroy fisheries and increase poverty.

The Saltos del Moconá, a waterfall more than three kilometres long, could be drowned by the reservoir. That already happened with the Sete Quedas (seven cascades) that disappeared as a result of the Itaipú dam on the Paraná River, said Cappato.

Something similar occurred with Itá, which left the falls of the Estreito do Uruguai underwater. ●

VIETNAM

Paying for ecosystems



Alejandro Kirk

Ho Chi Minh City: Sailing on dirt, perhaps not for long

► Helen Clark/IPS

HANOI - Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES), an environmental scheme now being trialled in this South-east Asian country, may serve as a model for the region, if found successful.

Two pilot projects, one in the southern Dong Nai River basin and the other in Son La province, are the test beds that will determine if this blend of economics and environmental management is workable.

The Dong Nai River Basin Project involves collaboration among Vietnamese government bodies, industry and local people, with support from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Winrock International and USAID in the form of expertise and four million US dollars in financial aid.

Hydro-electricity plants, government water companies and eco-tourism companies will now pay for the privilege of clean water downstream, by sending money upriver and giving locals incentives to keep the watershed pure.

Eventually, the Dong Nai River Basin is expected to supply 20 percent of Vietnam's power needs through hydro-electricity. Demand for water in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) increases by 19 percent each year.

"These services cannot be delivered for free. If they want secure access, they must pay for it," Jim Peters, chief of party, working for Winrock, told IPS.

On Apr. 10, Pilot Policy 380 (the Pilot Policy on Payment for Forest Environmental Services), was signed, bringing into effect the first PES. It will operate in

five provinces and in Ho Chi Minh City. German voluntary agency GTZ is trialling its own project in Son La province.

"This is the first pilot policy in Vietnam. Rather than establish a full-blown policy in an area Vietnam has little experience in, the country is using the pilot policy decision to see how it works under local conditions, then apply it as a finance tool for the 2020 Forest Targets," said Peters.

Tran Minh Phuong, project coordinator for the Mekong Region Water Dialogues, working for IUCN, says that PES has remained unused because, "the government understood about PES but they needed the financial support". Even when there is environmental understanding, day-to-day needs get in the way.

"Local people understand the

role of the forest, but their income is very low so they still cut it down for their needs," she explained. It is hoped that the financial incentives offered by the trial scheme, whose second phase will run from October 2008 to 2010, managed by Winrock, will be enough to correct this imbalance.

According to Peters 80 percent of the revenue will go towards local people, the "sellers". Twenty percent of the revenue will go towards overheads and scientific monitoring.

Local people are now being persuaded to switch from crops like cashew – which cause greater soil degradation and erosion (which then pollutes the river) but give high cash yields – to crops like bamboo. Winrock and IUCN also help find buyers for end products, such as bamboo chopsticks or incense sticks.

This pilot area was chosen because apart from being a leading water supplier it is also one of the most heavily forested areas in Vietnam and home to its richest biodiversity.

Bernard O'Callaghan, country director of IUCN, is at pains to explain that PES is not a overall solution to save Vietnam's threatened biodiversity. However, though PES is no "silver bullet", maintaining the balance of the forest is another way to help biodiversity thrive.

Vietnam's rapid development has not done its environment any favours, however this new model of environmental management might prove useful in this nation of 83 million. It is already seen by many as more than just another foreign NGO effort. ●

PHILIPPINES

Organic farming
the way forward

► Prime Sarmiento/IPS

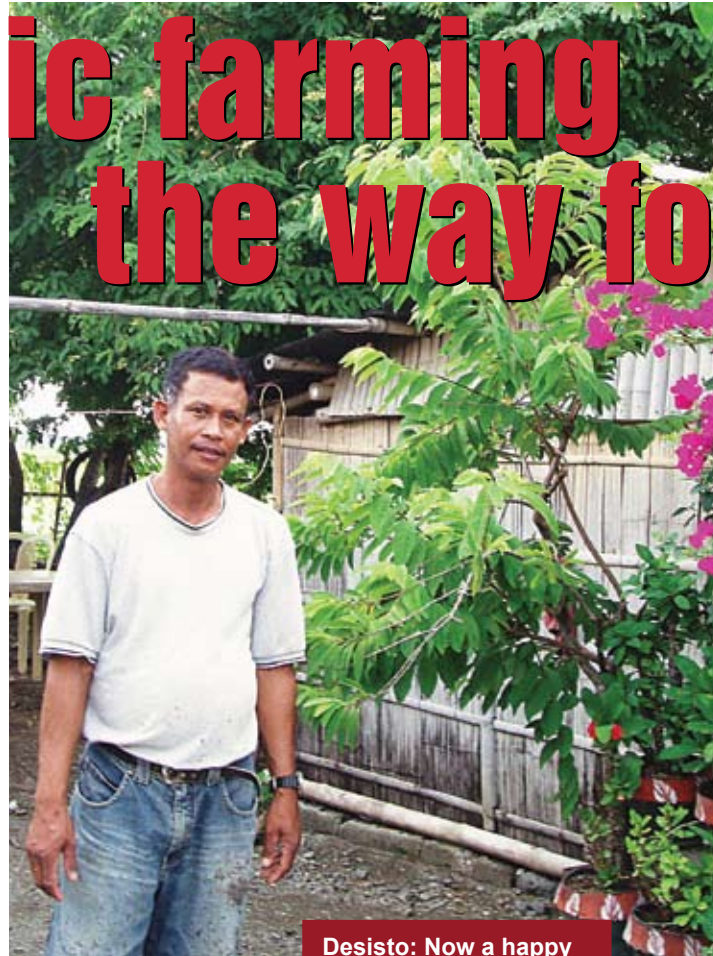
NUEVA ECIJA - Sustainable agriculture was far from farmer Peter Desisto's mind when he went to an organic farming seminar organised by the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) ten years ago. He and other farmers attended because they heard that PRRM was giving out loans.

Borrowing is a way of life for farmers who need to purchase expensive chemical pesticide and fertiliser before they can even plant rice in their fields. Such borrowings, usually from local money lenders who charge high interest, keep farmers perpetually in debt. The harvest gives them little surplus to avoid fresh loans in the next cropping season.

Desisto came out from the PRRM seminar loaded, not with borrowed money, but with new knowledge and a firm conviction that organic farming was the way forward. He gave up chemical-based inputs and instead bought cheaper chicken manure to fertilise the fields, raised ducks that eat the snails that were ruining his rice stalks, and used indigenous herbs to control pests.

Instead of solely relying on rice, Desisto diversified into hog and poultry raising and planting onions for extra income. "I spent more time applying chicken manure and planting other crops. The extra effort paid off," he said.

Now Desisto is not only free of debt but also able to provide adequately for his family. He is



Desisto: Now a happy organic farmer.

also content that the land he's renting remains productive, with an annual rice harvest at 90 sacks, which he attributes to the fact that his land is not bombarded with chemicals.

Desisto is one of a growing number of farmers in Nueva Ecija – one of the main rice growing areas in the Philippines – who have abandoned pesticides and synthetic fertilisers in favour of organic farming. "Sustainable agriculture in rice farming addressed the problem of high cost of chemical farming and acted on health, environmental and ecological considerations," the Manila-based Rice Watch and Action Network (R1) noted in its study published last year.

Organic agriculture products trading in the world is increas-

ing by 20-30 percent every year and the Philippines can easily claim a large share of a market that is estimated to be worth 100 billion US dollars. Popular organic products exported from the Philippines include bananas, beef, mangoes, muscovado sugar, papayas, peanuts, poultry, soya milk, vegetables from the uplands, yellow corn and rice.

Introduction of the so-called Green Revolution technology in the 1970s helped increase yields – but at a high cost. The high yielding seeds were also dependent on expensive chemical inputs that poisoned the soil and water sources, hurt land productivity and harmed farmers' health. This is why NGOs like PRRM have been advocating a return to organic farming, believing that this

will not just solve environmental problems but will also ensure food security.

"Organic agriculture is the answer. It won't only retain soil productivity but it can make farming viable. If farmers will have additional income from their land they will continue to plant rice," R1 lead convenor Jessica Reyes-Cantos said.

Cantos believes that the government should channel more funds to develop organic agriculture and ensure self sufficiency instead of spending money on stop gap measures like rice imports or giving out subsidised seeds.

Cantos urges the Philippine department of agriculture to implement the following measures: support farmers to improve their own seed varieties; promote credit support for organic farmers; provide more post harvest facilities and create a marketing fund to protect the farmers of organically-grown products from unscrupulous traders.

Philippine agriculture officials are now seeing the benefits of organic farming. At a press briefing last month, agriculture secretary Arthur Yap said the department will set aside P800 million (16 million dollars) to encourage rice farmers to engage in organic farming for the September-October planting season.

Yap said he is hoping that this will at least help farmers cut overheads as costs of synthetic fertiliser rise along with global petroleum prices. ●

► By Feizal Samath/IPS

KOULARA, Sri Lanka. An impoverished village in southern Sri Lanka is slowly pulling out of poverty by churning out terra cotta moulds of animal footprints for tea connoisseurs all over the world.

Villagers here – traditionally brick-makers – have found value and economic potential in protecting the jungle, the wild animals and their natural habitat under a new project titled ‘Animal Tracks’, Ajith Perera, a celebrated Sri Lankan potter and team leader of the project explained.

The project came to fruition when International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) staffer Asanka Abayakoon was seconded to Dilmah -Sri Lanka’s largest value-added tea exporter to streamline its environmental sustainability and charitable work in villages.

The relationship between once-struggling villagers from this small hamlet adjoining Uda Walawe National Park, IUCN and Dilmah has brought man and beast closer to harmonious coexistence. “These villagers who never stepped into the national park [because they were so poor] are now collecting animal footprints and learning about the animals and their lifestyles,” said Perera.

Young workers at the ‘Animal Tracks’ workshop and training centre are giving finishing touches to dozens of tiny pendants made out of terra cotta. “We need a quality raw material because the pendants are exported to consumers across the world,” says Dilhan C. Fernando, Trustee of the MJF Foundation, Dilmah’s charitable arm.

Recently competition in the brick business forced Koulara residents to take jobs in a nearby sugarcane plantation. “We would make less than 3,000 rupees [below 30 dollars] a month and that



Surviving: Shanthi makes pendants at home, her two kids watch.

F. Samath

SRI LANKA

‘Animal tracks’ lead villagers out of poverty

too if there is work,” said Sriyani Subasinghe, manager of the Animal Tracks workplace.

“Now women and girls are making 24,000 rupees [nearly 240 dollars] a month through this initiative. We make in two months what would take more than a year to earn through the sugar plantation and other menial daily work,” she said sitting in Animal Tracks’ thatch-roofed office. The complex employs 100 women in

wattle-and-daub huts thatched with dry coconut leaves. Open spaces to allow natural light and ventilation.

A range of plates, ornaments and jewellery are also produced from clay using the footprints of elephants, leopard and other animals from the park. Venturing into the park, with the help of park wardens, villagers look for footprints and then fill them with plaster-of-paris, turning

out a mould within minutes.

“Often – in the case of elephants – you need to follow the animals and look for fresh footprints which provide a better mould,” Abayakoon explained.

“This project has given hope to all of us. With the comfortable income they get, our workers are rebuilding their homes, buying other needs and also saving in the local bank,” says 24-year old Anoma Jayaratne, Animal Tracks Production Manager.

Thirty-two-year-old Shanthi Kumar works in the comfort of her home turning out pendants. She started three weeks ago, after initial training at Animal Tracks, and now produces 300 pieces a day.

“I am very happy with this job as I am able to earn a comfortable living working at home,” she said while her two children watched as she worked. Fifty other villagers work from their homes.

Animal Tracks has been picked as one of the five best environmentally sustainable projects to be profiled at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, in which Dilmah founder Merril J. Fernando and his son Dilhan C. Fernando are also taking part. ●



C4C

Climate For Change

The world is changing more quickly than at any time in human history. Whether in the oceans, on land, or in the world's climate, the impact of human activities on planet Earth is strikingly evident. The New Climate for Change stream at Congress will consider challenges and solutions.

Mitigation: Equitable mitigation will depend on achieving both temperature and emissions targets – brought about by changes in the energy sector, development of the carbon market, rates of deforestation, and use of marine technology and engineering.

Adaptation: Adaptation of societies to the challenges of population growth, globalization, and climate change will require coordinated local, regional, and global approaches to integrated ecosystem management and reducing vulnerability. Important underlying considerations include climate risk assessment techniques, appropriate funding, implementation of national adaptation plans, links between mitigation and adaptation strategies, defining the role of indigenous leadership, and how to support more effective community based management.

Energy: Workshops will draw links between global energy solutions and climate change solutions. Discussion will look closely at the impacts of different energy strategies, including the role of biofuels, energy efficient designs, and the subsequent impacts on biodiversity, agricultural production, and people.

Conservation and Development: The nexus between conservation and development in a changing world will be widely discussed. A range of workshops in the stream focus on urban agriculture, watershed management, energy, gender, and security.

Indigenous Peoples: The role of indigenous peoples in conservation and ecosystem management is particularly important to adaptation strategies and the effectiveness of mitigation techniques. Workshops will highlight the role of indigenous peoples in making progress on both fronts.

Biodiversity and ecosystem service values: The future status of biodiversity, both in protected areas and production landscapes, will have dramatic implications for people. A range of events will focus on the concepts of ecosystem valuation and the value of protected areas.

Protected Areas: Workshops will debate the impact of natural corridors, fragmentation of ecosystems, the integration of parks and reserves, and protected areas management in the face of global change.

Assessment: A major barrier in the resolution of international environmental issues is the lack of quantification of impacts and results. A variety of workshops will discuss the status, role, and importance of green accounting, ecological footprints, ecological forecasting, evaluation methodology, investments, and issues in international trade and climate change.

Communication and Education: Scenario building, advertising campaigns, increased eco-literacy, and climate-integrated education are all discussed in workshops on this theme.

Governance: Governance: The role of coherent environmental policy at multiple scales will become more crucial. Workshops cover national climate change legislation, climate change and the CBD, decentralized approaches to legislation, and climate change and international trade.

Partnerships and Alliances: One approach to climate change problem-solving is strengthening local and regional networking. Workshops will demonstrate case examples in South Asia, the Mediterranean, Latin America, and between the public and private sectors.

TERRAVIVA



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