

## The Environment



The environment programme aims to build consensus on major environmental issues and promote the integration of economic and environmental policies

In the Langkawi Declaration on Environment in 1989, Commonwealth Heads of Government expressed their belief that environmental protection should be balanced with promoting economic growth and sustainable development. Eight years later, at Edinburgh, they re-emphasised the shared interest of all countries in protecting the environment and strengthening co-operation in this area in order to achieve sustainable development.

Since the Langkawi Declaration, the Secretariat has developed an environment programme which aims to build consensus on major environmental issues, promote the integration of economic and environmental policies in member countries, and strengthen national capacities for environmental management.

### Consensus and Co-operation

The Commonwealth Consultative Group on Environment (CCGE) is the principal Commonwealth forum for building consensus and strengthening co-operation on environmental issues such as those concerning forestry, fisheries and climate change. It meets annually in the wings of meetings of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

The CCGE's discussions in June 1997 paved the way ultimately for Commonwealth consensus on climate change in the 1997 Edinburgh Commonwealth Economic Declaration. This consensus contributed to the ability to attain agreement on a Protocol for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions until the year 2012, at the December 1997 Kyoto Conference of Parties to the Convention on Climate Change.

In April 1998, the CCGE agreed an agenda for action to promote sustainable management and use of freshwater resources which was presented as a Commonwealth contribution to the CSD's discussion on the subject. In 1999 the CCGE's discussions on overcoming vulnerability and accelerating the sustainable development of small states enabled the Commonwealth to influence the CSD's preparations for the UN General Assembly's Special Session later in the year which reviewed overall progress in implementing the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

### Policy Development

The Secretariat supports the efforts of member states to integrate their environmental and economic policies so that economic development becomes environmentally sustainable.

Regional workshops were held in Trinidad and Tobago in March

1998 and Zimbabwe in January 1999 which helped economic and environmental policy-makers, and representatives of regional institutions, NGOs and the private sector, to gain a better understanding of the links between economic activities and the environment. They also identified priority areas where market-based economic instruments, such as pollution charges and taxes, could be deployed to implement the 'polluter pays' principle and achieve environmental objectives. The Secretariat has published an overview of environmental economics called *Integrating the Economy and the Environment: Policy and Practice*.

The Secretariat monitors major international policy developments concerning environment and development and reports on them through its quarterly journal *International Development Policies*. This service is especially intended to assist those member countries which are not always able to attend international

meetings whose deliberations may have implications for their environmental policies.

### Environmental Management

The Secretariat assists governments, on request, to strengthen their capacities to deal with a range of environmental problems. This includes advice on the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements; the development of environmentally sensitive industries and processes; natural resources management (forests, fisheries, mining); training in environmental management; and technical assistance through the exchange of Commonwealth expertise.

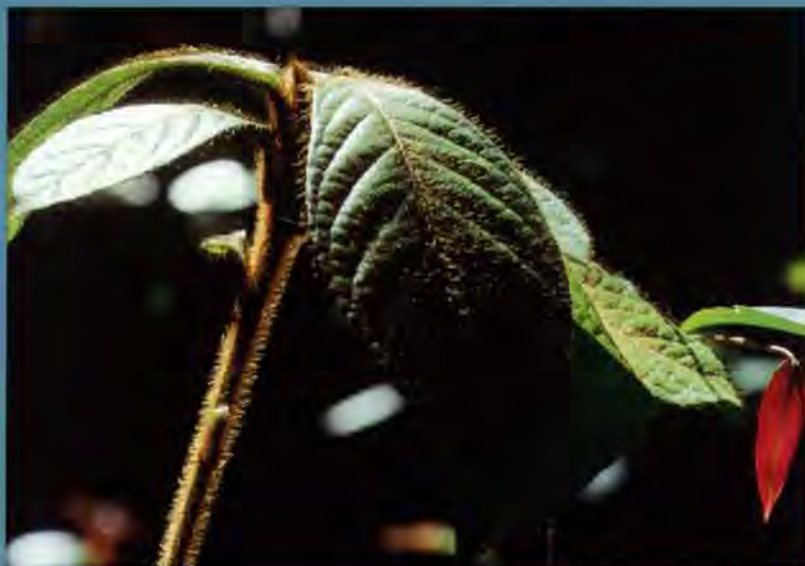
In 1998, countries in the South Pacific were advised on the implementation of parts of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the role of criminal law in strengthening enforcement of international environmental conventions affecting the region,

### Environment's Economic Value

Professor David Pearce, an environmental economist working with the Secretariat to help member governments better integrate their economic and environmental policies says: "Most of what goes wrong in the environment ... is that we don't buy and sell it. We don't buy and sell the global atmosphere or the world's oceans. People treat them as free, and so don't carefully think what we're doing with them.

"Although the environment has no economic value, it has to compete against activities that have market prices such as agriculture, forestry and transportation. The result is that the playing field is uneven. The environment loses because it appears worthless, while the activities that degrade it have economic value."

'Selling' genetic material for pharmaceuticals means that someone is paying for their conservation





Field training on how to conduct environmental impact assessments for officials from the Indian Ocean states

and implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In Africa, the Secretariat provided consultants to help Namibia review existing arrangements for the management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, and training in South Africa on the phasing-out of ozone-depleting substances under the Montreal Protocol. A workshop was held in the Caribbean in 1998 on the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol.

The Secretariat also advises a number of governments on WTO agreements and their implications for the protection of plant varieties as well as other environmental measures.

Assistance is being provided in a number of other areas. In the Caribbean, the Secretariat has encouraged the development of craft industries using recycled and naturally occurring materials, manufacture of solar water heaters (in Dominica, for example) and implementation of low-cost methods for waste management. Work has been done on the environmental implications of tourism development in East Africa and Jamaica.

In the agriculture sector, projects on integrated pest management in the Caribbean and Zambia are promoting the use of biological control to combat invasive species. Training and technical assistance projects on soil conservation and the rehabilitation of degraded lands have been implemented in Commonwealth

According to him, one approach is to estimate the economic value of environmental resources and apply these values in decision-making on development. In the case of clean air, for example, its economic value would be partly calculated by looking at the damage from pollution to human health and the value that people place on having clean air to breathe.

Another approach is to establish markets in environmental goods. He adds: "People in tropical forests are now 'selling' genetic material in forests for pharmaceuticals, agriculture and even fragrances. People are selling carbon dioxide stored in forests. But 'selling' doesn't mean getting rid of the forests, it means that instead of destroying them, somebody pays for their conservation."

These concepts formed the basis of workshops in the Caribbean in March 1998 and Africa in January 1999 which brought together senior policy advisers from environment, finance and economic planning ministries, and representatives from the private sector and the NGO community.

They focused on agriculture, water, forests, energy, tourism, industry and waste management, and the issues and practical problems related to economic valuation techniques, natural resources accounting and economic instruments. These included improved decision-making, environmental taxes which influence behaviour and can raise revenue for conservation programmes, and appropriate charges for the use of environmental resources, for example by tourists.

Africa and the Caribbean. Biological diversity conservation is being promoted in several countries through projects to improve biodiversity information management and increase the use of under-utilised crops. A *Nature Conservation Source-Book for Forestry Professionals* (1998) is an illustrated volume of teaching materials for forestry staff and others to encourage forest conservation, research and eco-tourism in Uganda.

In the fisheries sector, the Secretariat has examined human resource requirements in Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Assistance is given to member countries in drafting legislation for maritime areas and fisheries, and in negotiating fisheries access agreements. Relevant provisions that are included in maritime legislation cover marine parks development, protection of coastal areas, and conservation of mangrove swamps and other wetlands. Assistance is also provided in integrating environmental concerns into the drafting of legislation and when negotiating agreements in the petroleum and mining sectors.

Specialised short training courses have been used to develop skills

in environmental impact assessment, remote sensing, geographical information systems and environmental education. The Secretariat has developed two long-term programmes in collaboration with the University of Botswana (offering an MSc in Environmental Science) and the Centre for Environmental Studies at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago (an MSc in Environmental Engineering).

Under the Commonwealth Science Council's Chemical Research and Environmental Needs (CREN) project, training has been provided on cyanobacteria, chemical emergencies, and low-cost instrumentation for environmental monitoring, air pollution modelling, risk assessment and other aspects of hazardous waste management.

Other examples of environment-related projects are described elsewhere in this Report.

### **Iwokrama International Rainforest Programme**

The Iwokrama Programme is an exemplar of the Commonwealth's practical contribution to the implementa-

tion of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit's agreements on forests, biodiversity and climate change. The 360,000-hectare project in Guyana is dedicated to demonstrating how tropical rainforest resources can be both conserved and sustainably used for human development.

Half of the area is being maintained as a Wilderness Preserve for scientific research. The remainder, a Sustainable Utilisation Area, will be developed in environmentally sound ways, in partnership with local Amerindian communities and the private sector, to generate economic benefits.

The Iwokrama International Centre, which manages the Programme, has launched several projects in core areas: sustainable forest management; conservation and use of biodiversity; human development; forestry research; and information and communication. Local communities, as well as the people of Guyana in general, will benefit in terms of employment, skills development and improved facilities. The wider global community will benefit from the practical experience with conservation and sustainable use of tropical forest resources in Iwokrama.

The Secretariat continues to support the development of the Iwokrama Programme through policy advice, technical assistance and the use of its good offices to catalyse international funding. As the result of a meeting of donors in Brussels in January 1998 (jointly chaired by the Secretariat, the World Bank and the European Commission), new funding commitments amounting to US\$8 million were secured to expand the Iwokrama Centre's operations. These met over half of the Iwokrama Programme's total funding requirement of \$13 million for the period 1998-2002.



The Iwokrama project ... 360,000 hectares dedicated to demonstrating how tropical rainforest resources can be conserved and sustainably used for human development