



Press Release

**For immediate release**

## **IUCN promotes Protected Areas, Equity and Livelihoods during Asia-Pacific Forestry Week**

**Gland, Switzerland, April 21, 2008 (IUCN)** - IUCN is participating in the first-ever Asia-Pacific Forestry Week taking place from the 21st to the 26th of April 2008, in Hanoi, Viet Nam. The event is expected to be the largest and the most important forestry-related event this year in the South East Asia region, a region which has seen the largest decline in forest area worldwide. The event provides a unique opportunity for diverse stakeholders and high level forestry officials from throughout the Asia Pacific region to share perspectives and seek solutions to the most challenging issues facing forests and forestry today.

On Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008, IUCN is co-organizing a session on Protected Areas, Equity and Livelihoods (PAEL).

*"I believe that this session will serve as a terrific opportunity to examine some evidence and to identify some practical options for reducing the negative impacts of conservation on rural people. It's important to have these discussions in order to identify practical solutions for maximizing the contributions that protected areas can make to sustainable development,"* says **Joshua Bishop, Senior Adviser, Economics and the Environment Programme, IUCN.**

In 2007 the Task Force on PAEL was set up as a direct response to the World Parks Congress on Protected Areas and Poverty recommendation that Protected Areas should be equitably administered, "do no harm" to the livelihoods of indigenous/local communities and, where possible, effectively contribute to poverty reduction. The Task Force on PAEL is an official task force of the IUCN WCPA and Commission on Environment, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) under the Theme on Indigenous and Local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas (TILCEPA) initiative.

The laws under which Protected Areas are established are not always the product of participatory processes where the voices of those most affected by the prohibition of economic activities in selected forest areas can be heard. IUCN has been working specifically on addressing this issue in Sri Lanka and Vietnam through its global forest governance project, "Strengthening Voices for Better Choices" (SVBC) and its successes in Sri Lanka will be presented during IUCN's session. The session will also include presentations of IUCN's work on Protected Areas from across the Greater Mekong Subregion, and an overview of IUCN's "Gateway to Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)" approach.

The goal of this session on PAEL and the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week in general is to further effective development and implementation of policies and strategies that empower all stakeholders to conserve the world's forests and harness them as sustainable sources of income for some of the world's poorest. The Asia-Pacific Forestry Week and this session will bring together some of the most knowledgeable and experienced minds in the field to enhance ongoing efforts and arrive at innovative solutions to achieve this goal. Recommendations and conclusions from the week will be forwarded to the UNFF to further highlight regional perspectives.

The Asia-Pacific Forestry Week has been organized by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and is anchored around the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission. The event will bring together upwards of 500 individuals from governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutions, regional and international networks, UN agencies and the private sector.

**Notes to editors:****Venue:**

- IUCN's one day session will take place on Friday April 25<sup>th</sup> from 9.00am to 5.00pm at the National Convention Center in Hanoi, room 201.

**For more information, please contact:**

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**For more information about Asia-Pacific Forestry Week:** <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/44755/en/0/>

**For more information on IUCN's Strengthening Voices for Better Choices:** [www.iucn.org/forest](http://www.iucn.org/forest)

**Background Information:**

The PAEL session is organized in collaboration with the Asia Forest Network (AFN), the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). This session will support the work of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Task Force on PAEL.

Deforestation in Asia matters. It matters to the world at large through its contribution to global climate change. It is thanks to rampant deforestation that Indonesia is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest emitter of green house gases in the world. It matters to governments and law enforcement officials across the region, overwhelmed by the illegal and corrupt practices that characterize much of the cross-border trade that drives forest loss and deprived of much-needed resources as a result. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Telepak estimate that illegal timber valued at almost US\$ 2.5 billion is traded between the countries of East and Southeast Asia every year. According to the World Bank, these kinds of illegal exchanges cost the governments of developing countries US\$ 10 billion annually, more than 6 times the official development assistance dedicated to sustainable management of forests. Deforestation and degraded forest lands also matter to the poor, marginalized communities and individuals that depend on forest resources to survive. Muddled regulatory frameworks, restrictions on land use and harassment by logging companies and officials emboldened by systemic corruption are just some of the forces propelling deforestation and denying poor and vulnerable communities the opportunity to share in the benefits of the lands they inhabit.

**About IUCN**

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental network. IUCN is a democratic union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and some 10,000 volunteer scientists in more than 150 countries. IUCN's work is supported by 1,100 professional staff in 62 countries and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

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