

MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY TO MANAGE ECOSYSTEMS FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

STEERING COMMITTEE

Edward Ayensu, Pan African Union
for Science & Technology, Ghana

Mark Collins, World Conservation
Monitoring Centre, U.K.

Angela Cropper, Trinidad and
Tobago

Andrew Dearing, World Business
Council for Sustainable
Development

Madhav Gadgil, Indian Institute of
Science, Bangalore

Habiba Gitay, Australian National
University

He Changchui, FAO

Gisbert Glaser, UNESCO

Zuzana Guziova, Ministry of the
Environment, Slovak Republic

Calestous Juma, Harvard University

John Krebs, University of Oxford,
U.K.

Jonathan Lash, World Resources
Institute, USA

Roberto Lenton, United Nations
Development Programme

Jane Lubchenco, Oregon State
University, USA

Jeffrey McNeely, World
Conservation Union (IUCN),
Switzerland

Harold Mooney, International
Council for Science (ICSU)

Ndegwa Ndiang'ui, Convention to
Combat Desertification

Janos Pasztor, Climate Change
Secretariat (UNFCCC)

Prabhu L. Pingali, International
Maize and Wheat Improvement
Center (CIMMYT)

Per Pinstrup-Andersen,
Consultative Group on Int.
Agricultural Research

Mario Ramos, Global Environment
Facility

Peter Raven, Missouri Botanical
Garden, USA

Walter Reid, Millennium
Assessment Secretariat

Cristian Samper, Instituto
Alexander Von Humboldt,
Colombia

José Sarukhán, Universidad
Autónoma de México

Peter Schei, Directorate for Nature
Management, Norway

Klaus Töpfer, United Nations
Environment Programme

José Galizia Tundisi, International
Institute of Ecology, Brazil

Robert Watson, World Bank

Xu Guanhua, Ministry of Science
and Technology, People's
Republic of China

A.H. Zakri, Universiti Kebangsaan
Malaysia, Malaysia

Millennium Assessment Update March, 2000

Dear Friends,

We would like to provide you with an update on progress made over the past six months in establishing the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA). As you know, since late 1998, this Steering Committee has been exploring the possibility of establishing an international scientific mechanism, analogous to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The MA would provide policymakers with "state of the art" scientific information on conditions, future scenarios, and response options related to the goods and services provided by the world's ecosystems. The Steering Committee is designing the Assessment to respond to the needs and guidance of key "users" including ecosystem-related conventions, national ministries, and civil society.

The MA will be a "joint assessment" undertaken by a number of agencies and institutions that would benefit from its findings. The Board will thus be comprised of senior representatives from a set of international agencies including the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention to Combat Desertification, Ramsar Wetlands Convention, Framework Convention on Climate Change, four UN Agencies, the World Bank, International Council on Science (ICSU), and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). In addition, approximately 20 "At Large" Board members will be invited from governments, the scientific community, NGOs, and the private sector to represent the needs of other key audiences.

The actual work of the assessment will be undertaken by an "Assessment Panel" made up of leading natural and social scientists from around the world. The members of the Panel will serve as chairs of the various working groups responsible for different portions of the Assessment. A set of 10 "catalytic" regional, national, and local assessments will be central components of the MA.

Based on nearly a year of extensive consultations, the Steering Committee announced unanimous decision to call for the creation of the Millennium Assessment at its October 1999 meeting. Since that time, substantial progress has been made in assembling the financial

and institutional foundation for launching the MA. Highlights of the last six months are described below.

Establishing the Institutional Framework

- **Convention to Combat Desertification:** A workshop on the MA was held during the CCD COP-3 (November 15-26, Recife, Brazil). Senegal introduced a statement supporting the MA to the Committee on Science and Technology in an informal room document (ICCD/COP (3)/INFORMAL.1), which was supported by statements from China, Norway, and Brazil. The Chairman's summary of the meeting included support for the MA.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity.** A description of the MA was included in the document "Cooperation with Other Bodies" (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/2) discussed at the January meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA). SBSTTA requested the Executive Secretary of the CBD to explore ways and means of collaborating in undertaking the MA and has recommended that the CBD COP decide on follow-up action based on the outcome of the consultations of the Executive Secretary. The potential role of the MA as a joint assessment undertaken in partnership with other conventions is also described in the summary of the CBD "Brainstorming Meeting on Scientific Assessments" held in November 1999 (UNEP/CBD/COP/5/Inf./1). SBSTTA delegates were also briefed on the MA by a panel presentation involving representatives of the MA Steering Committee, Advisory Group, and the secretariats of the CBD and CCD. A RealAudio segment of the briefing has been made available by Earth Negotiations Bulletin/IISD and can be found on the MA website (<http://www.ma-secretariat.org>) under "*publications.*"
- **Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS).** The MA Steering Committee hosted a workshop on the MA at the 7th General Conference of TWAS (November 22-27, Dakar, Senegal). TWAS has endorsed the proposed MA.
- **Other endorsements, briefings and meetings.**

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research has endorsed the MA.

Mexico's National Academy of Sciences has endorsed the MA and, supported by the Academies of Brazil and Malaysia has called on the May 2000 meeting of the InterAcademy Panel to issue a statement supporting the MA.

A briefing on the MA was given at the European Union Environment Agency's Management Board Meeting (November 24, Copenhagen, Denmark) and a briefing was given for Washington D.C.-based NGOs in December.

The full text of the endorsements referenced above and others can be found under the heading "*Building Momentum*" on the MA website.

Establishing the new Board and Secretariat

The Steering Committee was established to explore the demand for, and feasibility of, the Millennium Assessment, not to carry it out. As described above, a new Board is now being created that will use the findings of the joint assessment. Dr. Robert Watson and Dr. A.H. Zakri were selected by the Steering Committee to serve as interim co-chairs of the Board. The first Board meeting will take place in July 2000 in Trondheim Norway. In 1998, the MA Steering Committee asked the World Resources Institute to serve as the interim secretariat during the planning phase. Secretariat responsibilities will now shift from WRI to the various institutions coordinating the different working groups of the MA. The Steering Committee recommended that the core secretariat be based at an institution in a developing country and co-located with one of the co-chairs of the process.

Establishing the Substantive Components of the Assessment

The nominating sub-committee of the MA Steering Committee is now working to identify candidates to chair the "Assessment Panel" – the body of scientists responsible for carrying out the MA. The MA Board will select the scientific chairs that will in turn help to select working group chairs for the process. Concept papers are now also being solicited for the various "catalytic" local, national, and regional assessments that will be undertaken as components of the MA. The Steering Committee expanded the membership of the MA Advisory Group in January. The AG has grown to include nearly 70 individuals based in 32 countries. It includes representatives of universities, governments, international institutions, private sector, NGOs, and civil society. The AG members will play a large role in helping identify individuals to be involved in the Assessment Panel and working groups.

Members of the MA Steering Committee are exploring the possibility of undertaking the "scenarios" component of the MA as a collaborative effort with ICSU/SCOPE (the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment), the International Program on Ecosystem Change (IPEC), and research programs under the International Geosphere Biosphere Program. More generally, many of the components of the MA are best undertaken through existing networks of experts (such as the network of institutions involved in the Global Environmental Outlook, the Global Observing systems, the IGBP, GCTE, IUCN, and others) not by creating a new infrastructure.

A draft "methodology" paper for the MA will be prepared by August 2000 and will serve as a background document for a major design workshop, to be held in late-2000 or early-2001, involving members of the global and sub-global working groups.

Several institutions on the MA Steering Committee (WRI, UNEP, UNDP, the World Bank, and IFPRI) undertook a Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems (PAGE) over the past year in order to help demonstrate the value and need for an integrated assessment of ecosystem goods and services, establish links with institutions that would participate in such an assessment, and provide material for the upcoming edition of "*World Resources 2000*" that will call for the creation of the MA. The PAGE technical reports will be released in May/June 2000. Key findings from PAGE will also be featured in a special edition of a major international newsmagazine in April.

Financial Support for the MA

The budget for the MA is \$21 million over four years. The Steering Committee is encouraged that the prospects for covering more than half of these costs through the support of the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Foundation are promising. At present, key fundraising needs center on the need for support for the catalytic regional, national, and local assessments (approximately 1/3 of the budget) and for the work on scenarios.

Outreach

The improved and expanded MA website (<http://www.ma-secretariat.org>) debuted in mid-December. The new site contains a wealth of information on MA activities, as well as the people and organizations involved with the project. Please visit the site to view the MA Overview slide show, hear a RealAudio clip of the briefing given at the CBS SBSTTA5 in Montreal, read about other planned and on-going global assessments, and much more!

The article "International Ecosystem Assessment", which was co-authored by several members of the Steering Committee, appeared in the October 22 issue of *Science* (Vol. 286:685-686) and two supportive letters ran in the 14 January issue. The full text version of the article can be accessed through the MA website.

The article "Ecosystem Data to Guide Hard Choices," which provides an overview of the MA, will appear in the Spring 2000 issue of *Issues in Science and Technology*.

Looking Ahead

April 26, 2000	Briefing for Environment Ministers, Commission on Sustainable Development side-event, New York, USA
May 12-13, 2000	Organizing Meeting of the MA Board Executive Committee, Nairobi Kenya
May 16, 2000	MA Briefing, Convention on Biological Diversity COP5, Nairobi, Kenya
July, 2000	MA Board Meeting, Trondheim, Norway

What You Can Do

We welcome your input into this process at any time. Please feel free to provide comments on the material posted on the website and to suggest people or institutions that should be involved in the MA process. In particular:

The Board will make initial selections on countries and regions for the "catalytic" local, national, and regional assessments at its July meeting. Initial 3-page concept papers for these assessments are needed by May 1. If you are interested in helping to organize one of these assessments, please contact the interim secretariat for a copy of the background paper which describes these assessments and contains information needed for developing the concept papers.

Over the next four months, the Advisory Group and Steering Committee will be helping to generate nominations for experts to be involved on the various working groups of the MA. We would also welcome your own suggestions and recommendations of individuals to involve

For Further Information:

Dr. Walter Reid
Acting Science Director
Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
731 N. 79th St.
Seattle, WA 98103
Tel: (206)782-7963
Fax: (206)782-5682

Valerie Thompson
Program Assistant
World Resources Institute
10 G St. NE
Washington, D.C. 20002 USA
Tel: (202) 729-7794
Fax: (202) 729-7610
e-mail: valeriet@wri.org

