

# **Global Land Cover Network Workshop**

New Delhi, India, 14-18 February 2005

## UNEP's Welcome address

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to this FAO-UNEP workshop on Global Land Cover Network.

Global Land Cover Network (GLCN) is of great importance to UNEP and it is an integral element of our land resources assessment programme. And it is part of our UNEP-FAO co-operative programmes.

Standardisation of land cover data and harmonisation of land cover classification systems is one of the fundamental steps in producing comparable information on global land resources.

Therefore, taking this step to expand the success and experience of the just concluded AFRICOVER project, which tested the FAO-UNEP Land Cover Classification System (LCCS) in India is a very important one.

In this connection I must also pay tribute to the governments of Italy and Netherlands: Italy who over half a decade funded the Africover project, which developed and tested the LCCS methodologies and tools, and Netherlands who saw the great value in expanding the Africover success and agreed to financially contribute to spreading this good LCCS-gospel to other parts of world. Thus providing for the next step in realisation of our dream of eventually having a global harmonised database (and an operational Global Network of agencies and institutions for assessing and monitoring the land cover).

[We have held four regional workshops in 2003 -04 and this year we'll be having two / three regional and two national GLCN workshop – in the Near East, Central America and possibly in Central Asia; and national workshops in China and possibly in Argentina and/or Brazil].

Now that we have land cover data available from remote sensing sources in digital format globally it is essential that we have a uniform classification system to be able to usefully compare the data. NASA satellite datasets of 1990 and 2000 have been donated by US government. Orthorectified datasets on country by country basis are being supplied to all countries - first it was done last year for Africa, and presently it is being done through UNEP Regional Office for Latin America for Latin American countries. FAO is doing the same. UNEP and FAO are establishing with their

government counterparts the most appropriate focal point institutions in each country as recipients and custodians of the national databases, be it in the Ministry of Environment or the Ministry of Agriculture or elsewhere.

[One may ask: "Why do we need such information LCCS and GLCN provides"?)

Today both national and international decision makers need information based on solid data on the status and trends of our natural resource base.

There are several global, regional and national undertakings to map out the natural resource situation: where are we now and what direction are we going.

For example:

- (i) Global Forestry Resources Assessment (GFRA) by FAO based on national data has been going on for a couple of decades;
- (ii) Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) in going-on;
- (iii) Global Programme of Action on impacts of land based pollution on coastal and marine environment (GPA) is going on;
- (iv) Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) is going on;
- (v) Global Marine Assessment (GMA) is under negotiation;
- (vi) Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) is to start this year;
- (vii) International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) is also to start this year.

Just to mention a few.

GLCN will be a network, which provides an excellent useful baseline contributing to these global undertakings.

But even more useful tools GLCN, based on a uniform Land Cover Classification System (LCCS), is providing for different operators at national and sub-national level; be it for ecological monitoring or cadastral planning – they all can use the same baseline data and modify it for their own needs. And in combination with other bio-physical as well as socio-economic data GLCN provides a very powerful tool for national planning.

I am very happy to see representatives from so many Indian institutions here taking advantage of this unique training event, and I hope that at the end of this training both your confidence about LCCS and your skills in its application will have grown to new heights; and that you will have become new valuable players in the Global Land Cover Network.

Thank you and I wish you a very good and rewarding time here in new Delhi