



Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

Newsletter August 2002

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. Everyone has the right to . . . seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 27 and 19).

Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities . . . and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. . . . (The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Principle 10).

Like the Conventions with which it is associated (Biodiversity, Desertification, and Ramsar), the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) is committed to the concepts of transparency and participation. At its core, the MA is a rigorous global scientific undertaking, but it is also an open process, committed to inclusiveness and responsiveness. It is *inclusive* of diverse disciplines, perspectives, and interests, and it is *responsive* to the practical needs of the non-scientific community and to the perspective of policy makers. One of the primary goals of the MA is to increase the capacity of individuals and institutions to use and provide information for the better management of ecosystems for human well-being, bridging science and policy.

Participate!

The goal of the MA to link science and policy is reflected in its governing structure. The MA Board represents a broad spectrum of interests, ranging from international bodies to business, indigenous organizations, and non-government organizations (NGOs). In addition, the Board actively and effectively works with the Assessment Panel, which organizes and leads the scientific work.

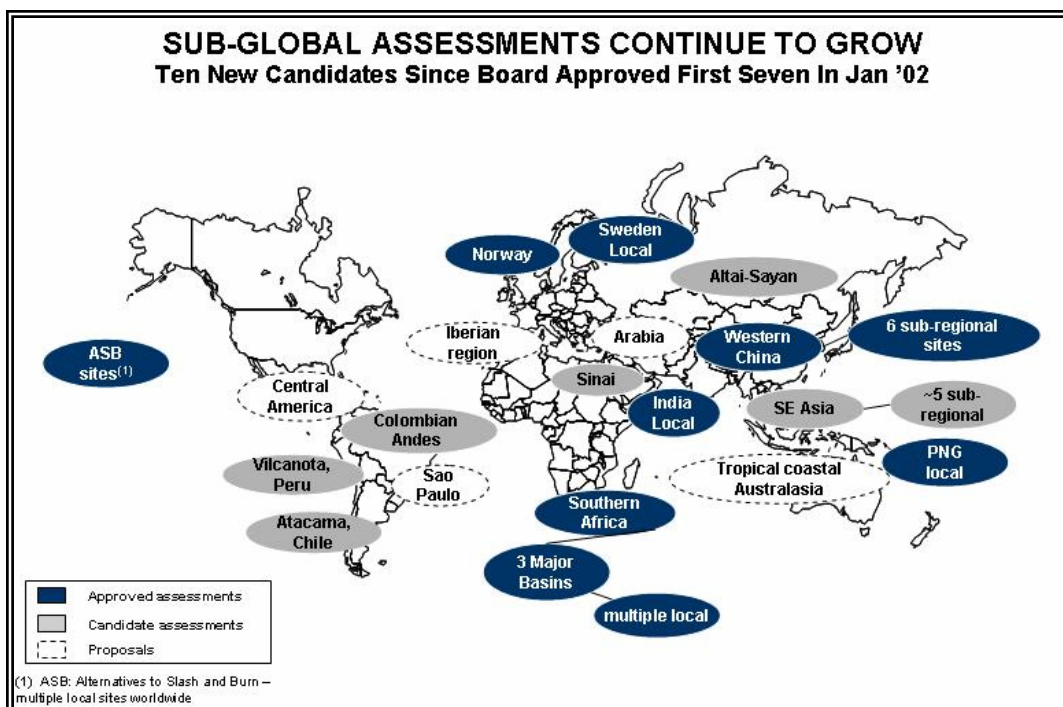
The MA's commitment to openness extends beyond its institutional design to its efforts to facilitate broad access to the assessment process itself. Several mechanisms of interaction with stakeholders and the public have already been defined and put in place, and we remain open to exploring additional avenues.

User Forums. The global MA and sub-global assessments will involve numerous institutions and individuals from many countries, and we will continue to explore opportunities for dialogue at the regional, national, and local levels with other users of the MA findings. One such opportunity will be a series of "user forums." These forums will be multisectoral spaces where diverse participants will be invited to engage in the MA process, and eventually decide how they might actually use the MA outputs in their own decision-making processes. The forums will be developed regionally or nationally, and therefore will focus on the application of MA findings to specific, locally relevant issues.

Authors and reviewers. The MA has made open, public calls to institutions and individuals to nominate candidate experts to become authors or reviewers of the Assessment reports. We are particularly interested in authors and reviewers from the private sector, NGOs, and indigenous groups. Please see the [Call for Nominations](#) for the latest information.

Affiliated Scientific Organizations and Academies of Sciences. The active involvement of scientific organizations in the MA will be instrumental in ensuring (a) the success of the peer review process and (b) the wide dissemination of findings to decision-makers around the world. To facilitate interactions with such groups we have established a network of Affiliated Scientific Organizations (ASOs). These ASOs include international, regional, or national scientific societies, academies, ministries, and other organizations responsible for fostering scientific, technical, or technological research, monitoring, or assessment. To learn more about benefits and responsibilities of becoming an affiliated organization, please see [MA Affiliated Scientific Organizations and National Academies of Science](#).

Access to information. As the assessment process progresses, the MA will seek to provide broad access to the information it generates and distributes. A [Data and Information Support System](#) to organize and facilitate public access to this information is under construction. New developments will be posted on the website, or you may contact the Secretariat with any requests.



Sub-global Assessments. The MA is a “multiscale” initiative involving assessments at the global, regional, basin, national, and local levels. There is still time to develop an assessment affiliated with the MA. For more information, please see [Sub-global Assessment Selection Process](#). Applications will be reviewed throughout 2002 and, by exception, during 2003.

We encourage everyone to use these mechanisms for participation in the Millennium Assessment. Input and involvement of individuals and organizations to the process at all levels is always welcomed. In fact, for the MA to achieve its objectives, it must engage and inform a wide variety of audiences,

embrace their concerns, and motivate them to use its findings and implement its recommendations. Comments and suggestions can be sent to the Secretariat via info@millenniumassessment.org

- Nicolas Lucas, MA Engagement and Outreach Coordinator

MA Activities at WSSD

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) being held in Johannesburg South Africa 26 August – 4 September 2002, provides a unique opportunity to raise the profile of the MA. The events coordinated during WSSD will inform representatives of countries, the private sector, NGOs, and institutions about opportunities that exist for becoming engaged in the assessment process, as well as the availability of MA tools, data, and methods they can use in their own assessment activities. Below is a brief summary of the MA-related WSSD activities.

1. The MA will hold a side event briefing focused on the MA Sub-global Assessments (Norway, India, South Africa, and, hopefully, China). Delegates from countries in which MA Sub-global Assessments are underway were invited, and we hope the event will provide a platform to inform other countries about the opportunities for involvement in the MA process.

2. The MA Secretariat is organizing video conferences involving a panel of MA representatives and individuals in approximately 10 countries. These are part of our continuing efforts to establish user forums for stakeholder groups in these countries.

3. There will be several display sites (one with UNEP and CSIR in Ubuntu Village and another in the IUCN Environment Centre) with multimedia presentations and printed materials on the MA and on MA Sub-global Assessments.

4. Other groups have invited MA representatives to participate in their events. The MA will be featured at the side event being hosted by the Asia Pacific Environmental Information Service (APEIS).

Blue Planet Prize Recipients

The Asahi Glass Foundation, Japan recently announced the recipients of the 2002 Blue Planet Prize. The MA is especially pleased to recognize and congratulate one of this year's winners: Assessment Panel co-chair Dr. Hal Mooney. Dr. Mooney was selected for his pioneering work in the field of plant physiological ecology, for providing objective measures of how plant ecologies are influenced by their environments, and for his conservation efforts. Our congratulations are also extended to the other recipient for this year, Dr. James Gustave Speth. As the founder of the World Resources Institute, former administrator of UNDP and now as Dean of Yale's school of Forestry, Dr. Speth has been noted for his instrumental role in the promotion and development of science-based solutions to global environmental problems, and has been a helpful advisor to the MA process.

Opportunity Announcement

The World Resources Institute (WRI) is currently seeking applicants for a Vice President for Research (VP). The VP is responsible for assuring that WRI's research work and publications meet the highest professional standards by ensuring that policy work is relevant and that it is based on sound science and/or data analysis. The VP will report to the President and participate in the overall strategic management of the Institute by serving on the Executive Team. Applications submitted by 16 September 2002 will be given priority status. Women and developing country nationals are especially encouraged to apply. More information about WRI and the position can be found on their website: <http://www.wri.org/about/jobs.html>

Completion of first round of WG meetings

Between April and June 2002, each of the four MA working groups met for the first time with their coordinating lead authors (CLAs). The meetings resulted in outlines for the assessment reports, identification of additional CLAs and lead authors (LAs), and identification of possible data needs and indicators. Current versions of each assessment report outline can be found on the MA website at

<http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/workgroups.htm>.

Participation by members of the Technical Support Units of other working groups and the Engagement and Outreach team allowed for the experiences and needs of other groups to inform the discussion and bring cross-cutting issues to the table.

Sub-Global Assessment Working Group

The "approved" and "candidate" MA Sub-global Assessments held their first working group meeting in Panama in June.¹ Among almost 50 participants were representatives of the Sub-global Assessment teams, CLAs for the Assessment Report, and MA Secretariat members. Meeting objectives included the following:

- review of the MA Conceptual Framework;
- identification of methodological approaches for sub-global assessments at various scales, including cross-scale interactions;
- sharing lessons learned from assessments already underway;
- identification of mechanisms for interaction among the sub-global assessments; and
- development of a first-order outline for the Assessment.

One particularly valuable aspect of the meeting was the sharing of ideas and experiences among the ongoing assessments. The newer candidate assessments were also able to draw upon the rich pool of experience within the working group.

¹ For more information about the process of approval for sub-global assessments, please see the document "Sub-global Assessment Criteria" on the MA website.

Conditions and Trends Working Group

The Conditions and Trends Working Group CLAs had their first meeting in Italy in early May. Nearly 40 experts participated in the meeting, co-hosted by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization. In addition to the development of the Assessment Report outline, one of the key meeting goals was to establish a set of “system” definitions and on a list of goods and services that will be addressed. More detail can be found in the article below. The meeting was followed by a smaller workshop to discuss the data and indicators that will be used by the MA. Several CLAs stayed for this meeting and further developed the ecosystem definitions. They also identified the set of proposed core data sets and indicators that will be used by the MA.

Scenarios Working Group



Approximately 40 experts gathered in Trinidad in mid-April to participate in the first Scenarios Working Group meeting. In addition to addressing the goals common to all working groups, the group updated the focal questions for the scenarios, agreed on a provisional list of primary and proximate drivers, and agreed on a set of prototype scenarios. Basic storylines now will be developed, and the next working group meeting planned for October will focus on the elaboration and quantification of these story lines.

Responses Working Group

The Responses Working Group authors’ meeting took place in late May in New Delhi. Nearly 50 experts attended the meeting, including CLAs, representatives of the UNEP Poverty and Environment Project, and MA Secretariat staff. Participants reached a consensus on the structure of the report outline, identified specific key responses, developed preliminary “take-home” messages of the report, and identified important cross-cutting issues within the working group (as well as cross-cutting issues across all of the MA working groups). The group also discussed lessons from previous assessments, including the Global Biodiversity Assessment (GBA) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

To find full contact information for each of the working groups, visit

<http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/about/people.html>

COP-6 Decisions and MA

Decisions made in April at the Sixth Conference of the Parties (COP 6) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have further strengthened the collaboration between the CBD and the MA. The MA is directly called upon in five decisions to provide assessment information and assistance. The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) was tasked with reviewing the findings of the MA and with providing

recommendations to the COP based that review. Excerpts of the relevant decisions can be found on the [MA website](#).

MA Board co-chair A.H. Zakri, professor and director of the Institute for Advanced Studies at UN University in Tokyo, delivered a statement to delegates at the opening plenary session on April 8. On behalf of the working groups of the MA, he requested guidance from the COP and SBSTTA regarding assessment priorities and the preparation of synthesis reports (listen to this speech from the [UNU website](#)).



Decisions about the future are based on current information on condition and trends

Box 1: Condition Assessment Report Outline	
Part I - Introduction	
Chapter 1.	Preface and Roadmap
Chapter 2.	Executive Summary of MA "Conceptual Framework"
Chapter 3.	Methods and Tools
Chapter 4.	Drivers of Ecosystem Change
Chapter 5.	Biodiversity
Chapter 6.	Ecosystem Condition and Human Well-Being
Chapter 7.	Problem Areas and Vulnerable Groups
Chapter 8.	Human Responses
Part II - Ecosystem Services	
a) Provisioning Services	
Chapter 9.	Freshwater
Chapter 10.	Food
Chapter 11.	Fiber, Timber, Fuel
Chapter 12.	Other Biological Products
b) Supporting Services	
Chapter 13.	Biological Regulation
Chapter 14.	Nutrient Cycling and Soil Fertility
Chapter 15.	Atmospheric and Climate Regulation
Chapter 16.	Human Disease Control
Chapter 17.	Waste Processing and Detoxification
Chapter 18.	Flood, Storm, and Erosion Protection
c) Cultural Services	
Chapter 19.	Spiritual and Amenity
Part III - Systems Assessment	
Chapter 20.	Cultivated Systems
Chapter 21.	Rangeland Systems
Chapter 22.	Forest and Woodland Systems
Chapter 23.	Urban Systems
Chapter 24.	Inland Water Systems
Chapter 25.	Coastal Systems
Chapter 26.	Marine Fishery Systems
Chapter 27.	Polar Regions
Chapter 28.	Mountain Systems
Chapter 29.	Island Systems
Chapter 30.	Dryland Systems
Chapter 31.	Synthesis

The MA Condition and Trends Working Group aims to assess the current condition and recent trends of ecosystems in terms of their capacity to provide services for people. Effective ecosystem management relies on a sound knowledge of ecosystem condition, ecosystem change, and the impacts of ecosystem change on people. Such knowledge is acquired from information on the state of ecosystems and human well-being through time - i.e., information on condition and trends. The group will consider historical causes of ecosystem changes and will assess the consequences of such changes for human well-being.

Frascati, near Rome, Italy was the location for the first meeting of the Condition and Trends Working Group, hosted by FAO in May. Over 40 eminent natural and social scientists attended the meeting, and considerable progress was made developing the conceptual aspects of this component of the MA, as well as with expanding the Condition and Trends Assessment Report outline, which is summarized in Box 1.

The work plan of the group was developed, as with the rest of the MA, through extensive interaction with stakeholders and users of the assessment findings. The work plan has evolved to include a systematic assessment of the main services provided by ecosystems. Each of these services (whether provisioning, supporting, or cultural in nature) will first be considered individually. For each service, the Assessment Report will address the current and recent trends in the scale and distribution of supply and demand, approaches to valuation, and aspects of near-future sustainability. The report will also consider causes of changes in the quality and quantity of supply and demand in these services, and explore the links with human well-being and biodiversity.

The Condition Assessment Report will also analyze the various systems from which key services are provided. The system categories for the assessment map closely to traditionally defined biomes, but will specifically focus on "management units" of the biosphere. For example, the working group is looking at rangelands

(defined to include grasslands, savannahs, and deserts), cultivated systems, and marine fishery systems. (See the outline summary below for the complete list.)

Each system will be profiled, examining the major choices, conflicts, and tradeoffs between services provided by the system and how changes in the system have affected the provision of those services. Interactions with other systems also will be considered, and sustainability issues will be explored for the capacity of the systems to continue to provide the range of services. The “services and systems” format for this component of the Assessment will allow for the examination of the tradeoffs between the different services that are inherent within and between managed systems, and will allow users to approach the material in the most appropriate manner for their needs.

In addition to the Condition and Trends Assessment of Services (in Part II) and Systems (in Part III), an introductory section (Part I) will expand upon some of the relevant material from the MA Conceptual Framework. This will support strong integration with the Scenarios and Responses Working Groups, and will link the global Condition Assessment with the various sub-global components of the MA.

The treatment of biodiversity as a component of ecosystems, as a provider of ecosystem supporting services, and as an intrinsic entity will also be considered in the introductory section of the Conditions Report. A final synthesis chapter will draw from Parts II and III to consider trends in drivers, resources and values across systems, and the connections between, and major transitions in, the various systems and services.

An additional key role of this working group, as identified in the extensive “user needs” survey for the MA, is to establish baseline information for “current condition” in the year 2000. This will serve as a benchmark against which future assessments of “trends” can be based, and also for our state of knowledge for ecosystem assessment at the beginning of the new millennium.

The Condition Working Group is co-chaired by Rashid Hassan at the Centre for Environmental Economics and Policy in Africa (CEEPA) and Bob Scholes at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in Pretoria. The Technical Support Unit is led by Neville Ash at UNEP’s World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) in Cambridge, UK. CLAs are currently being finalized, and lead authors are being engaged to assemble the chapter writing teams in advance of the second meeting of the working group, to be held in November 2002.

- Neville Ash, Condition Working Group Technical Support Unit

For further information on any aspects of the Condition Working Group, please contact Neville on email at ash@millenniumassessment.org or by phone on +44 1223 277314.

MA Meetings and Events 2002

August 20-24

Assessment Panel and Conceptual Framework
Authors Workshop, Frankfurt, Germany.

August 23

Meeting of MA Board Executive Committee,
conference call.

August 26-September 4

WSSD, Johannesburg: MA Side Event, Location Wild Olive Room,
Ubuntu Village, August 26, 13:00.

September 18-24

CMS COP, Bonn, Germany: MA Side Event, TBD.

October 7-11

MA Scenarios Author Workshop, Bangkok, Thailand.

November 4-8

MA Conditions Author Workshop, Sao Carlos, Brazil.

November 18-26

Ramsar COP, Valencia, Spain: MA Side Event, November 19,
Location TBD, 13:00.

December 13-17

Assessment Panel and Conceptual Framework
Authors Workshop, San Francisco, United States.

February 11-12, 2003

MA Board Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland.

Please direct questions or comments regarding the contents of this newsletter to Valerie Thompson (Thompson@millenniumassessment.org, Tel: +1 202 729 7600). You have received this information because of a request submitted via the MA website. If you do not wish to continue receiving updates on the MA, please send an e-mail to postmaster@millenniumassessment.org, including “remove from list” as the subject of the message.