What is the Montreal process?

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There have been three major directions in which international action towards sustainable management of forests has developed since the Earth Summit of 1992. These activities under the UN umbrella itself - for example, the setting up of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) under the aegis of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) - initiatives at international and regional levels (such as the Helsinki and Montreal Processes), and measures by the NGOs and industry to develop timber certification schemes (Forestry Stewardship Council, ISO standards etc.).

New Zealand has been working on all three fronts to ensure cohesion between international initiatives and our own approaches to sustainable management. In this context we want to look closely at the Montreal Process.

The Montreal Process is a non-binding agreement between ten non-European temperate countries on a set of criteria and indicators of conservation and sustainable management of their forests. The ten countries are Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. The criteria agreed, following two years of negotiation, are intended to address how countries protect the major values derived from forests. There were seven major areas identified. These were:

- conservation of biological diversity
- maintenance of productive capacity of forests
- maintenance of forest ecosystem health and vitality
- conservation and maintenance of soil and water resources
- maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles
- maintenance of long-term multiple socio-economic benefits, and
- appropriate institutional framework.

A wide range of indicators was also developed as the measurement relating to each of the criteria. For instance, the indicators of conservation and maintenance of soil and water resources criterion include:

- soil and water resources criterion include
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