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IPF-2 HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 12 MARCH 1996

Delegates dedicated day two of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests to programme element I.4, fragile ecosystems affected by desertification and the impact of air-borne pollution of forests and element I.5, needs and requirements of countries with low forest cover.

ECOSYSTEMS AFFECTED BY DESERTIFICATION, AND AIR-BORNE POLLUTION IMPACTS

PART 1 – DESERTIFICATION

Co-Chair Krishnan invited delegates to resume commentary on program element I.4.

CHINA stressed the need to rely on national legal regimes and suggested that national plans reflect each nation's economic and social development. Developed countries should assist with financing and share technical know-how related to increasing forest cover and managing existing forests. The EU called for: integrating national plans with evolving international programs; improving donor coordination; and expanded applied research, particularly on native and woody species as well as alternative fuel sources. AUSTRALIA stated that community and land owner participation is key to addressing desertification issues.

SWEDEN encouraged an expansion of plantation research with an aim towards clarifying management objectives and establishing profitable market outlets. He called for an interdisciplinary approach, noting the need to address issues such as animal husbandry, water conservation and sound agricultural practices. CANADA called for institutional strengthening and recognition of links to the convention on desertification (CCD). He urged countries to reform ineffective land tenure systems and to promote participation of local communities and integration of traditional knowledge. Alternative fuel sources should be identified and socioeconomic factors considered with the goal of enhanced food security. The US, supported by Japan, endorsed linkages to the CCD, including afforestation and reforestation under the CCD Committee on Science and Technology.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA stated that desertification is a global issue, not a regional one and encouraged technology transfer and NGO participation. CHILE stated that governmental assistance in the form of direct and indirect subsidies as well as providing access to technology has resulted in an increase in plantations and an overall reduction in desertified/arid zones.

MEXICO called for discussion of strategies to improve, enhance and backstop markets for Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). JAPAN called desertification an issue of sustainable development, and emphasized technologies adaptable to local populations.

MALAYSIA highlighted the effect of atmospheric pollutants on soil critical nutrient loads, while INDONESIA emphasized prevention in mitigating these effects. The NETHERLANDS stressed preservation of remaining natural vegetation and called for local participation in national forestry action programmes. NORWAY highlighted bottom-up and participatory approaches, especially in the context of utilizing traditional knowledge for management.

IRAN stated that the IPF should address underlying causes such as poverty and unemployment, and questioned the value of industrial afforestation of arid lands.

ZIMBABWE noted that afforestation can be expensive. He stated that survival needs limit the participation of rural people in combating desertification. PAPUA NEW GUINEA stated that research and information sharing is necessary to promote selection of appropriate species, and noted the importance of national and local partnerships. INDIA highlighted the work of the Arid Forest Research Institute on sustainable agricultural and water harvesting practices by small and marginal farmers in dry areas.

ARGENTINA stated that international cooperation should encourage reforestation with native species, and called for NTFP research for sustainable development.

TANZANIA emphasized the problem of land degradation by refugees. ALGERIA called attention to a national reforestation programme to reduce poverty and internal migration. He called for technology transfer and financial assistance. FRANCE stated that natural and reconstituted forests are not substitutable, and called for moderating demand for wood products.

UGANDA noted that reforestation campaigns in tropical Africa have not narrowed the gap between afforestation and deforestation, and requested a reference to narrowing the gap as a priority. BRAZIL could not support statements that plantations are negative as a whole and questioned the asserted sharp decline in the production and trade of non-timber forest products. He said the document did not present a holistic view of desertification. FINLAND said international bodies should develop decentralized action programs that would be carried out by the countries themselves. IGOs should address capacity-building and provide strategic support for national land use programmes. PERU requested more information on desertification and population pressures for IPF-3. He emphasized the importance of addressing population pressures in high mountain regions. The Chair summarized delegates' statements: placing IPF in the context of the CBD, Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) and INCD; an integrated view of underlying causes; socioeconomic plans in harmony with afforestation; national forest action plans on the local and micro level; bottom-up and participatory management and partnerships; NGO and local authority participation; suitable species for arid areas, the potential of NTFPs and traditional knowledge.

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On the impact of air-borne pollutants, the EU said air pollution is an external factor that cannot be influenced by the forest sector itself. He supported the proposed topics for consideration and highlighted the need for national commitments. POLAND suggested several management principles and called for promotion of natural ecosystem processes. He stressed the need for development and transfer of environmentally sound technology to prevent pollution. NORWAY emphasized the "critical loads" concept and the need for cost-effective agreements. It has supported a pilot project on a methodology for use in the ECE region. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA said an international agreement may be premature and noted the need for scientific evidence and research. He called for a workshop or expert group meeting. DENMARK said the link between pollutants and elemental inputs from the atmosphere should be considered during afforestation efforts. AUSTRIA said the CSD should be informed that pollution abatement in energy production and transportation are essential for forest protection. GERMANY said that air pollution illustrates that sustainable development of forests is related to factors beyond control of the forest community. He supported monitoring effects over long periods, raising awareness to influence political decisions and taking measures to improve forests stands. CANADA highlighted the need to demonstrate that policies are based on objective scientific research. He noted the importance of transferring environmentally sound technology.

PART 2 — AIR POLLUTION AND FORESTS

SWITZERLAND, supported by a number of delegations, emphasized the importance of the "critical loads" approach to understanding the impact of airborne emissions on forests. JAPAN commented on adapting this approach to South and East Asia, noting that urbanization and nitrogen oxide emissions necessitated a regional approach.

GHANA stated that airborne pollution is not only a problem for developed countries. He called for a preventive approach in countries just beginning to industrialize. He cautioned that different forests have varying capabilities to withstand air pollution. The US highlighted its national clean air legislation and implementing regulations, a new forest health monitoring initiative, and a US-Canada accord on transboundary air pollution. SWEDEN stated there is sufficient knowledge to take action to mitigate airborne pollution. He stated that complex ecosystems such as tropical rainforests may be especially sensitive, and that the problem cannot be solved through forest management practices.

CITIZENS ALLIANCE FOR SAVING THE EARTH AND ATMOSPHERE on behalf of several Japanese NGOs highlighted the importance of legally-binding instruments on transboundary pollution and on climate change. INDIA stated that energy use per capita is very low in his country, and described efforts to promote clean energy sector technology.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION drew attention to the fragile nature of boreal forests, noting that Russian forests comprise 22% of the world's total. FRANCE highlighted the role of scientific research, public education and media coverage in encouraging decisions to mitigate airborne pollution. BRAZIL called for a study of natural versus anthropogenic causes of forest dieback. He called the reference to economic growth and fossil fuels a "sensitive issue" with developing countries, also requiring further study.

NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF COUNTRIES WITH LOW FOREST COVER

Co-Chair Martin Holdgate introduced programme element I.5, needs and requirements of countries with low forest cover (LFCs), and UNEP senior programme officer Bai Mass Taal introduced the document (E/CN.17/IPF/1996/4). The document attempts to identify LFCs based on FAO statistics and definitions. It concludes that LFCs require cooperation to reduce their dependence on foreign forest goods and services, and that they may consider investing in "minimum permanent forest estate." The document also proposes actions.

CHINA said it might be advisable to use a unified low forest cover definition. It is essential to address forest cover at an international as well as national level. The report is missing the

need for international cooperation including capacity building and financial and technical assistance. MEXICO said all types of forests and forest vegetation should be considered. Biodiversity and other environmental goods and services that are not reflected in economic terms are important. The UK said it is not appropriate to search for a single definition that will satisfy all circumstances. Actions should be prioritized, recognizing that all countries do not have the same options and that afforestation, reforestation, plantations and other items are not only for LFCs.

AUSTRALIA said there is a need to identify developed and developing countries' needs. Work should be done on inventory methodology, and greater emphasis given to timber production values. Plantations can contribute directly to protecting biodiversity and indirectly to decreasing pressure on native forest resources. GABON proposed to define optimal forest cover as a point at which a country's supply of forest goods and services equals demand and to refer to "irreducible needs" to eliminate North-South discrepancies. The NETHERLANDS emphasized the importance of timber. He expressed hesitation about promoting substitutes.

GERMANY encouraged grouping countries in relation to their causes of deforestation, noting this may also help in the analysis of program element I.2. Inter-sectoral policy development considering microeconomic factors is necessary. Countries should establish affordable quantities of forest cover, factoring in opportunity costs associated with water and land tenure systems. The US sought clarification of the reference to "global" in relation to the availability of forest products per person on national and global terms. He welcomed international cooperation concerning technology sharing, as well as joint implementation schemes for carbon set-off and financing. CANADA urged that the report address developed countries with low forest cover. He recommended participatory approaches to forest stewardship, enhanced efficiency of fuelwood use and valuation of wood and non-wood resources. Biodiversity concerns should be integrated into existing national plans and land tenure systems.

IRAN urged the Panel to consider global issues and to examine the causes behind LFCs such as poverty and the lack of technology and expertise. He suggested that regional and international efforts be undertaken to assist LFCs. Mangrove forests should be addressed. COLOMBIA has relatively high forest cover, but the recommendations will be relevant because all countries should improve degraded areas. He said the list of recommendations should be prioritized. NEW ZEALAND appreciated the emphasis on national level concerns, the distinction made between LFC and LFC per capita and the recognition of questions about the environmental impacts of substitutes. MALAYSIA expressed uncertainty over the definition of forest cover and questioned whether woodlands should be included. IPF should consider a methodology for evaluation of non-wood forest products and define "uniqueness" to cover all forest types.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates and observers say differing views expressed in the first two days of IPF-2 on whether certain measures should be implemented at the global or national level could be the resumption of a continuing debate. Raised initially regarding underlying causes of deforestation and regarding optimum forest cover, the global-national balance could re-emerge in other issues. Observers say similar considerations have run through forest policy processes since UNCED, with initial aspirations toward global action ending with decision-making left to national governments. Others say national action will be critical to the effectiveness of any global measures.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF COUNTRIES WITH LOW FOREST COVER: Delegates are expected to continue discussions of programme element I.5, needs and requirements of countries with low forest cover, in morning and afternoon sessions.