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THIRD SESSION OF THE CSD'S INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON FORESTS (IPF-3) 9-20 SEPTEMBER 1996

The third session of Intergovernmental Panel on Forests will open Monday, 9 September in Geneva. The Panel will continue consideration of its five categories of work, which is divided into 11 programme elements, and will convene two Working Groups. Working Group I is expected to consider Category I (implementation of UNCED decisions related to forests at the national and international level including an examination of sectoral and cross-sectoral linkages) and Category III (scientific research, forest assessment and development of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management); and Working Group II is expected to address Category II (international cooperation in financial assistance and technology transfer) and Category IV (trade and environment relating to forest products and services). Category V (international organizations and multilateral institutions and instruments including appropriate legal mechanisms) is expected to be discussed in Plenary.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IPF

The Economic and Social Council, in its decision 1995/226, endorsed the recommendation of the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to establish an open-ended *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) to pursue consensus and coordinated proposals for action to support the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests. In pursuing its mandate, the IPF is focusing on 11 issues clustered into five interrelated categories and will submit final conclusions and policy recommendations to the CSD at its fifth session in 1997.

The first meeting of the IPF took place in New York from 11-15 September 1995. At this meeting, delegates adopted the IPF programme of work and attempted to set the dates and venues of future meetings. Several issues that have typically divided North and South again proved difficult. Members of the G-77 were resistant to any proposal that could foreseeably lead to a loss of national control over forests and forest products. There was also concern about the subject of criteria and indicators (C&I) and whether proposed intersessional workshops should constitute an official part of the Panel process. Developed countries questioned the need to extend the length of Panel meetings and expressed serious concerns about the Panel's work.

The IPF held its second session from 11-22 March 1996 in Geneva. Delegates conducted their first substantive discussions of six programme elements, and also completed initial

consideration of the remaining elements. During the final two days of the meeting, delegates considered the Co-Chairs' summaries. They labeled these transitional in nature to signify that the summaries did not represent negotiated text. Delegates agreed to begin negotiations at IPF-3 on items that had received substantive consideration at the second session, although another substantive discussion is scheduled on the programme element on financial assistance and technology transfer. Delegates left Geneva satisfied that they had expressed national positions on a range of forest issues, but were somewhat frustrated that all of their positions were not reflected in the report of IPF-2.

RESULTS OF COUNTRY-LED INITIATIVES

EXPERT CONSULTATION ON IMPLEMENTING THE FOREST PRINCIPLES — PROMOTION OF NATIONAL FOREST AND LAND-USE PROGRAMMES: The expert consultation "Implementing the Forest Principles — Promotion of National Forest and Land Use Programmes" was held in Feldafing, Germany from 16-21 June 1996. Sponsored by Germany, the consultation focused on components of programme element I.1, Promotion of National Forest and Land Use Plans and Programmes, and programme element II, International Cooperation and Financial Assistance and Technology Transfer for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). Experts from governments, the private sector, NGOs and international organizations discussed four themes: sectoral planning, policies and the institutional setting; investment programming; national capacity and capacity building; and international cooperation in support of national forest programmes (NFPs). The participants — 31 from developing countries and 36 from developed countries — produced a report, which includes "options for action," for further consideration during IPF-3. Among the options suggested for IPF consideration were: preparing a code of conduct involving financial institutions, cooperation agencies and national authorities; developing strategic planning for investments to facilitate funding for SFM; focusing capacity building on local institutions; establishing a forum for international consultation on forests; and enabling the conceptual development and implementation of country-led NFPs. For photos and a full report of the Feldafing Expert Consultation try <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/proceedings/>.

WORKSHOP ON FINANCIAL MECHANISMS AND SOURCES OF FINANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY: The workshop, co-sponsored by UNDP and the Governments of Denmark and South Africa, was held from 4-7 June 1996 in Pretoria, South Africa, and was attended by 70 experts from 45 countries. The workshop produced the Pretoria Declaration, which will support and contribute to IPF's work on international cooperation in financial assistance and technology

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transfer. In the Declaration, the experts recognized that forests, including wooded lands, simultaneously provide a wide range of economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits at the local, national, regional and global levels, and that maintaining all types of the world's forests in a healthy state is in the collective interest of present and future generations. The experts called upon governments to take a number of urgent actions, such as: securing the market value of natural resources capital stock, land-use planning and security of land tenure through policy reforms; creating and promoting a favorable environment for investment in SFM, including macro-economic stability; providing incentives and promoting the use of appropriate technologies to support SFM; and formulating and implementing national forest programmes that include clear action plans and provisions for in-country coordinating mechanisms and monitoring of progress.

In the report of the workshop, the participants noted that during the last few years many donors have reduced ODA and that forestry ODA has declined in real terms. Meanwhile, private investment flows to developing countries have been rising and are now five times greater than ODA. They note that directing private investment toward sustainable forest management constitutes a critical task. In developing countries the current flows of private investment are highly concentrated on a few countries with export potential, while serious funding shortages are experienced in countries where forestry is oriented to domestic markets. For more information on the meeting contact: UNDP, One UN Plaza, New York, NY, 10017, tel: +1-212-906-5629; fax: +1-212-906-6973; e-mail: HQ@undp.org.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CERTIFICATION AND LABELING OF PRODUCTS FROM SUSTAINABLY MANAGED FORESTS: This conference, sponsored by the government of Australia, was held from 26-30 May 1996 in Brisbane to advance the international dialogue on the issue of certification and labeling as a means for achieving SFM. Based on workshop discussions, participants recommended that the IPF consider several conclusions, including: certification and labeling are potentially useful tools among many others to promote SFM and their efficacy needs further evaluation; both performance standards and environmental management systems are complementary and important components for the assessment of SFM; and there is insufficient information to determine the extent of the market demand for certified products. The conclusions also note that a number of issues merit further consideration. These include: costs and benefits; market implications; the scientific basis for defining and measuring SFM; governance and credibility of certification schemes; the roles of governments and international institutions and organizations; consistency with international agreements; harmonization and mutual recognition between schemes; trade impacts; and the role of environmental, economic and social objectives in achieving SFM. For information contact the Conference Secretariat, PO Box 505 Curtain ACT 2605, Australia, tel: +61 6 281 6524, fax: +61 6 2851336.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS WORKING GROUP MEETING ON TRADE, LABELING OF FOREST PRODUCTS AND CERTIFICATION OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT: An International Experts' Working Group Meeting on "Trade, Labeling of Forest Products and Certification of Sustainable Forest Management" was held in Bonn, Germany from 12-16 August 1996 as a joint initiative of the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Indonesia. Seventy participants from 37 countries, and several international organizations and NGOs attended the meeting. The group proposed that the IPF consider options for action, and recommended that arrangements be made for a continuous exchange of information and experience on certification and labeling in appropriate fora to ensure transparency and to facilitate its further development.

Policy dialogue should focus on the international, regional and national levels with respect to the following: international accreditation bodies; mutual recognition, harmonization and/or co-ordination of certification systems; mechanisms capable of resolving conflicts and conflicts of interest to assure credibility of schemes; and the special needs of small forest owners and community-based forest activities and their integration into forest certification schemes. The group noted that, wherever possible, voluntary certification schemes should take account of C & I frameworks at national, regional, and international levels and the need to maintain relevance and practicability. The IPF may wish to bring to the attention of the WTO the potential positive relationship between SFM and voluntary certification and labeling systems and highlight the principal concepts of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade. For more information contact: Hagen Frost, German Federal Ministry of Economics, tel: +49 228 615-3947, fax: +49 228 615-3993 or Dr. Untung Iskandar, Indonesian Ministry of Forestry, tel: +21-5701114, 5730680, fax: +21-5738732, 5700226.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL SEMINAR ON CRITERIA AND INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT: This seminar, held in Helsinki, Finland from 19-22 August 1996, was hosted by the Government of Finland and organized in collaboration with the FAO, and supported the IPF's work programme element III.2. The open-ended Seminar was attended by 155 experts from 55 countries. The conclusions note that C&I are useful tools, designed ultimately to improve the quality of forest management and play an integral role in the sustainable development of nations. The potential benefits of using C&I are evident: internationally, by broadening the basis of information and understanding about the quantity and quality of the world's forests; at the national level, as a guide in developing or revising policies and legislation, and in the formulation and refinement of national forest programmes; and at the forest management unit level, in assessing the outcome of forest management and providing a basis for continuous improvement. There are linkages between these levels that deserve to be more fully examined and understood.

The group's key elements for action note that the IPF may wish to: recognize C&I for sustainable forest management as an important forest policy tool in guiding and assessing progress towards sustainable forest management; acknowledge that differences among countries in socio-economic development will have a direct impact on the development and implementation of C&I for sustainable forest management; recommend that C&I be integrated into National Forest Programmes or other relevant policy frameworks, and should thus directly contribute to the decision-making process by supporting and directing policies for the conservation and sustainable development of natural renewable resources, based on prevailing conditions and national priorities; recommend the establishment of linkages and the harmonization of data requirements between international initiatives on C&I for SFM and different conventions and other processes and instruments related to forests; and recognize that countries presently collaborating in international processes are in different stages of development and implementation of national level C&I; and that some countries still must join these efforts. For information contact the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; ISCI Secretariat, tel: +358 0 160 2405; fax: +358 0 160 2430; e-mail: isci@mmm.agrifin.mailnet.fi; Internet: <http://www.mmm.fi/isci/home.htm>.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

The Plenary will meet at 10:00 am in Room XIX. At 3:00 pm, Working Group I is scheduled to meet in Room XIX and Working Group II is scheduled to meet in Room XX.