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UNFF11
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UNFF11 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY 2015

UNFF11 reconvened on Wednesday, 13 May, for the start of the High-Level Segment (HLS) and the continuation of discussions in WG2. WG1 had completed its work late the previous evening, agreeing on the draft ministerial declaration. Throughout the day, the HLS heard general statements from Member States.

WG2 resumed in parallel to consider the Co-Chairs' proposed resolution text. They also convened in smaller contact groups to discuss text on MoI. WG2 discussions continued into the night.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

The HLS was convened under the theme "The Future IAF We Want."

UNFF11 Chair Noel Messone welcomed delegates, saying this segment provides an opportunity for renewed commitments for a stronger IAF beyond 2015.

ECOSOC President Martin Sajdik (Austria) highlighted reforms in ECOSOC that aim to create synergies among its subsidiary bodies, including UNFF. He noted that the June 2015 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will focus on ways to implement its functions in reviewing the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, in which forests play an important role.

South Africa, on behalf of G-77/CHINA, said the group strongly advocates for establishing a global forest fund to catalyze SFM implementation. The EU highlighted milestones achieved through the current IAF, including the NLBI and increased awareness of forests' multi-functionality and their role in the international development agenda.

GERMANY pointed to the need to enhance SFM to protect forests for future generations. LITHUANIA called for global forest policy coherence, including the development of strategic plans with time bound, concrete actions, objectives and goals, and secure financial arrangements to tackle all forest-related challenges.

PAKISTAN noted the tangible steps they are taking towards SFM, including promoting public-private partnerships and integrating forest planning into rural development efforts. JAMAICA recognized the crucial role forests play in soil stabilization, watershed protection, tourism, and climate change mitigation.

GUINEA noted rich biodiversity within 13 million hectares of Guinean forests and urged for accessible sources of finance to protect these hotspots. SENEGAL called for a strengthened UNFF, noting the importance of adopting specific measures to: address

illegal logging; improve local governments' accountability; and promote participatory forest management to build sustainable livelihoods.

ZAMBIA called on UNFF11 to establish a new IAF that is supported by robust financing mechanisms. FIJI said a lack of commitment to MoI means UNFF cannot achieve its goals. CONGO called for solidarity in UNFF, including in financing, capacity building and technology transfer.

MADAGASCAR reported on his country's efforts to combat illegal logging through engagement with the World Bank and FLEG. GHANA said SFM plays an important role in enhancing the role of forests in sustainable development. GABON called on UNFF Member States to cooperate in a common vision for the future IAF, including supporting SFM implementation through strengthening of financial mechanisms.

CZECH REPUBLIC urged that commitments made in the declaration and resolution affirm the key role of forests in sustainable development. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION reaffirmed the need for a legally binding agreement on all types of forests and announced a US\$300,000 contribution to the UNFF Trust Fund.

MALAYSIA called for establishing a global forest fund, lamenting that progress in SFM has thus far been "unsatisfactory." CHINA underscored that the current forest policy landscape is fragmented, stressing the importance of NLBI implementation.

SLOVAKIA emphasized the value of regional level processes in connecting national and global level efforts. ROMANIA noted the importance of: tracking and controlling timber flow; managing forests in order to address poverty eradication; and engaging Major Groups in the UNFF.

NORWAY noted that the UNFF and CPF have the potential to improve their relevance and effectiveness by, *inter alia*: addressing emerging issues; reaching out to sectors beyond forestry; and taking into account the varying conditions across different regions.

SWEDEN noted their priority to facilitate SFM that promotes gender equality and secure forest tenure for the most vulnerable groups. MONGOLIA emphasized that community-based forest management exemplifies sustainability and should be reinforced throughout the world.

ARGENTINA said their SFM management plan is a flagship project in Latin America, calling for UNFF to support further SFM implementation through increased funding. IRAN said despite efforts in the past two decades to implement SFM, deforestation continues at an alarming rate.

The PHILIPPINES reported initiatives to combat illegal logging through prohibitive sentencing and confiscation of logs, which are

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then used for school furniture. SPAIN announced her country will host the Forest Europe Ministerial Conference in October 2015, which will address, *inter alia*, forests' role in a green economy.

JAPAN stressed forests' importance for DRR, recalling emphasis on forest conservation at the third UN World Conference on DRR held in March 2015. CANADA stressed that the strategic plan for the future IAF needs to focus on high priority actions that can be achieved within a short time and have long-term tangible results.

NICARAGUA referred to the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve, where forest protection is being achieved through legal policies and frameworks, and respect for communities' rights and Mother Earth. VENEZUELA called for recognizing the intrinsic value of forests and the rights of nature to regenerate, as opposed to capitalistic models that emphasize products and the consumption value of forests. COLOMBIA urged for political commitment based on common goals and targets with measurable objectives.

INDONESIA mentioned successes in controlling illegal logging and trade in forest products through timber legality assurance systems. ITALY said his country is enjoying the most forested period in the last 500 years. SUDAN reported that awareness-raising initiatives on forest management and reforestation are starting to deliver. LAO PDR referred to their Forestry Strategy, which aims to increase national forest cover to 70% by 2020.

TURKEY highlighted that their national policies provide grants and soft loans for income-generating activities among forest-dependent communities. GRENADA emphasized that SFM needs to be achieved by "crossing boundaries and building alliances" with all stakeholders. ECUADOR called for a stronger focus on the ethical, human, social and cultural dimensions of forests.

FRANCE noted their commitment to supporting SFM implementation in developing countries. FINLAND emphasized the importance of participatory forest management that empowers women. SWITZERLAND observed that despite all the international forest-related fora, the voice of forests "is still hardly audible."

PARAGUAY called for improved dialogue among stakeholder groups on the ground. MOROCCO highlighted the question of how best to create synergies between UNFF and the Rio Conventions. SAMOA noted that forests and SFM provide win-win solutions for many development challenges in the transition to a green economy.

THAILAND said that cooperation on SFM is essential to reverse forest loss. The US cited a need to create enabling policy conditions to attract finance and ensure accountability. SURINAME called for strengthening the UNFF Secretariat at all levels. VIET NAM said that they have increased national forest cover over the last two decades. URUGUAY highlighted the role of education in ensuring the conservation of natural resources.

INDIA called for addressing MoI for effective SFM implementation. BOLIVIA emphasized the importance of non-market based mechanisms for the sustainable development of forests. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA looked forward to the meaningful achievements of UNFF11. COSTA RICA lamented the lack of progress towards discussing a legally-binding agreement. PALESTINE bemoaned a loss of forest cover as a result of political conflict. KENYA emphasized UNFF as a forum for ensuring SFM implementation.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA noted that customary land tenure in his country is a constraint to SFM. PERU said their SFM strategy is to ensure forests do not compete with other sectors. TANZANIA emphasized the need for technology transfer to achieve SFM.

Chair Messone adjourned the session.

WORKING GROUPS

WG2: During the report back on Tuesday evening's MoI discussions, it was noted that delegates had engaged in a fruitful

exchange, with a considerable amount of the original text concerning functions of the facilitative process having been deleted, and alternative text formulated. WG2 Co-Chair Bezerra invited delegates to come up with an agreed, clean text on MoI by the end of the day's sessions, suggesting delegates split into both a contact group and a smaller discussion group to resolve key issues.

Delegates then turned to the Vice-Chairs' proposal on the draft resolution, which many considered a good basis for deliberations.

On the IAF beyond 2015, there was discussion on wording concerning the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, "taking into account different visions and approaches." Some preferred deleting this addition, while others urged that different models and tools for achieving sustainable development also be taken into account.

Delegates next discussed whether the IAF should promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, "in particular" or "including" the NLBI. One delegate also proposed inclusion of wording that ECOSOC consider a full range of options, including a legally binding instrument or agreement on forests. Others wished to have this insertion deleted or moved to a section on tasks for the UNFF. A delegate also suggested deleting reference to "Major Groups and other stakeholders" in language regarding the composition of the IAF. Many opposed this.

Delegates resumed discussions of the Vice-Chairs' proposal on the draft resolution in the afternoon, with Co-Chair Granholm urging them to make compromises where possible.

Delegates agreed, *ad referendum*, on certain points concerning the IAF beyond 2015, the UNFF beyond 2015 and the NLBI beyond 2015. Many delegates stressed that the section on monitoring, assessment and reporting was key. There was, however, no consensus on how to capture all concerns. Some therefore suggested simplifying the section to refer only to issues that needed to be resolved at the current session, with the Co-Chairs engaging in consultations on this.

On MoI, it was explained that a small group had met over lunchtime to work through some issues. This resulted in an unofficial document with proposed text that seeks to capture different views. The contact group was invited to resume MoI discussions on the basis of this proposal after the first reading of the Vice-Chairs' proposal had concluded.

Discussions continued into the night.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The conference room was brimming with new energy as ministers filtered in for Wednesday's HLS, despite the late night negotiations that led to the draft ministerial declaration being approved. Anticipating the ministerial declaration to be tabled on Thursday, some reflected there had also been an "HLC" – or "high level of compromise." One delegate was heard saying "it may well represent the lowest common denominator." Others, however, were heard celebrating that for the first time in the UNFF, a declaration has acknowledged "living in harmony with nature," representing a fundamentally different vision of sustainability, which "shouldn't be dismissed among current conversations" aiming to "transform" the IAF.

Meanwhile, with discussions in WG2 resuming in parallel to the HLS, the atmosphere was more constrained as old disagreements surfaced. It seemed that in spite of the Vice-Chairs' proposed compromise text being seen as a good place to start, originally proposed language was being reintroduced. This led one seasoned observer to summarize WG2's progress thus far as being "one step forward...two steps back."