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FOURTH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON FORESTS 1-21 FEBRUARY 1997

The fourth and final session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF-4) gets underway today in New York. With only eight working days to go, delegates have a formidable workload before them. The two primary goals of IPF-4 are to agree on recommendations to the Commission on Sustainable Development on legal mechanisms, international organizations and multilateral institutions and to complete negotiations on the IPF's entire report, consisting of 12 different programme elements.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IPF

The Commission on Sustainable Development's open-ended *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) was established to pursue consensus and coordinated proposals for action to support the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. 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 the IPF. In pursuing its mandate, the IPF is focusing on 12 programme elements clustered into five interrelated categories. The IPF will submit final conclusions and policy recommendations to the CSD at its fifth session in April 1997.

IPF-1: The first session 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/China 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 and whether proposed interessional workshops should constitute an official part of the IPF process. Developed countries questioned the need to extend the duration of Panel meetings and expressed serious concerns about the Panel's work.

IPF-2: The IPF held its second session from 11-22 March 1996 in Geneva. Delegates conducted their first substantive discussions on six programme elements and completed initial consideration of the remaining six. 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 was 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 some were frustrated that their full positions were not adequately reflected in the report of IPF-2.

IPF-3: The IPF held its third session from 9-20 September 1996 in Geneva. Delegates undertook substantive discussions on eleven programme elements: I.1 (national forest and land-use plans); I.2 (underlying causes of deforestation); I.3 (traditional forest-related knowledge); I.4 (ecosystems affected by desertification and pollution); I.5 (needs of countries with low forest cover); II (financial assistance and technology transfer); III.1(a) (forest assessment); III.1(b) (valuation of forest benefits); III.2 (criteria and indicators); IV (trade and the environment); and V.1 (international organizations and multilateral institutions). They also initiated discussion on programme element V.2 (legal mechanisms).

The objective of IPF-3 was to produce a document containing elements to be considered for inclusion in the Panel's final report to the CSD. Delegates did not engage in negotiations or drafting of the elements at IPF-3, but made comments and proposed amendments to be negotiated at IPF-4. Some delegates regarded IPF-3 as a success in that it provided an opportunity for a meaningful exchange of views on the issues. Others expressed disappointment at the Panel's inability to reach the negotiating stage on any of the programme elements and noted that this task may prove daunting during IPF-4.

INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

CONSULTATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR IPF-4: IPF Co-Chairs Martin Holdgate (UK) and Manuel Rodriguez (Colombia) held an informal briefing in preparation for IPF-4 on 16 December 1996 in New York. The Co-Chairs presented a document that they created based on IPF-3 outcomes and proposed its use for negotiation at IPF-4. Many delegates found it premature to accept the document as a basis for negotiation because they had only received the document that morning. Others recommended accepting the document for negotiation, citing it as a good synthesis of the wide views from previous IPF meetings. Delegates also

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discussed the organization of work, scheduling conflicts with other meetings and NGO involvement.

A second round of consultations were held on 4 February 1997 in New York, chaired by Adam Vai Delaney (Papua New Guinea), a member of the CSD Bureau. The purpose of this meeting was to address some of the organizational matters in advance of IPF-4 to save time once the session began. Delegates discussed the use of the Co-Chairs' text as the basis for negotiation, the organization of work for IPF-4 and the preparation of recommendations for presentation to the CSD.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL EXPERT WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY AND LAND USE: This meeting, held in Stockholm, Sweden from 14-18 October 1996, was conducted in support of IPF agenda item I.1, progress through national forest and land-use plans. The main objective was to contribute to a better understanding of participation and consensus-building principles and their implications in formulating and implementing national forest programmes. The workshop was attended by 48 experts from 21 countries and considered case studies submitted by eight countries. The workshop produced options for action for the IPF, such as: acknowledging consensus building as an important process to address sustainable forest management (SFM) in future deliberations; developing mechanisms to strengthen and support research and information exchange on methodologies for consensus building; supporting the enhancement of linkages in order to strengthen collaboration between sectors and different levels of planning; and encouraging countries to embark on a long-term process of consensus building in forestry and land-use programmes and to continuously identify the necessary steps with regard to issues, institutional arrangements and stakeholders.

THIRD MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: The third meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-3) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) met in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 4-15 November 1996. COP-3 took several key decisions, including: elaboration of a realistic work programme on agricultural biodiversity and a more limited one on forest biodiversity; adoption of a long-negotiated Memorandum of Understanding with the GEF; agreement to hold an intersessional workshop on Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities); application by the Executive Secretary for observer status to the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment; and a prosaic statement from the CBD to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly to review implementation of Agenda 21. With regard to forests, the Parties agreed that "some forests" can play a crucial role in conserving biodiversity and that the CBD will work in a complementary way with the IPF and other forest-related fora. The COP's decision also limited the work of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to devising methodologies for the development of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and analyzing the impact of human activity on the loss of forest biodiversity. These decisions are to be transmitted to IPF-4.

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON INTEGRATED APPLICATION OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: An International Workshop on Integrated Application of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Practices was held in Kochi, Japan from 22-25 November 1996. The workshop was co-sponsored by the Governments of Japan, Canada, Malaysia and Mexico in cooperation with FAO, ITTO and

the Kochi prefectural government. The workshop was attended by 155 participants from 36 countries and focused on SFM practices at the field level, in order to distill lessons and experience that could provide insight to IPF-4. Workshop participants specifically examined practical and field level aspects of integrating forest planning into the wider context of land-use planning and integrating research findings into SFM. The workshop formulated a series of "Proposals for Action" at the field level and within the context of the international policy dialogue at the IPF. The proposals for action note that a new "culture" of land-use planning and forest research and extension recognizes that the integration of a variety of environmental, social and economic values, needs and aspirations is essential to achieve SFM practices. The proposals also note that research should be multi-disciplinary to cover all aspects of the topic, including participation by other sectors. Consideration must be given to reforming the reward and incentive structure for forest research and extension. Participants also stated that research and extension must seek to involve all stakeholders on a collaborative basis at all levels and stages.

INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF INDIGENOUS AND OTHER FOREST-DEPENDENT PEOPLES ON THE MANAGEMENT, CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL TYPES OF FORESTS: This meeting, which was held in Leticia, Colombia from 9-13 December 1996, was organized by the International Alliance of Indigenous-Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests, the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organisations in the Amazon Basin (COICA) and the Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon-region (OPIAC), and was co-sponsored by the Governments of Colombia and Denmark. Approximately 100 participants took part in the meeting, including indigenous peoples, NGOs and representatives of governments and international agencies. The meeting's main objective was to formulate resolutions and proposals for action for IPF-4 on matters related to indigenous and other forest peoples' issues. The meeting concluded with the adoption of the Leticia Declaration and Proposals for Actions, which sets out general principles on the rights, welfare, viewpoints and interests of indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent peoples. The Declaration also addresses: national forest and land-use programmes; underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation; traditional forest-related knowledge; financial assistance and technology transfer; criteria and indicators for SFM; and international instruments and mechanisms. A full report on the Leticia Meeting will be made available to all participants of IPF-4.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

The fourth session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests will get underway this morning at 10:00 am. After the Co-Chairs open the session, delegates will adopt the agenda (E.CN.17/IPF/1997/1) and address other organizational matters. Some issues that may arise include the programme of work, the use of two working groups, the use of the Co-Chairs' report (E.CN.17/IPF/1997/3) as the basis for negotiation, and the need to draft recommendations to be presented to the CSD. There will then be an opportunity for a general debate. Several ministers are expected to speak at this time. In the afternoon, a plenary debate is expected on Programme Element V.I: International Organizations and Multilateral Institutions and Instruments (E.CN.17/IPF/1997/5).