



THIRD SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON FORESTS 3-14 MAY 1999

The third session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF-3) will open today in Geneva. At IFF-3, delegates will engage in substantive discussions and prepare draft conclusions and proposals for action on monitoring progress in implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests' (IPF) proposals for action, matters left pending from the IPF process on the need for financial resources, issues arising from the IPF process needing further clarification, and international arrangements and mechanisms to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. Delegates will also receive information and updates on promoting and facilitating implementation, transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs), trade and environment, and forest-related work of international and regional organizations.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IFF

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON FORESTS:

The UN Commission on Sustainable Development's (CSD) open-ended *ad hoc* Intergovernmental Panel on Forests was established in 1995 to pursue consensus and coordinate proposals for action to support the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The IPF focused on 12 programme elements: national forest and land-use plans; underlying causes of deforestation; traditional forest-related knowledge; ecosystems affected by desertification and pollution; needs of countries with low forest cover; financial assistance and technology transfer; forest assessment; valuation of forest benefits; criteria and indicators; trade and environment; international organizations and multilateral institutions; and legal mechanisms. The IPF's objective was to submit final conclusions and policy recommendations to the CSD at its fifth session (CSD-5) in April 1997.

The IPF met four times from 1995-1997. The first session of the IPF (IPF-1) took place in New York from 11-15 September 1995. Delegates adopted the IPF's programme of work and discussed the dates and venues of future meetings. At IPF-2, held 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. Delegates agreed to begin negotiations at IPF-3 on items that had received substantive consideration at IPF-2. At IPF-3, convened from 9-20 September 1996 in Geneva, the objective 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 document at IPF-3, but made comments and proposed amendments to be negotiated at IPF-4.

The fourth and final session of the IPF was held from 11-21 February 1997 in New York. Delegates negotiated and agreed on conclusions and proposals for action under the abovementioned 12 programme elements for the IPF's final report. Delegates called for continued intergovernmental forest policy dialogue but could not agree on major issues such as financial assistance and trade-related matters, or whether to begin negotiations on a global forest convention. On these and other elements, the IPF forwarded a range of options to the CSD in its final report. Recommendations on specific characteristics and functions of a continued intergovernmental forum or negotiating process were attached as a non-negotiated annex to the report. CSD-5 adopted the IPF's report and forwarded a set of recommendations based upon its findings to the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS).

UNGASS: The UN General Assembly, at its nineteenth special session in June 1997, decided to continue the intergovernmental policy dialogue on forests through the establishment of an *ad hoc* open-ended Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) under the aegis of the CSD. In addition, the General Assembly decided that "the Forum should also identify the possible elements of and work toward consensus on international arrangements and mechanisms, for example, a legally-binding instrument." The Economic and Social Council, through resolution 1997/65, established the IFF, which will report to the CSD at its eighth session in 2000.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON FORESTS:

The IFF held its organizational session (IFF-1) from 1-3 October 1997 in New York. Delegates agreed on the IFF's programme of work, the schedule and allocation of programme elements for discussion at future sessions, the number, date and venue of future sessions, participation and the organization of intersessional meetings or consultations. The programme of work includes eight items grouped into three categories.

This issue of the Earth Negotiations Bulletin © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Ian Fry <Ifry@pagasus.com.au>, Laura Ivers <laurai@iisd.org>, Leila Mead <leila@interport.net>, Mark Schulman <markschulman@hotmail.com> and Anny Wong, Ph.D <wonga@ewc.hawaii.edu>. Digital editing by David Farnau <david@virtualstockholm.net> and logistics by Juana Espasa <espasa@hotmail.com>. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org> and the Managing Editor is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Canada (through CIDA), the United States (through USAID) and the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape. General Support for the *Bulletin* during 1999 is provided by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the German Federal Ministry of Environment (BMU) and the German Federal Ministry of Development Cooperation (BMZ), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Community (DG-XI), the Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs of Austria, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment of Norway, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment of Finland, the Government of Sweden, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Ministry for the Environment in Iceland. The *Bulletin* can be contacted by e-mail at <enb@iisd.org> and at tel: +1-212-644-0204; fax: +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted by e-mail at <info@iisd.ca> and at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada. The opinions expressed in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications only and only with appropriate academic citation. For permission to use this material in commercial publications, contact the Managing Editor. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists and can be found on the Linkages WWW server at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>. The satellite image was taken above Nairobi, Kenya, (c)1999 The Living Earth, Inc. <http://livingearth.com>. For information on the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, send e-mail to <enb@iisd.org>.



Category I includes I(a), promoting and facilitating the implementation of the IPF's proposals for action, and I(b), reviewing, monitoring and reporting on progress in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

Category II includes matters left pending on II(a), the need for financial resources, II(b), trade and environment, and II(c), transfer of ESTs to support sustainable forest management (SFM). Category II(d) addresses issues arising from the IPF process needing further clarification, including: underlying causes of deforestation; assessment, monitoring and rehabilitation of forest cover in environmentally critical areas; forest conservation, including conservation in protected areas; identification and definition of global and regional research priorities; the use and application of a range of economic instruments, including tax policies and land tenure arrangements as a means of promoting SFM; and future supply and demand of wood and non-wood products and services. Category II(e) addresses forest-related work of international and regional organizations.

Under Category III, international arrangements and mechanisms, the IFF will identify elements, build a global consensus and engage in further action to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, as well as identify the possible elements of and work toward consensus on international arrangements and mechanisms, for example, a legally-binding instrument on all types of forests. Based on the report submitted to CSD-8 and depending on the decision the CSD takes, the Forum may engage in further action on establishing an intergovernmental negotiation process on new arrangements and mechanisms or a legally-binding instrument on all types of forests.

IFF-2: The objective of IFF-2, held from 24 August - 4 September 1998 in Geneva, was to prepare draft conclusions and proposals for action on promoting and facilitating implementation and addressing certain matters left pending from the IPF. Delegates conducted substantive discussions on I(a), promoting and facilitating implementation of the IPF's proposals for action, II(e), forest-related work of international and regional organizations and existing instruments, II(b), trade and environment and II(c), transfer of ESTs. Text on trade and environment and transfer of ESTs remained heavily bracketed. The IFF-2 also conducted background discussion on, I(b), monitoring progress in implementation of the IPF's proposals for action, II(a) the need for financial resources, II(d), issues needing further clarification and III, international arrangements and mechanisms.

In the interim period, a number of meetings addressing areas of the IFF programme of work were held. These meetings included:

- The International Consultation on Research and Information Systems in Forestry (ICRIS) was held in Gmunden, Austria from 7-10 September 1998. ICRIS examined ways and means to implement research support, with particular emphasis on the interface between research and the user community and the role of research in policy formulation;

- Both the Australian Government consultation entitled International Forest Conservation: Protected Areas and Beyond, held 9-11 September 1998 in Canberra, and the Brazil/US International Expert Meeting on Protected Areas, held 15-19 March 1999 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, explored options for improving the conservation and protection of representative and unique forest types as an integral part of SFM;
- The Global Workshop on Underlying Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation, hosted by the Costa Rican government and facilitated by an organizing committee comprised of UNEP, governments and NGOs, convened in San José from 18-22 January 1999. The Workshop was the culmination of a 16-month process of regional consultations and case studies designed to support and build on the implementation of the IPF proposals for action on the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation and the ongoing work of the IFF;
- The International Experts Meeting on the Role of Planted Forests, sponsored by the Governments of Chile, Denmark, New Zealand and Portugal, was held in Santiago, Chile, from 22-26 February 1999. The meeting addressed the role of plantation forests in meeting the world's growing requirements for wood and non-wood based products; and
- The Experts Meeting of the Costa Rica-Canada Initiative on international arrangements and mechanisms, in support of Category III, met in San José, Costa Rica from 22-26 February 1999. The Experts Meeting was the first of three stages of the Costa Rica-Canada Initiative which aims to identify possible elements and work toward a consensus on the usefulness of having international arrangements and mechanisms, for example, a legally-binding instrument on all types of forests. Regional and sub-regional meetings will be conducted May - October 1999, with a final meeting to be held in Canada in November 1999 to synthesize the results of these meetings.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Delegates will convene in Plenary at 10:00 am. Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, is expected to deliver opening comments from New York via video conference. IFF Co-Chairs, Ilka Ristamäki (Finland) and Bagher Asadi (Iran) will also make opening remarks. The Plenary is expected to adopt the agenda and the organization of work, with possible modifications as sessions will not be held on Thursday, 13 May, due to a holiday.

WORKING GROUPS: The Working Groups established at IFF-2 are expected to convene later in the day. Working Group 1 will discuss monitoring progress in implementation and Working Group 2 will address the future supply of and demand for wood and non-wood forest products and services.