



**AFLEG MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
HIGHLIGHTS:
WEDNESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2003**

On Wednesday, delegates to the Africa Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) Ministerial Conference met in Plenary, closed negotiations and Open Sessions. The Plenary heard reports on progress made on Tuesday by the negotiators, and Working Group discussions. Open Sessions included the launch of the WWF Producers' Group, a review of the Forest Governance Learning Group, and an informal roundtable on how to integrate the AFLEG process into existing institutional and regional frameworks.

PLENARY SESSION

UPDATE ON PROGRESS ON NEGOTIATIONS AND BREAK-OUT WORKING GROUPS: Jag Maini, World Bank consultant, reported on progress made in the closed negotiations on the Ministerial Declaration, noting participation by over 35 countries, and underlining that negotiators are taking into account input from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector.

Lovemore Simwanda, NGO representative, reported on NGO discussions, highlighting recommendations on good governance, legislative reforms, transparency, trade and value-added forest products, forest management and livelihoods, and conflict timber.

Emmanuel Fochive, private sector representative, reported on consultations within the private sector, noting recommendations to establish a task force to determine obstacles to sustainable forest management (SFM), create a steering committee to define monitoring mechanisms for the legality of forest production, and strengthen supervision structures.

Emmanuel Ze Meka, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), and Andy Roby, UK Timber Trade Organization, noted that the Working Group on marketplace and trade issues focused on possible options to ensure legality of forest products. Roby said licensing was considered a key measure and that the Group stressed the need for independent verification mechanisms.

Art Blundell, UN Security Council, reported on the outcomes of the Working Group on conflict timber. Noting the need for a definition of conflict timber, he said the Group recommended that AFLEG deem that revenue from timber should not be used to fund conflicts. He highlighted the issue's complexity, due to sovereignty concerns, and emphasized that post-conflict situations pose serious challenges.

Liz Bennet, World Conservation Society, reported on the outcomes of the Working Group on illegal trade in bushmeat. Noting two sides to the issue, she said some people depend on bushmeat for their livelihoods, but many animal species are under pressure from hunting. She said the Group called for capacity building, awareness raising, independent monitoring, strong wildlife policies, the inclusion of wildlife planning in forest concessions, and country-specific solutions that respect sovereignty.

Jane Bryden, UK, summarized the outcomes of the Working Group on tenure and related local governance issues, noting that forest governance reform is becoming widespread in Africa and that participatory community-based forestry management has an important role to play in the reforms. She said the Group agreed that consistent enforcement, flexibility, capacity building, decentralization, democracy, and political will for reform are key elements for success.

Kauam Tekam, Cameroon, reviewed the conclusions of the Working Group on the implications of illegal activities in the forest sector, institutional reforms and strategies to implement them. He stated that presentations were made on regaining control of Uganda's forests through measures for long-term reform, fuelwood issues, NGO and governmental partnerships, and the impacts of illegal timber exports in Benin. He said the Group identified key factors for success, including transparent mechanisms for granting forest concessions, institutional support through capacity building, strengthened judicial systems and tools, mechanisms to reduce corruption, and stakeholder involvement and partnerships.

OPEN SESSIONS

LAUNCH OF THE WWF PRODUCERS' GROUP IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA: Noting the increasing demand for certified timber and the obstacles faced by companies in West and Central African countries wishing to produce certifiable timber, Laurent Some, WWF, explained that the WWF Producers' Group is a partnership between the private sector and other stakeholders that aims to improve SFM practices in Central and West Africa to meet these requirements.

Participants discussed the concept of community forest, the mutual recognition of various certification schemes, the need to ensure that minimum standards are in place for SFM, and the development of a pan-African harmonized certification scheme.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS

FOREST GOVERNANCE LEARNING GROUP: Adolfo Bila, Eduardo Mondlane University, outlined Mozambique's experience with forest legal reform and governance. He noted that the new legislation: resulted from a participatory process; provides free access to forests for local peoples, and returns 20% of logging fees to local communities; limits the number and volume allowed under annual logging licenses; and reduces logging fees for locally processed timber. Highlighting lessons learned, he stressed the need for institutional reform at all levels to implement the legislation, and the role of NGOs in facilitating implementation at the local level. Bila noted that communities are often not aware of their rights.

James Mayers, International Institute for Environment and Development, introduced the Forest Governance Learning Group, an alliance of independent agencies working on forest governance issues in Western and Southern Africa. Emphasizing that control of, and access to, forests and natural resources are among the most pressing governance issues in rural Africa, he said forestry can contribute to poverty eradication and environmental sustainability, but only with good forest governance. He identified four key governance challenges: tackling the effects of illegal logging on livelihoods; driving national forest programmes (NFPs); incorporating forestry considerations into poverty reduction strategies; and ensuring sustainability and equity of forest privatization and decentralization. In its first year, Mayers said the Group will conduct in-country policy research on illegal and corrupt forestry practices, as well as in-country reviews of governance practices for NFPs, poverty reduction strategies and decentralization.

During the ensuing discussion, participants addressed information sharing, the need to identify priority offenses, the need for funding, governance reform in Asia and Latin America, and the varying success in implementing laws among different ethnic groups. One participant stated that international networks designed to support community forestry often have weak links to communities. Another participant raised the issue of the influence of global conventions on models and approaches being adopted, noting that NFPs emanate from the global level. Another participant highlighted the importance of land tenure for linking control of, and access to, natural resources.

INFORMAL ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON HOW TO INTEGRATE THE AFLEG PROCESS INTO EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS: Markku Simula, World Bank consultant, introduced the roundtable discussion on how to integrate the AFLEG process into existing institutional and regional frameworks.

El Haji Sene, FAO, drew attention to the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission, which serves as a forum for cooperation and information exchange, and the World Forestry Congress, as important FAO initiatives. He highlighted the Commission's study on the African forestry sector.

Outlining the ITTO's efforts to combat illegal logging, Emmanuel Ze Meka, ITTO, noted that illegal logging undermines the competitiveness of forestry companies. Highlighting that the Organization is well-suited to address illegal logging because its membership consists of both producer and consumer countries, he drew attention to relevant ITTO case studies and decisions, and underscored the Organization's commitment to help member countries achieve SFM.

Daniel Ngantou, Conference on Central African Moist-Forest Ecosystems (CEFDHAC), noted that CEFDHAC can contribute to the implementation of the AFLEG Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan,

and the distribution of relevant information to civil society. Drawing attention to regional differences in ecological characteristics, he supported the development of regional action plans for every region in Central Africa.

Jean-Pierre van de Weghe, Central African Forests Observatory (FORAC), presented the FORAC initiative, including a website and databases to provide tools for assessing the state of forests in Africa. Noting the use of the Observatory for creating networks and monitoring forest-related activities, he said the initiative can play a leading role in the AFLEG process.

Emile Kisamo, Lusaka Agreement Task Force, reviewed the Lusaka Agreement on Co-operative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora, and its activities aimed at eliminating illegal trade in forest products. He stressed the Agreement's role in coordinating measures to fight environmental crime, and its willingness to form partnerships with the AFLEG process.

Emile Mkoko, African Timber Organization, presented the Organization's aim to coordinate action to ensure optimal use and conservation of forest resources through SFM. He said achievements include the classification of timber species, the development of criteria and indicators for SFM, and the adoption of plans for tropical timber exploitation. He also noted proposals for a database and a website.

During the ensuing debate, a representative from Indonesia highlighted its experiences since the East Asia FLEG Ministerial Conference in 2001, including the integration of other sectors into forestry management. Regarding illegal logging, he called for strong and continued commitment of all stakeholders, and engagement of trading partners. An NGO representative underscored the readiness of civil society to assist governments to build capacity for law enforcement. Another participant said some countries face "draconian" World Bank policies. A private sector representative asked the FAO and the ITTO for guidance on how they would like forest revenues to be used, and said tax pressures had hindered the ability to distribute revenues to communities. El Haji Sene stressed the need for a mechanism to ensure that communities benefit from revenues.

Simula highlighted the main points emanating from the interventions, including the need for strong political will and continued commitment, internalization of AFLEG principles at all levels, increased coherence and complementarity, and effective cross-border cooperation. Noting the limited focus on law enforcement during the discussion, he suggested delegating some responsibilities for implementation to sub-regional bodies, and increasing cooperation with NGOs and the private sector.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Participants should be seated in the Grand Plenary Hall by 9:00 am. The Official Opening Ceremony of the Ministerial segment of the Conference will commence at 11:00 am, followed by an Opening Address by the Prime Minister of Cameroon and Ministerial Statements. At 1:30 pm, stakeholder statements will be heard, followed by the announcement of the AFLEG Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan at 4:00 pm.

MINISTERIAL MEETING: A closed Ministerial Meeting will be held at 2:15 pm, in a room to be announced.

CLOSING ADDRESS: The closing address will be delivered in Plenary at 5:00 pm.