AFRICA FOREST LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GOVERNANCE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE: 13-16 OCTOBER 2003

The Africa Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) Ministerial Conference will be held from 13-16 October 2003 at the Palais des Congrès in Yaounde, Cameroon. The objectives of the meeting, co-hosted by the Government of Cameroon and the World Bank, are to: share and explore ideas on forest governance; consider priority issues, including illegal forest exploitation and associated trade in Africa; identify ways in which various stakeholders can address these issues, including partnerships between producers and consumers, donors, civil society and the private sector; and negotiate and endorse a Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan for AFLEG.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FLEG PROCESS

BACKGROUND: Several international forest-related efforts have addressed issues relevant to the Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) initiative. In May 1998, the G-8 launched an action programme on forests, which gives high priority to eliminating illegal logging and illegal timber trade, seeks to complement actions undertaken at regional and international levels, and states the G-8’s commitment to identifying actions in both producer and consumer countries.

The G-8 action programme motivated a partnership on forest law enforcement for East Asia between the World Bank, the UK and the US, which led to the FLEG East Asia Ministerial Conference in September 2001. The Conference adopted a Ministerial Declaration, whereby participating countries committed themselves to, inter alia, intensify national efforts and strengthen bilateral, regional and multi-lateral collaboration to address forest crime and violations of forest law, and create a regional task force on FLEG to advance the Declaration’s objectives. The task force held a follow-up meeting for the implementation of the Declaration in Bali, Indonesia, in May 2002.

FLEG IN AFRICA: African governments have raised the issue of sustainable forest management (SFM) in various fora, including at the Yaounde Summit in 1999, where Heads of State from Western Congo Basin countries committed themselves to work together to ensure that forests remain a renewable economic resource and reservoirs of biodiversity. Ministers from several countries in Africa subsequently expressed interest in focusing specifically on issues of FLEG. The AFLEG process aims to strengthen high-level commitment in Africa to build capacity for forest law enforcement, in particular relating to illegal logging and hunting, associated trade, and corruption.

The AFLEG process is part of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and is intended to strengthen international and multi-stakeholder commitment. In this context, the aims of the AFLEG process are to: confirm the will and commitment of producer and consumer country governments and other stakeholders; address the need for shared responsibility and cooperation between stakeholders; and develop a programme of action.

In May 2002, the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) at its 32nd session adopted a decision on forest law enforcement in Africa, which calls for data collection regarding forests in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Republic of Congo, in order to improve forest concession management and ensure conservation in protected areas. ITTC-32 also decided to promote SFM in the Congo Basin through: engaging in a World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) “Type 2” partnership; organizing a workshop to develop a regional applied research programme; and contributing to the establishment of a regional strategy aimed at improving forest concession management.

AFLEG PRE-MINISTERIAL PLANNING MEETING: From 18-20 June 2002, the Republic of Congo hosted a preparatory meeting for the AFLEG Ministerial conference. The event, held in Brazzaville, brought together more than 73 participants from 27 countries, representing governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to share knowledge and experience on FLEG in Africa and globally, identify priority issues, and develop recommendations for a ministerial declaration on FLEG for African forests. Participants heard keynote presentations on global issues relating to FLEG, a review of the G-8’s perspective, information on FLEG experiences in East Asia, and analyses of the African context. Regional groups considered country case studies, including...
community forestry and law enforcement, poaching and private sector issues. Issue-based working groups also met, focusing on legal frameworks, information, conflict and post-conflict situations, capacity building, and possible elements of a Ministerial Declaration and procedures for the Ministerial Conference.

The meeting produced draft elements for an AFLEG Ministerial Declaration including: the fair and equitable implementation of forest laws; economic incentives; reforms of land tenure, licensing, subsidies and processing capacities; immediate and coordinated national, regional and international action against breaches of forest laws, including illegal logging, illegal trade and corruption; transparency; awareness raising, particularly in conflict areas; monitoring; partnerships; conflict situations; and technological capacities and infrastructure.

INTERSSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE CONGO BASIN INITIATIVE/LAUNCH OF THE CONGO BASIN PARTNERSHIP: The Preparatory Meeting for the Congo Basin Initiative was held in Brazzaville, the Republic of Congo, on 20-21 June 2002. The meeting, facilitated by the US Government, prepared a proposal for the Congo Basin Partnership, which was launched at the WSSD as a Type II Partnership. The Partnership aims at supporting a network of effectively managed national parks, protected areas and well-managed forestry concessions, and promoting economic development, poverty alleviation and improved governance.

WSSD: The WSSD took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August - 4 September 2002. Participants adopted a Plan of Implementation and a Political Declaration that include elements relevant to AFLEG on: sustainable consumption and production patterns, including corporate environmental and social responsibility, and accountability; internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments; managing the natural resource base, including reducing biodiversity loss by 2010 and taking immediate action on domestic forest law enforcement and illegal international trade in forest products; and institutional frameworks, including integrating sustainable development into international trade regimes and enhancing partnerships involving all major groups.

CONSULTATION ON TRADE AND SFM: The Expert Consultation on Trade and SFM was convened by the FAO in Rome, Italy, from 3-5 February 2003. The Expert Consultation provided a forum to debate how current developments in trade policies and market development affect the sustainability of forest management, and how SFM is changing trade patterns and market share.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF CRITERIA AND INDICATORS FOR SFM: The International Conference on the Contribution of Criteria and Indicators for SFM was held from 3-7 February 2003, in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Discussions were structured around strengthening the elaboration and application of criteria and indicators (C&I) for SFM, promoting political commitment for the use of C&I as tools for SFM, strengthening institutional capacity and stakeholder partnerships for implementing C&I and facilitating the exchange of information among all stakeholders, and contributing to the work of the UNFF and to international initiatives on C&I related to sustainable development.

COFO: The sixteenth session of the Committee on Forestry of the FAO convened in Rome, Italy, from 10-14 March 2003. Discussions focused on: major forestry policy issues, such as those relating to the implementation of the key outcomes of the World Food Summit and the WSSD; FAO programmes on forestry, including the future of forests and implications of the Forestry Outlook Study for Africa; and the FAO medium-term planning process, particularly regarding forests, poverty and food security, forests and water, forests and climate change, forest governance and forest biological diversity.

ITTC-34: The thirty-fourth session of the ITTC took place from 12-17 May 2003, in Panama City, Panama. The Council adopted decisions, including those on: the Asia Forest Partnership; C&I for SFM; cooperation between the International Tropical Timber Organization and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) on broad-leaf mahogany; phased approaches to certification; and the expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical timber.

UNFF-3: The third session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-3) was held from 26 May - 6 June 2003 in Geneva, Switzerland. Delegates adopted resolutions on: enhanced cooperation, and policy and programme coordination; forest health and productivity; economic aspects of forests; maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs; and the UNFF Trust Fund.

WORLD PARKS CONGRESS: The Vth IUCN World Parks Congress convened in Durban, South Africa, from 8-17 September 2003. The main outcomes of the meeting included the Durban Accord and Action Plan, consisting of a high-level vision statement for protected areas, and an outline of implementation mechanisms. Participants also adopted recommendations, including one on governance which: stresses the importance of governance as a key concept for protected areas; recognizes that protected areas governance should reflect and address relevant social, ecological, cultural, historical and economic factors; and adopts legitimacy, accountability, and fairness as general principles for good governance.

WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS: The XII World Forestry Congress took place from 21-28 September 2003 in Quebec City, Canada. Sessions addressed aspects of forests for people, forests for the planet, and forests and people in harmony. Participants adopted a statement that reflects their collective vision of “Forests, Source of Life.”

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

The meeting will commence at 9:00 am at the Palais des Congrès with opening statements and announcements by Ministers. These will be followed by reviews of forest governance issues and means for harnessing natural resources for growth. In the afternoon, presentations are scheduled on forest governance and legal frameworks, information and monitoring, and multilateral and bilateral institutions.