



FOURTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS: 3-14 MAY 2004

The fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-4) opens today at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Over 550 delegates will be in attendance. During the meeting, delegates will assess progress in implementation as it relates to traditional forest-related knowledge, forest-related scientific knowledge, social and cultural aspects of forests, monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR) and criteria and indicators (C&I) for sustainable forest management (SFM). Delegates will also consider a host of issues common to all UNFF sessions, including enhanced cooperation with other organizations and intersessional work. Also scheduled are the annual Multi-stakeholder Dialogue and the review of country experiences and lessons learned, with an emphasis on African countries and small island developing states.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNFF

UNFF succeeded a five-year period (1995-2000) of forest policy dialogue facilitated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). In October 2000, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC), in resolution E/2000/35, established UNFF as a subsidiary body with the main objective to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. To achieve its main objective, principal functions were identified for UNFF, namely to: facilitate implementation of forest-related agreements and foster a common understanding on SFM; provide for continued policy development and dialogue among governments, international organizations, and major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, as well as to address forest issues and emerging areas of concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner; enhance cooperation, as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues; foster international cooperation and monitor, assess and report on progress; and strengthen political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The IPF/IFF processes produced more than 270 proposals for action towards SFM, known collectively as the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. These proposals are the basis for the UNFF Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) and Plan of Action, various themes of which are discussed at annual UNFF sessions. Country- and organization-led initiatives also contribute to the development of UNFF themes. By 2005, the UNFF will consider recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests. It will also take steps to devise approaches towards appropriate financing and technology transfer to support the implementation of SFM.

UNFF ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION: The UNFF organizational session and informal consultations on the MYPOW took place from 12-16 February 2001, at UN headquarters in New York. Delegates agreed that the UNFF Secretariat would be located in New York, and addressed progress towards the establishment of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), a partnership of 14 major forest-related international organizations, institutions and convention secretariats, and the duration of Bureau members' terms.

UNFF-1: The first session of UNFF (UNFF-1) took place from 11-23 June 2001, at UN headquarters in New York. Delegates discussed and adopted decisions on UNFF's MYPOW, a Plan of Action for the implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, and UNFF's work with the CPF. They also recommended the establishment of three *ad hoc* expert groups to provide technical advice to UNFF on: approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting; finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (EST); and consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests.

UNFF-2: UNFF-2 took place from 4-15 March 2002, at UN headquarters in New York. Delegates adopted a Ministerial Declaration and Message to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and eight decisions on: combating deforestation and forest degradation; forest conservation and protection of unique types of forests and fragile ecosystems; rehabilitation and conservation strategies for countries with low forest cover; rehabilitation and restoration of degraded lands and the promotion of natural and planted forests; concepts, terminology and definitions; specific criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests; proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for 2002-2005; and other matters.

UNFF-3: UNFF-3 met in Geneva, Switzerland, from 26 May – 6 June 2003. UNFF-3 adopted six 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; the UNFF Trust Fund; and strengthening the Secretariat. UNFF-3 also finalized the terms of reference for the three *ad hoc* expert groups, a task that had been carried forward from UNFF-2. Also adopted was a decision on the voluntary reporting format.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS: The XII World Forestry Congress, the theme of which was "Forests, Source of Life," took place from 21-28 September 2003, in Quebec City, Canada. More than 4,000 participants from over 140 countries attended the Congress, representing the scientific community,



governments, intergovernmental organizations, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. Thirty-eight theme sessions convened to address the following sub-themes: forests for people; forests for the planet; and forests and people in harmony. In the eco-regional sessions, participants engaged in roundtable discussions organized according to the five broad ecological regions of the Earth. In the special sessions, the conclusions of side events, including the Youth Forum and the Indigenous Peoples' Forest Forum, were presented. In the final general session, participants adopted a Statement reflecting their collective vision of forests as a source of life.

AFRICAN FOREST LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GOVERNANCE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE: The Africa Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) Ministerial Conference took place from 13-16 October 2003, in Yaounde, Cameroon. Co-hosted by the Government of Cameroon and the World Bank, the meeting was attended by more than 300 participants from 39 countries, representing governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and the private sector. Participants exchanged views on forest governance; considered priority issues, including illegal forest exploitation and associated trade in Africa; identified ways in which various stakeholders can address these issues, including partnerships between producers and consumers, donors, civil society and the private sector; and negotiated and endorsed a Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan for AFLEG.

THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER COUNCIL (ITTC-35): ITTC-35 took place from 3-8 November 2003, in Yokohama, Japan. Approximately 200 participants were in attendance, representing 41 members (22 producer countries and 19 consumer countries), one potential member country, six intergovernmental organizations and 19 NGOs. The Council adopted decisions on: projects, pre-projects and activities; management of the administrative account for 2003; an Executing Agencies Account; and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) Biennial Work Programme for 2004-2005. The Council also approved 16 projects and four pre-projects.

SECOND SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE NEGOTIATION OF A SUCCESSOR AGREEMENT TO ITTA, 1994: Approximately 100 participants attended the second session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom II) for the Negotiation of a Successor Agreement to the 1994 International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA, 1994), which met from 10-12 November 2003, in Yokohama, Japan. During the negotiations, delegates clarified the elements contained in a draft working document of the successor agreement and, in the end, produced a final draft text that will serve as the basis for discussion at the UN Conference for the Negotiation of a Successor Agreement to the ITTA, 1994 in July 2004, in Geneva.

UNFF AD HOC EXPERT GROUP ON MONITORING, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING (AHEG MAR): The AHEG MAR convened in Geneva, Switzerland, from 8-12 December 2003 to, *inter alia*: assess existing reporting requirements and monitoring and assessment procedures under relevant international conventions, processes, instruments and organizations related to forests; propose ways of monitoring and assessing progress based on voluntary reporting; and recommend ways of building capacity for monitoring, assessment and reporting. The AHEG MAR recommended that the UNFF: urge relevant organizations to identify areas of overlap in reporting and inconsistencies in reported information; invite relevant organizations and instruments, including the CPF, to prepare a document that overviews global progress toward SFM for consideration at UNFF-5; continue monitoring and assessing progress in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action until UNFF-5; and recommend more coherence and linkages between reports generated for domestic purposes and international reporting.

UNFF AD HOC EXPERT GROUP ON FINANCE AND TRANSFER OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND TECHNOLOGIES (AHEG FINTEST): The AHEG FINTEST convened in Geneva, Switzerland, from 15-19 December 2003, to, *inter alia*: assess the status of official development assistance for SFM; review the effectiveness of, and propose measures to improve, existing international SFM financing; explore ways to increase SFM financing; assess the role of private SFM financing; review and assess existing initiatives on the transfer of EST and knowledge diffusion for SFM promotion. The AHEG FINTEST recommended, *inter alia*, that: countries and CPF members facilitate the flow of information relating to EST by linking with information networks and by strengthening cooperation with enterprises and public institutions using EST; countries include the promotion of private investment in national SFM financing strategies; and that countries take measures to improve rent capture from forest management.

WORKSHOP ON FORESTS AND FOREST ECOSYSTEMS: PROMOTING SYNERGY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THREE RIO CONVENTIONS: A workshop organized by the Secretariats of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in cooperation with the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), was held from 5-7 April 2004, in Viterbo, Italy, to foster synergy at the national level in order to more effectively implement the Rio conventions. The workshop brought together representatives of the three Rio Conventions from a number of countries representing all the UN regions, as well as representatives and experts from institutions that have been actively supporting implementation of the Conventions. Participants focused on forests and forest ecosystems and discussed two main themes, the potential for synergies through forest landscape management and soil conservation, and ecosystem services and poverty reduction. In eight working groups, participants engaged in discussion relating to synergy at the local level.

INTERLAKEN WORKSHOP ON DECENTRALIZATION, FEDERAL SYSTEMS IN FORESTRY AND NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMMES: The workshop on decentralization, federal Systems in forestry and national forest programmes (NFPs) convened in Interlaken, Switzerland from 27-30 April 2004. This country-led initiative was launched by Switzerland and Indonesia, in support of UNFF, and conducted by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and Intercooperation. Participants of the workshop adopted a series of recommendations for consideration at UNFF-4, including: developing a common understanding of the concepts and definitions to facilitate dialogue on forestry decentralization; promoting dissemination of appropriate information to enhance understanding of forestry decentralization; formulating approaches for maintaining protected areas while enabling traditional use by local people; developing principles to guide institutional choice for equitable representation; promoting the valuation of, and compensation for, forest environmental services; analyzing the implications of decentralization for the development of NFPs; strengthening stakeholders capacity; and promoting partnership among various stakeholders and sectors for human and institutional capacity building and the involvement of NGOs and other major groups as equal partners in planning, monitoring and implementation activities.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: UNFF-4 will convene at 10:00 am in Conference Room XVIII with opening statements from several key speakers. Delegates will then offer general statements before hearing presentations on forest trends based on reports to UNFF and the status of the Secretariat. In the afternoon, Plenary will resume from 3:00-6:00 pm to engage in a panel discussion on the role of forests in achieving broader development goals.