



## UNFF-4 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 3 MAY 2004

On Monday, 3 May 2004, the fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-4) opened in Geneva, Switzerland. During the morning plenary session, delegates heard opening statements, country statements, and a report on the status of the UNFF Secretariat. In the afternoon, delegates heard panel presentations, and engaged in substantive discussion, on forests and their role in achieving broader development goals, and continued hearing country statements.

### OPENING PLENARY

José Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), opened UNFF-4. Delegates then elected to the Bureau Yuriy Isakov (Russian Federation) as Chair, George Talbot (Guyana) as Vice-Chair, Xolisa Mabhongo (South Africa) as Rapporteur, Stephanie Caswell (United States) and I Gede Ngurah Swajaya (Indonesia).

**OPENING STATEMENTS:** Ocampo noted that UNFF is the only subsidiary body for the United Nations Economic and Social Council with universal membership, and stressed the significance of the issues facing UNFF-4. He emphasized the importance of the multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD), improved scientific and traditional forest-related knowledge, and national reporting on the implementation of the International Panel on Forests/International Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF) proposals for action. He also encouraged delegates to approve the Secretariat's proposal for a process on facilitating the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (ROE) at UNFF-5, and said the 2006-2007 biennial programme plan should be modified after the review has been completed.

Chair Yuriy Isakov urged delegates to work collaboratively towards a successful outcome, and said the deadline for submitting draft proposals is 11 May at 6 pm. Chair Isakov stressed the importance of focusing on substantive issues and taking stock of progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action in advance of UNFF-5.

Phillippe Roch, Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape, welcomed participants and commended the streamlining and policy convergence that is occurring as countries develop national forest programmes (NFP) and implement the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

Hosny El-Lakany, Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), pointed to the increased global commitment to sustainable forest management (SFM) and to CPF activities that translate international recommendations into action on the ground. He stressed the CPF's success in streamlining national reporting and the distribution and use of its Sourcebook on Funding for SFM. He also said the CPF will contribute to the ROE at UNFF-5 and to the *ad hoc*

expert group on consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legally binding framework on all types of forests (AHEG PARAM).

**ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS:** Delegates adopted the provisional agenda of UNFF-4 (E/CN.18/2004/1), approved the proposed organization of work, established two working groups, and accepted the participation of the Association of South and East Asian Nations.

**STATUS OF THE SECRETARIAT:** Pekka Patosaari, Coordinator and Head of the UNFF Secretariat, reported on the activities and status of the UNFF Secretariat during the programme budget biennium 2002-2003 (E/CN.18/2004/3), and thanked donors for supporting the Trust Fund. He then called for donor support to ensure the wide participation of developing countries at UNFF-5.

**COUNTRY STATEMENTS:** QATAR, on behalf of G-77/China, stressed the importance of traditional and scientific knowledge and social and cultural aspects of forests to developing countries, and called for international support for poverty eradication. He welcomed the proposal on the ROE, supported continued interessional work on this issue, and said a lack of funds is stalling the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. He called for, *inter alia*: an international framework for the protection of traditional knowledge, especially through *sui generis* systems to protect biodiversity; the negotiation of an international regime on access and benefit-sharing within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); and continued voluntary work on criteria and indicators for SFM.

GUATEMALA called for ensuring that concrete and regional actions are carried out, making information and methodology useful for countries, and for addressing illicit trafficking of timber.

IRELAND, on the behalf of the EU, Bulgaria and Romania, underscored the significance of social and cultural aspects in the implementation of SFM and IPF/IFF proposals for action, and said he was confident that consensus recommendations would emerge from the AHEG PARAM. On the MSD, he suggested that sufficient time be allocated for the discussion. He also stressed the importance of reaching a decision on the ROE process.

SOUTH AFRICA reviewed its progress in national implementation, including its new forest-related legislation, broad stakeholder participation, the current development of a new NFP, and efforts to strengthen traditional forest-related knowledge and scientific knowledge.

China introduced the current situation of forestry development in China transforming from timber production to ecosystem management. Noting the universal membership of the AHEG PARAM, he stressed the group should ensure transparency and reflect the views of all its members. CONGO drew attention to a recent country-led initiative conference in Brazzaville on environmentally sound technologies (EST) and thanked a number of donor countries for their financial support. AUSTRALIA said UNFF



needs to demonstrate substantive progress through practical work on the ground, stressed the value of regional partnerships as a low-cost and effective approach to implementation, and suggested changing the structure of UNFF sessions to focus on implementation.

INDONESIA stressed that international cooperation and collaboration are needed to overcome remaining obstacles to implementing SFM, including undocumented social and cultural values, lack of recognition by national legislation, insufficient law enforcement, and complexity of land tenure and ownership regimes. He recommended that the CPF assist countries in the implementation of agreed international commitments through the mobilization of additional financial resources and transfer of EST.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION described its work on SFM and stressed the need for financial assistance and transfer of EST. JAPAN highlighted the need for worldwide cooperation and regional initiatives to combat deforestation, and called for UNFF-4 to clarify concrete actions in order to avoid repetition of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. UGANDA underscored the importance of decentralization in forest management and the need for effective coordination between conventions, and called for the extension of patent laws to cover traditional knowledge.

SWITZERLAND highlighted, *inter alia*, the importance of monitoring, assessment and reporting for long-term planning, and the need to increase attention to social and cultural aspects of forests due to their crucial role in governance. CROATIA welcomed the inclusion of all interested parties in UNFF discussions and stressed the need for scientific cooperation. CUBA reiterated the need for means of implementation. INDIA described its efforts to implement SFM, including intersectoral cooperation and community forest management. NEW ZEALAND recommended that UNFF discuss how to: harmonize current forest-related processes, including the CBD, under the UNFF umbrella; involve the private sector; and explore the potential of regional approaches to facilitating SFM.

**PANEL DISCUSSION ON FORESTS AND DEVELOPMENT:** Under-Secretary General José Antonio Ocampo, DESA, introduced a panel on forests and their role in achieving broader development goals, reminding delegates that forests provide livelihoods for the world's poor and that SFM contributes to economic diversity and the equitable distribution of incomes. He outlined three critical areas: the need for coherent forest policy; efficient land tenure systems and access for local and indigenous communities; and effective governance, compliance and enforcement.

Ole Henrik Magga, UN Permanent Forum On Indigenous Issues, reminded delegates that many of the world's 370 million indigenous peoples depend on forests, enhance biological and cultural diversity and are the most economically disadvantaged groups. He said indigenous peoples measure poverty in terms of loss of control over their territories and called for the adoption of development programmes to allow full participation of indigenous peoples.

Tony Simons, World Agroforestry Centre, described the contribution of agroforestry systems to the MDGs, including those on poverty alleviation, health and education. He stressed the importance of working with local communities, adopting cross-sectoral approach to mainstreaming forest in other national activities, involving the private sector, and developing market-driven agroforestry.

Fredy Arnoldo Molina Sanchinel, ACICAFOC, described the benefits of community-based concessions in Central America, including: strengthened local capacity, safety nets, empowerment of women, forest conservation and control of illegal activities. He stressed that the involvement of local and indigenous communities in forest management is the key to forest protection and poverty alleviation.

Inviolata Chinyangara, International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW), reviewed the IFBWW's work on poverty reduction and promotion of the social and cultural aspects of forestry. Noting the heavy dependence of African communities on the forestry sector, she discussed the connection between

globalization, structural adjustment programs and job loss, and called on the International Labour Organization to adopt a convention protecting the interests of forest workers.

In the ensuing discussion, AUSTRALIA outlined its efforts to extend indigenous community participation in sharing economic benefits of forests, provide the forest industry with greater access to indigenous lands, and stimulate the creation of partnerships. COSTA RICA listed its achievements in improving the quality of life for local communities, noted the need for alternative means of public and private funding, and offered to host an expert meeting on traditional forest-related knowledge in December.

US noted that the contributions of forestry to social prosperity are not well recognized, and stressed the need for learning how to further integrate forestry with social policy. She emphasized countries' responsibilities for identifying appropriate national solutions, and drew attention to the report from the *ad hoc* expert group on finance and transfer of EST (AHEG FINTEST), which lists policy options.

BRAZIL suggested adopting a resolution on strengthening the role of forestry in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). On this proposal, FOREST PEOPLES PROGRAMME said this resolution would have to mention landownership and devolution of control of forest resources to local and indigenous peoples, and to call on CPF members, such as the World Bank and Global Environment Facility (GEF), to revise their policies accordingly, for example, by prohibiting involuntary relocation.

GUATEMALA commented on national efforts on SFM, and BENIN drew attention to the rise of unemployment resulting from globalization and the need for compensation and diversification. INDIA emphasized the inability of mainstream development to address the needs of marginalized forest-dependent communities. GERMANY called for connecting the MDGs to NFPs, and for maximizing potential benefits of agroforestry through better planning and integration into land use programs. GABON noted decentralization efforts in the Congo Basin, while PERU called for financial and technical assistance to enhance national efforts for SFM and poverty reduction.

The FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION explained that they use forest cover as one indicator under the MDG relating to environmental sustainability.

Panelists responded to various comments from the Plenary, highlighting the importance of: linking forestry issues to poverty reduction strategies and macro-economic planning; indigenous and community involvement in forest management; land use planning; the valuation of eco-system services provided by forests; and the need to increase official development assistance.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

On the first day of UNFF-4, expectations for the meeting varied significantly. Some delegates were of the view that the main thrust of UNFF-4 would be a small number of contentious policy discussions, whereas others thought the numerous side-events would be UNFF-4's main strength. Whatever the case, at this early stage, several delegates were unsure about the number of decisions they could expect from the session, while others hoped that no new decisions would be negotiated at all. Many delegates anticipate that the upcoming review of UNFF's work will loom large, and expect that the key players will spend the next two weeks in the corridors discussing the future meeting of the AHEG PARAM.

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**PLENARY:** Delegates will convene from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm in Salle XVIII to hear the presentation of forest trends based on national reports and presentations on enhanced cooperation from, *ad hoc*, the GEF and from the Secretariats of the CBD, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

**WORKING GROUP I:** Working Group I will convene from 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm in Salle XVIII to hear the results of the AHEG FINTEST.

**WORKING GROUP II:** Working Group II will convene from 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm in Salle XVII to continue work on enhanced cooperation.