



UNFF-4 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 5 MAY 2004

On Wednesday, delegates convened in morning and afternoon plenary sessions to consider presentations on country experiences and lessons learned in African countries. In the afternoon, Working Group I discussed the social and cultural aspects of forests, while Working Group II monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR).

PLENARY

COUNTRY EXPERIENCES: AFRICA DAY: UNFF-4 Chair Yuriy Isakov (Russian Federation) explained that the outcomes of "Africa Day" will contribute to the high-level segment of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2004. Pekka Patosaari, Coordinator and Head of the UNFF Secretariat, emphasized the role of regional cooperation, highlighting recent forest-related initiatives. Moderator Judith Mbula Bahemuka (Kenya) explained that Africa Day aims to: highlight the role of forests in rural development and poverty alleviation in Africa; share knowledge and lessons learned; strengthen sustainable forest management (SFM) partnerships; and promote stronger African participation in the UNFF process.

Grégoire Nkeoua, Ministry of Forestry and Environment for the Republic of Congo, noted the challenges facing SFM implementation in the Congo Basin are environmental preservation, cross-sectoral policy convergence, and the mobilization of resources. He said the goals of the Convergence Plan for Congo Basin Regional Action are: policy harmonization and common action, forest inventories, biodiversity conservation and capacity strengthening. He concluded that financing for the plan is the key to its success and noted the contribution of the Congo Basin Partnership and new market opportunities provided by carbon sequestration.

El-Hadji Sène, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), described FAO African Forestry and Wildlife Commission recommendations related to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/ Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF) proposals for action, including: improving knowledge and local level participation; promoting forest product trade; increasing land reclamation; utilizing indigenous knowledge; simplify procedures for Global Environment Facility (GEF) funding; strengthening sub-regional cooperation; ensuring the harmonization of certification schemes; supporting small and medium-size enterprises; incorporating forests in national development strategies; and focusing on national forest programme (NFP) implementation.

Ruth Mubiru, Uganda Women Tree Planting Movement, emphasized the contributions of forests and tree planting to African women's livelihoods. Noting the lack of land tenure for, and decision-making power of, women, she called for their involvement in national planning, and for organizing an UNFF-sponsored meeting on women and tree planting.

Tobias Takavarasha, New Partnership for Africa's Development, reported on its Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Programme Action Plan, which includes elements on forestry,

fisheries and wildlife. He explained that increasing capacity building would improve food security and equitable wealth distribution, and called for the reprioritization of agriculture, linking the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on hunger and poverty reduction to the IPF/IFF proposals for action, and creating enabling environments for the private sector and smallhold farmers.

Frank Kufakwandi, African Development Bank, discussed how economic problems hinder SFM in Africa, and said community and private sector involvement in forest management is minimal. Noting the lack of political commitment and concrete action on the ground, he called for integrating SFM and poverty reduction strategies, and addressing land tenure, environmental governance and the empowerment of women.

Samuel Nguiffo, Center for Environment and Development, presented on illegal forestry activities and the challenges of forest law enforcement in Cameroon. Noting that the responsibility to address illegal logging rests with governments, donors and forest concession holders, he said partial solutions to illegal logging include: thinking about the problem on a regional and ecosystem scale; deploying independent regionally-based observers; and applying persuasive sanctions.

Yemi Katerere, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) said international processes do not serve African interests, and that unconditional aid is scarce. He called for, *inter alia*: adopting a rights-based approach and devolving benefits to those managing the forests; simplifying and enforcing regulations; integrating forestry into other sectors; improving market access and the free mobility of people; generating policy relevant research; and targeting capacity building.

In the ensuing discussion, MALAWI, on behalf of the G-77/ CHINA, called for further donor support for increased African participation in UNFF. TANZANIA stressed the importance of decentralization, capacity building, and increased private investment and donor assistance. UGANDA listed its efforts to involve disadvantaged groups in decision making, and said improved market access can help finance SFM. Noting that forests are rarely a national priority, GAMBIA said forestry could attract investment if integrated with other sectors. MADAGASCAR underscored the importance of evaluating ecological services of forests. SENEGAL stressed the need to balance agriculture and forests and, with NIGERIA, stressed the importance of adequately assessing the contribution of the forest sector to the national economy. ALGERIA described its national initiatives, such as a national forest registry, work on land improvement, and reforestation to prevent erosion and rural depopulation. The CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC called for good governance in the management of natural resources, capacity building for rural communities and trans-boundary efforts to combat poaching. NIGERIA called for studies to evaluate the contribution of the forest sector to the GDP. BENIN requested UNFF to address concerns related to forest law enforcement. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO highlighted a lack of resources, data and impact studies, and said armed conflicts over resource control pose

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a challenge for SFM. BURKINA FASO recommended participatory management models as a way to balance local needs with SFM. SOUTH AFRICA stressed the linkage between poverty and forests and the role of regional and sub-regional institutions in mobilizing implementation capacity.

IRELAND, on behalf of the EU, stressed the importance of the African Forest Law Enforcement and Governance process. INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN AGROFORESTRY said forest issues are too broad to be subsumed in other sectors and identified lack of capacity as the principal obstacle to African SFM. GERMANY, with FRANCE, commended the Congo Basin Partnership, and highlighted the importance of long-term donors support in the region. CANADA listed changes in its international development policy, including increases to its official development assistance (ODA) and untied non-food aid, and said its recent elimination of tariffs and quotas on imports from least developed country benefits African countries. The US urged delegates to respond to the substantive proposals and requested the UNFF Secretariat to find a better format for dialogue and ways to integrate the IPF/IFF proposals for action into the MDGs.

ECUADOR outlined its achievements in reforestation and local community involvement in forest management. INDONESIA noted the common problems of developing countries and committed to developing cooperation and partnerships. CHINA reported on women's involvement in reforestation and combating desertification and called for an international conference on the participation of women in forest management. NORWAY noted a seminar on gender and forestry to be held in Tanzania in August 2004.

In response, panelists reiterated, *inter alia*: the need to not consider forestry under agriculture; the importance of involving women in the forestry sector and related forest policy and decision making processes; the value of information and training; the link between forestry, poverty reduction and the MDGs; the impact of fiscal policy on forestry; and that effectively addressing illegal logging may attract donor support. Panelists also said that there is little awareness of forests' role in the overall economy, and that structural adjustment forces governments to give priority to issues other than forests.

WORKING GROUP I

Pekka Patosaari, UNFF, thanked CIFOR for assisting the preparation of the report on social and cultural aspects of forests (E/CN.18/2004/8). Yemi Katetere, CIFOR, presented the discussion points, including: mainstreaming of social and cultural aspects of forests in NFPs and SFM strategies; promoting fair and equitable benefit-sharing; documenting the contribution of forests to poverty reduction; adopting social impact assessment methodologies; and considering lessons learned on decentralization and the devolution of authority.

KOREA, UNITED KINGDOM, and MALAYSIA shared their national experiences with stakeholder involvement. Welcoming the report, IRELAND, on behalf of the EU, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, suggested, *inter alia*: referring to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the access and benefit-sharing (ABS) work of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); developing educational initiatives; and emphasizing forests' contribution to poverty reduction in order to allocate national resources and donor assistance towards SFM. INDONESIA noted the cultural impacts of decentralization, and recommended fair and equitable benefit-sharing and the development of an international regime on ABS under the CBD. MALAYSIA recommended that international cooperation take into account national sovereignty and said they are addressing land tenure of indigenous peoples and protect it where appropriate. SWITZERLAND described its experiences with decentralization and overcoming initial conflicts through transparency, capacity building and creating appropriate institutional frameworks. JAPAN warned that social conflicts can inhibit SFM. NEW ZEALAND stressed the importance of local involvement in combating illegal logging and reminded financial benefits from local forest management take

time to materialize. She recommended that UNFF identify areas in CBD's current work on ABS where UNFF could add value, and work in collaboration with the CBD to avoid the duplication of efforts.

WORKING GROUP II

Peter Holmgren, FAO, presented the report on MAR (E/CN.18/2004/10). He noted that the 2005 global Forest Resource Assessment (FRA 2005) under preparation by FAO is a country-driven process. He underscored that although information is still missing and that national capacity building is needed, there has been progress on national forest assessments, streamlining and reporting, and harmonization of definitions. Identifying points for discussion, he suggested that CPF members strengthen MAR capacity building and further develop information reporting frameworks, and that UNFF provide guidance to international bodies.

Mike Dudley, United Kingdom Forestry Commission, presented the report of the *Ad Hoc* Expert Group on MAR (AHEG MAR), and listed the group's recommendations, including that: countries make better use of existing resources for MAR and strengthen criteria and indicators processes; international organizations continue work on streamlining reporting requirements; and UNFF review and enhance the FRA 2005, improve ways for collecting country information for UNFF-5, and expand the sharing of country experiences at UNFF-5 through side events and panel discussions.

A number of countries underscored the crucial role of MAR in achieving SFM. ARGENTINA underscored the need for political will, resources and country capacity for data collection, and said harmonization of definitions and terms should take into account various types of forest covers. AUSTRALIA stressed the importance of streamlining reporting procedures, and, supported by NEW ZEALAND, suggested allowing countries to limit their implementation reports to selected clusters of IPF/IFF proposals for action. IRELAND, on behalf of the EU, supported the harmonization of terminology and continued enhancement of FRA 2005. JAPAN proposed that countries make reports available on the Internet even if they are not translated or do not pertain to the IPF/IFF proposals for action. MALAYSIA outlined its national MAR program. Noting that only 30 countries have reported on progress, NEW ZEALAND expressed concern that the 2005 review may flounder without sufficient national reports. He said that FRA 2005 should be used to assess progress toward SFM. The FAO announced its regional forestry commissions have started discussions on implementation and monitoring of progress.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While many found Africa Day to be very beneficial insofar as it brought together the donor community and several key African policy makers, there can be little doubt that the real issue occupying the minds of many at UNFF-4 has been UNFF-5 and beyond. Some have said that the decade old debate on the merits and pitfalls of a forest convention has shifted slightly. As such, some delegates have said that the debate now seems to be more a "corridor" conversation about what stakeholders are looking to obtain from the post-UNFF arrangement, than it is a rehashing of well-worn arguments. Many players seem to be in agreement that UNFF is not delivering on its stated aims and propose this as the point from which discussions concerning the future of international forest policy should begin.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP I: Delegates will meet in Salle XVIII from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm to begin deliberations on forest-related scientific knowledge.

WORKING GROUP II: Delegates will meet in Salle XVII from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm to continue statements on MAR and to discuss criteria and indicators for SFM.

PLENARY: Delegates will convene in Plenary in Salle XVIII from 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm to discuss capacity building in the annual Multi-stakeholder Dialogue.