



**UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS *AD HOC* EXPERT GROUP ON CONSIDERATION WITH A VIEW TO RECOMMENDING THE PARAMETERS OF A MANDATE FOR DEVELOPING A LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON ALL TYPES OF FORESTS:
7-10 SEPTEMBER 2004**

The *Ad Hoc* Expert Group on Consideration with a View to Recommending the Parameters of a Mandate for Developing a Legal Framework on All Types of Forests (AHEG PARAM) begins its meeting today at UN headquarters in New York. The Expert Group will: assess existing regional and international binding and non-binding instruments and processes relevant to forests; consider reports prepared by countries, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) members and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat and outcomes of UNFF sessions; consider other outcomes of the international arrangement on forests; review the relevant experiences of existing forest-related and other relevant organizations and agreements, focusing on complementarities, gaps and duplications; and provide UNFF with a balanced range of options. The AHEG PARAM is to adopt a report for submission to the fifth session of UNFF (UNFF-5) specifying major outcomes of the group's work, including proposals and recommendations for further consideration by UNFF.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNFF

The United Nations Forum on Forests was established by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in October 2000. Resolution E/2000/35 established UNFF as a subsidiary body to ECOSOC with the main objective to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The 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). 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 sustainable forest management (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; 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.

ECOSOC also directed that, within five years, the UNFF was "to consider with a view to recommending to the ECOSOC and through it to the General Assembly the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests."

The IPF/IFF processes produced 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.

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, addressed progress towards the establishment of the CPF, a partnership of 14 major forest-related international organizations, institutions and convention secretariats, and discussed the duration of Bureau members' terms.

UNFF-1: The first session of UNFF 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 (AHEG MAR); finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (AHEG FINTEST); and consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests (AHEG PARAM).

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 (WSSD) 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. Delegates discussed the terms of reference for all three *ad hoc* expert groups and decided to carry forward these discussions to UNFF-3.

UNFF-3: UNFF-3 met in Geneva, Switzerland, from 26 May - 6 June 2003. UNFF-3 adopted six resolutions, focusing 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, including AHEG PARAM, a task that had been carried forward from UNFF-2. A decision on the voluntary reporting format was also adopted.

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 to monitor and assess 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 environmentally sound technologies (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 countries take measures to improve rent capture from forest management.

UNFF-4: UNFF-4 met in Geneva, Switzerland, from 3-14 May 2004. UNFF-4 adopted five resolutions on: social and cultural aspects of forests; forest-related scientific knowledge; monitoring,

assessment and reporting and criteria and indicators; finance and transfer of EST; and the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests. Delegates were not able to complete and adopt resolutions on traditional forest-related knowledge and enhanced cooperation. UNFF-4 convened a multi-stakeholder dialogue, and delegates considered country experiences and lessons learned, with particular emphasis on negotiating a resolution on the process for facilitating the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at UNFF-5.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF

CENTRAL AFRICAN FORESTS: Central African forestry officials and representatives from the donor community met from 25-26 June 2004, in Brazzaville, The Republic of Congo, to develop a regional strategy for the sustainable management of the ecosystems of Central African countries, especially in the Congo Basin. The Conference of Ministers in Charge of Central African Forests (COMIFAC) is recognized by the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, which was launched at the WSSD, as the central policy- and decision-making body for the conservation and sustainable management of forests in Central Africa.

1ST WORLD CONGRESS ON AGROFORESTRY: Participants from over 80 countries met at the first World Congress on Agroforestry from 27 June - 2 July 2004, in Orlando, Florida, US, to discuss current trends and developments in agroforestry. Delegates to the Congress adopted the Orlando Declaration, which recognizes, *inter alia*, that agroforestry will greatly enhance the achievement of targets in the Millennium Development Goals by improving household incomes and human health and promoting gender equity and environmental sustainability. The Declaration calls upon the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and UNFF to endorse the role of agroforestry in accomplishing their objectives, and urges countries to incorporate agroforestry into their poverty eradication strategies.

ITTC-36: The 36th session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC-36) met from 20-23 July 2004, in Interlaken, Switzerland. Delegates to ITTC-36 discussed: preparations for negotiating a successor agreement to the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994 (ITTA, 1994); progress reports on the study of forest law enforcement and governance in Malaysia and Honduras; phased approaches to certification; developments in UNFCCC/Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change discussions regarding forests; and the promotion of SFM in the Congo Basin. Delegates also considered recommendations on illegal logging and associated trade.

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE NEGOTIATION OF A SUCCESSOR AGREEMENT TO ITTA, 1994:

The United Nations Conference on the Negotiation of a Successor Agreement to the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994, met in Geneva, Switzerland, from 26-30 July 2004. Delegates discussed draft text for a new agreement, but needed additional time to finalize its terms. The main issues that require further discussion concern the objectives of the successor agreement and financial arrangements. Delegates agreed to reconvene the Conference from 14-18 February 2005, in Geneva, Switzerland.