



UNFF AHEG-PARAM HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 7 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) began meeting on Tuesday at UN headquarters in New York. In the morning, participants addressed organizational matters, and discussed complementarities, gaps and duplications in the existing international arrangement on forests (IAF). In the afternoon, participants exchanged views on other outcomes of the IAF, including efforts of countries to implement the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) Proposals for Action.

Editors' Note: Participants are acting in their personal capacities as experts.

PLENARY

OPENING OF THE AHEG-PARAM: Pekka Patosaari, UNFF Coordinator and Head, opened the AHEG-PARAM, noting that its tasks include identifying complementarities, gaps and duplications in the existing IAF, reviewing catalysts and obstacles, and providing a balanced range of options to the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-5).

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Experts elected Tim Rollinson (UK) and Andrea Alban Duran (Colombia) as co-chairs. Co-Chair Rollinson stressed that the AHEG-PARAM is not a negotiating group, and Co-Chair Alban Duran emphasized that the discussions must be inclusive. Experts adopted the agenda (E/CN.18/AC.3/2004/1) without amendment.

Hosny El-Lakany, Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), said CPF members have reaffirmed their commitment to the UNFF, and to enhancing collaboration and coordination on forest issues as well as assisting member countries to implement sustainable forest management (SFM). El-Lakany urged the AHEG-PARAM to formulate a clear set of recommendations for UNFF-5.

COMPLEMENTARITIES, GAPS AND DUPLICATIONS AND REVIEW OF EXPERIENCES WITH EXISTING PROCESSES AND INSTRUMENTS: Co-Chair Rollinson invited experts to analyze complementarities, gaps and duplications and review experiences arising from the existing regional and international binding and non-binding instruments and processes relevant to forests (E/CN.18/AC.3/2004/2). He

noted this was an opportunity to examine strengths and weaknesses of instruments and processes dealing with forests, and discuss forest-related objectives.

Ricardo Ulate (Costa Rica) noted that harmonizing forest policies in Central America has improved national-level implementation of SFM, and said the AHEG-PARAM could learn from this and other regional experiences.

Armas Jappinen (Sweden) noted that existing forest-related processes and instruments do not cover all aspects of sustainable development.

Jan McAlpine (US) said the discussion must focus on all forest-related processes and instruments, including UNFF country-led initiatives. She noted that emphasis should be on coordination and collaboration among CPF members, and suggested expanding on the role played by the CPF in facilitating and catalyzing action. Regarding the financing of SFM, McAlpine said the problem is not a lack of funds, but rather a question of how to access them.

Noting the cross-sectoral aspect of forests, Franz Perez (Switzerland) stated that current processes are complementary. He also highlighted the failure of UNFF to address the relationship between the ecosystem approach and SFM due to over-politicization of the issue within UNFF and the fear to provide guidance.

Don Wijewardana (New Zealand) stressed the importance of an integrated approach to forests, noting the need to: identify those IPF/IFF Proposals for Action that are important; address new issues, such as illegal logging; and adopt a regional approach to implementation. He said a clearer definition of SFM is also needed.

Matthias Schwoerer (Germany) highlighted negative consequences of a lack of focus and proliferation of issues, and noted difficulties in following up on instruments and goals set at the global level. He stressed the need to better define the relation between global, regional and national efforts, further discuss regionalization, and focus on implementation.

Tony Bartlett (Australia) noted that the AHEG-PARAM provides the last opportunity for formal discussion on the IAF until UNFF-5, and stressed the need to strengthen coordination and cooperation among processes, focus on implementation, engage more countries and stakeholders in discussions, use intersessional meetings, and promote policy dialogue focusing on lessons learned and emerging issues.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA emphasized the need for flexibility in implementation and enhanced SFM financing.



Hossein Moeini Meybodi (Iran) said making the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action relevant to other sectors could improve their implementation.

Juan Holguin (Ecuador) emphasized that discussions on forests must take into account other instruments and processes addressing specific country needs, such as the conservation of genetic diversity and poverty reduction.

Djauhari Oratmangun (Indonesia) said the IAF should continue, noting that strengthening UNFF is one option, but that other modalities need to be considered. He said a new IAF should, *inter alia*, have clear priorities, be linked to national implementation, benefit people and ensure predictable financing and public participation.

Li Ting (China) noted that, since legally binding instruments also face implementation obstacles, a legally binding instrument on forests would not necessarily improve the implementation of SFM. Ting also said that the problems of coordination between processes and instruments do not result from duplication and overlapping responsibilities, but from lack of cooperation.

Yuji Imaizumi (Japan) said assessing implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action and forest-related agreements has been difficult due to lack of information from countries and an under-resourced Secretariat. He stressed the need for an effective monitoring, assessment and reporting system, and called for strengthening and streamlining current efforts in this area.

Gregoire Nkeoua (The Republic of Congo) noted the lack of reporting on implementation, uncertainty regarding the roles of UNFF focal points and a lack of financial resources, and called for better inter-agency coordination and cooperation.

Anders Portin (Finland) stressed the importance of global-level policy guidance as a framework for regional implementation, and said addressing new issues, such as the role of forests in sustainable development, illegal logging and climate change could attract greater political attention.

OTHER OUTCOMES OF THE IAF: Co-Chair Alban Duran introduced a document on catalysts and obstacles in implementing the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action and UNFF decisions (E/CN.18/AC.3/2004/3).

Highlighting the importance of better cooperation and participation of relevant actors, McAlpine presented an example of successful cooperation to address restrictions in trade in broadleaf mahogany, as well as examples of failure, including in accessing funding to implement SFM.

Maria Da Conceicao Ferreira (Portugal) underscored the positive impact of UNFF work, including on criteria and indicators (C&I), and stressed the need for coordination at the national level and assessment of the usefulness of existing instruments and mechanisms.

Bashir Ahmed Wani (Pakistan) stressed the need to involve all stakeholders and raise foresters' awareness of international instruments. He cautioned against developing a legally binding instrument without adequate resources for implementation, and recommended assessing implementation of existing conventions.

Carlos Salinas (Peru) stressed the need for international policy making to facilitate SFM at the national and regional levels, the efficient use of resources and integration of forest and other issues, including poverty eradication.

Federico Perazza (Uruguay) underlined the need to take account of the different needs and responsibilities of countries and the need for international cooperation.

Dick Ballhorn (Canada) stressed the need to, *inter alia*, enhance policy integration and coordination, raise the profile of forests in national policy agendas, improve access to financial resources, and recognize the roles of non-governmental actors in policy development.

Jitendra Vir Sharma (India) stressed the importance of addressing regional needs, specifically gaps in technology transfer and financing SFM.

Oleg Shamanov (Russia) said while the global and regional policy dimensions are important, national circumstances must be addressed, and emphasized the need to: raise the profile of forest issues; address the social and cultural dimensions of forests; improve monitoring; and facilitate integration with the Millennium Development Goals and poverty eradication.

Perazza said catalysts for achieving SFM in Uruguay have included its national forest programme, stakeholder participation, and its involvement in the Montreal Process, and noted a lack of partnerships and financing have impeded the implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action.

Bartlett emphasized that assessing national implementation and establishing clear priorities can help achieve SFM, and cautioned against duplicating reporting obligations.

Sylvester Aroboi Okonofua (Nigeria) said that scarce resources, poverty and illegal logging have all been obstacles, but that the debt burden is the biggest problem impeding the implementation of SFM. He also noted the importance of properly valuing forest goods and services.

Rebecca Parzor (The Netherlands) said increasing the profile of forests requires linking forest-related issues, such as illegal logging, human health, and business development, more directly to people's concerns.

Alain Chaudron (France) recommended taking account of national circumstances and prioritizing a small number of objectives.

Manuel Briceno (Venezuela) recommended differentiating between substantive and operational aspects, as well as between natural and planted forests, within global and national legal frameworks, and stressed the need to identify ways of integrating associated environmental services.

Perrez highlighted the value of the CPF's work and exchanges of experience as catalysts and the low political profile of forest issues as an obstacle, and recommended: developing tangible, realistic and attractive goals; focusing and prioritizing activities and issues; addressing needs on the ground; and better coordinating activities among CPF members.

Schwoerer underscored the need for stronger political support at the international level and for raising the profile of forest issues. He called for integrating forest-related issues into development strategies and strengthening commitment from the donor community. He supported a peer-review process to improve monitoring, assessment and reporting.

Wijewardana said the building blocks for SFM have been put in place, including: C&I; certification; the acceptance of the term SFM; and coordination through the CPF.

Meybodi said bringing major groups into the discussion was a major achievement of the IAF, and noted that obstacles to implementation include the separation of SFM from the sustainable development discussion, and lack of capacity and stable financing.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Reflecting on the first day of the AHEG-PARAM and noting that its aim is not to negotiate, but to identify options for a new IAF, several participants expressed satisfaction with the focused interventions and exchange of views so far. Many experts noted the wide range of ideas raised, but also signalled that few of these ideas were new. While no specific propositions are expected to be raised regarding financial modalities, several participants remarked that the issue would be an underlying factor of any discussions on reforming the IAF.