



FIFTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS: 16-27 MAY 2005

The fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-5) commences today at UN headquarters in New York. This is the final mandated session of UNFF. Delegates will review progress and consider future actions, review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (IAF), consider the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests, and consider enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination. On 18 May, delegates will convene "Asia Day," consisting of a panel discussion on regional forest-related issues in Asia. From 25-26 May, UNFF-5 will convene a high-level ministerial segment and policy dialogue with heads of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) organizations and a Multi-stakeholder Dialogue.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNFF

The UNFF followed 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 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 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 were the basis for the UNFF Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) and Plan of Action and were discussed at annual UNFF sessions. Country- and organization-led initiatives also contribute to UNFF. Now, UNFF must review progress and consider future actions, review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (IAF), and consider recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal mandate on all types of forests.

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.

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 establishing 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; and consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests.

UNFF-2: The second session of UNFF 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 IAF; 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.

UNFF-4: UNFF-4 convened in Geneva, Switzerland, from 3-14 May 2004. UNFF-4 adopted five resolutions on: forest-related scientific knowledge; social and cultural aspects of forests; monitoring, assessment and reporting and criteria and indicators; review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests; and finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies. UNFF-4 attempted but could not agree on resolutions on traditional forest-related knowledge and enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER

AGREEMENT: The United Nations Conference on the Negotiation of a Successor Agreement to the ITTA, 1994 met at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, from 26-30 July 2004, under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. No agreement was reached on the financial structure of the new agreement and its objectives.

The second session of the Conference convened in Geneva, from 14-18 February 2005, and continued discussions on disputed text carried forward from the first session. Numerous proposals on unresolved cross-cutting issues were tabled during the week and delegates were unable to reach final agreement. A third round of negotiations will take place from 27 June - 1 July 2005 in Geneva.

AHEG-PARAM: The 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 (AHEG-PARAM) met from 7-10 September 2004, at UN headquarters in New York. Comprising 68 experts, the Expert Group: assessed existing regional and international binding and non-binding instruments and processes relevant to forests; considered reports prepared by countries, members of the CPF on Forests and the UNFF Secretariat; considered the outcomes of previous UNFF sessions and the IAF; reviewed experiences of existing forest-related and other relevant organizations and agreements, focusing on complementarities, gaps and duplications; and adopted a report providing a range of options for the future framework to be forwarded to UNFF-5.

COUNTRY-LED INITIATIVE ON THE FUTURE

IAF: A country-led initiative (CLI) in support of discussions on a future IAF was held in Zapopan-Guadalajara, Mexico, from 25-28 January 2005. The purpose of the initiative was twofold: to elaborate the critical elements that countries wanted

to see included in a future IAF; and to provide an informal contribution that would facilitate a decision concerning the future IAF to be taken at UNFF-5. Participants considered five aspects of a future IAF: objectives and functions; modalities; options for financing; identification of the international and domestic roles and contributions of the potential components of the IAF; and the challenge ahead. The CLI produced the Guadalajara Report and submitted it to the United Nations. The Guadalajara Report is not a consensus report, but synthesizes the personal opinions expressed during the meeting.

DIALOGUE ON ILLEGAL LOGGING: An international dialogue on illegal logging, sponsored by The Forests Dialogue, was held from 7-10 March 2005, in Hong Kong, China. The dialogue sought to raise awareness among business leaders of the problems posed by illegal logging, to identify solutions, and to secure agreement on how participants can work together for widespread adoption of these solutions. Participants agreed to call on G-8 Ministers to implement existing government commitments, including increasing development assistance for poor countries to combat illegal logging and recognizing their responsibility as major consumer nations to reduce imports of forest products from illegal sources.

COFO-17: The seventeenth session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO-17) convened in Rome, Italy, from 15-19 March 2005. Delegates discussed the 2005 State of the World's Forests report, Regional Forestry Commissions, international cooperation in forest fire preparedness, the role of forests in contributing to the Millennium Development Goals, and the World Forestry Congress. A Ministerial Meeting on Forests also convened on 14 March 2005 in advance of COFO-17, at which ministers considered international cooperation on forest fire management and maintaining a commitment to sustainable forest management, and adopted a Ministerial Statement.

FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP: The Forest Landscape Restoration Implementation Workshop was held in Petrópolis, Brazil, from 4-8 April 2005. The workshop sought to find ways to increase understanding of good practices and opportunities in Forest Landscape Restoration activities, stimulate political support, and catalyze and demonstrate their implementation around the world. The workshop was an organization- and country-led initiative in support of UNFF, sponsored by Brazil and the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration. Participants developed the Petrópolis Challenge, a declaration describing the goals and current status of forest landscape restoration and produced a report that was forwarded to UNFF.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

OPENING SESSION: Delegates will convene from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm in Plenary to hear opening statements, attend to organizational matters, and discuss enhanced cooperation. In the afternoon, delegates will resume in Plenary to commence discussion on: reviewing the effectiveness of the IAF; future actions; and consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests.