



UNFF-5 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 16 MAY 2005

On Monday, the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-5) opened at UN Headquarters in New York. In the morning, delegates heard opening statements, and addressed organizational matters and enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination. In the afternoon, delegates considered future actions, review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (IAF) and consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests (parameters).

OPENING PLENARY

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates elected to the Bureau Manuel Rodriguez Becerra (Colombia) as Chair, Vasile Lupu (Romania), Francis K. Butagira (Uganda), Denys Gauier (France) as Vice-Chairs and Rezlan Ishaer Jenie (Indonesia) as Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur. Delegates adopted the agenda (E/CN.18/2005/1).

OPENING STATEMENTS: Chair Becerra reported progress in institution building and policymaking at the global level but identified significant gaps between goals and achievements. He highlighted continued deforestation, urged delegates to decide on future actions, and expressed hope that the UNFF-5 high-level ministerial segment would produce strong recommendations to the United Nations Economic and Social Council and General Assembly. Noting a positive climate for decision making, he called on UNFF-5 to produce a strong body of regulations on sustainable forest management (SFM).

Pekka Patosaari, Coordinator and Head of the UNFF Secretariat, highlighted the role of UNFF processes such as the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue (MSD). He called for outcomes that would reinvigorate commitment and provide guidance for the future IAF, and stressed the need for additional funding. He indicated the importance of Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) support for the UNFF, and suggested that the work of the new IAF could contribute to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

ENHANCED COOPERATION AND POLICY AND

PROGRAMME COORDINATION: Hosny El-Lakany, FAO, presented the CPF Framework 2005 (E/CN.18/2005/INF/1). He noted that the document recounts the CPF's progress since its 2001 inception, including work on streamlining of national reporting, harmonization of requests for information and definitions, creation of a database on SFM funding sources, information-sharing, technical and financial assistance, capacity building and awareness raising. He noted the need for strengthening external funding for implementation of Intergovernmental Panel on Forests

(IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) Proposals for Action (PfAs), work at the regional and national levels, and interaction with the MDGs.

JAMAICA, on behalf of G-77/CHINA, supported by INDONESIA, NIGERIA and CUBA, reiterated the need to implement internationally agreed commitments to SFM, and stressed the importance of identifying appropriate financial mechanisms and predictable funds for SFM. She urged developed countries to assist in the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and capacity building in support of best practices and utilization of traditional forest knowledge. She called for a comprehensive approach to address the links between SFM and socio-economic development.

LUXEMBOURG, on behalf of the EU, called for a reversal of current trends in deforestation and forest degradation. He noted the importance of enhanced cooperation and coordination, saying this could be achieved through the use of existing regional arrangements rather than the creation of new ones. He emphasized the need for an IAF with strong political status and credibility to inform wider policy processes in achieving global development goals.

The US supported capacity building to alleviate poverty and thus enhance SFM. She favored creating a major group advisory body for the CPF as well as a seed fund to catalyze collaborative work among CPF members, with matching funds to come from participating CPF organizations. Supported by AUSTRALIA, she also supported regional subsidiary meetings focusing exclusively on implementation, possibly incorporated within the FAO's existing regional structure. She expressed US readiness to continue financing secondments to the Secretariat, and noted that potential Secretariat roles include managing seed funding and catalyzing CPF communication and logistical coordination.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION stressed the significance of UNFF-5, and said the session should focus on implementation of effective forest policy at the global level. Noting significant achievements by UNFF and the CPF, he said the IAF should focus on enhancing coordination. NEW ZEALAND supported widening the range of CPF member organizations, and stressed the importance of national level collaboration, cross-sectoral policy implementation, regional approaches to SFM and utilization of private sector expertise and resources. GUATEMALA cautioned against increasing bureaucracy within the UNFF Secretariat, and called for strengthening its alliance with CPF members. MEXICO called for strengthening regional processes and avoiding the duplication of effort.

SWITZERLAND expressed disappointment with UNFF's achievements, and underscored the need for a strong international regime on forests. He said that a legally binding instrument (LBI)



is the best option for a future IAF, but given insufficient support for this, he, with AUSTRALIA, called for strengthening UNFF through, *inter alia*: overarching goals; quantifiable targets; strengthened regional processes; national commitments; innovative funding; and a voluntary code on SFM.

INDONESIA, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, called for enhanced regional cooperation to be actively supported by the international community, the private sector and civil society.

AUSTRALIA highlighted the need for action on the ground and drew attention to a user-friendly manual on the implementation of the IFF/IPF PfAs. He also highlighted the need for incremental improvement and a focus on high priority goals.

The ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN called for attention to SFM implementation for all types of forests, particularly in low-forest-cover countries.

Patosaari reported that a breakdown of trust fund contributions would be made available but that there is no written report on the status of the Secretariat.

Manuel Guariguata, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), reported on activities under the CBD Forest Biodiversity Programme of Work and on the Global 2010 Target to reverse forest loss in order to preserve biodiversity. He called for improved cooperation and reduction of overlap between organizations.

FUTURE ACTIONS, REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS, PARAMETERS: Patosaari reported on the review of the effectiveness of the IAF (E/CN.18/2005/6), consideration of future actions (E/CN.18/2005/8) and parameters (E/CN.18/2005/9). He said the reports point to significant achievements of the current IAF, which include increasing stakeholder participation, developing criteria and indicators (C&I) for SFM, and formulating and implementing national forest programmes. He also noted challenges in addressing illegal logging, and said the reports called for strengthened political commitment, financing and capacity building. He highlighted that the parameters report noted the possibility of creating a framework that could contain both legally-binding and non-legally-binding elements.

LUXEMBOURG, on behalf of the EU, supported by CANADA, the US, and SWITZERLAND, stated that the present IAF has not achieved its full potential, and, supported by AUSTRALIA, that civil society and the private sector had not been adequately engaged. Supported by CANADA, SWITZERLAND, and the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, he stated that clear, quantitative targets and goals were essential in securing political commitment and accountability. He suggested the following targets, each to be achieved by 2015: doubling the area of forests under sustainable management; reducing by half the number of people in extreme poverty of those whose livelihoods are dependent on forests; and reducing by half the global deforestation rate. Supported by the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, he advocated an LBI.

AUSTRALIA, supported by the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, recommended the creation of subsidiary regional forest fora that would focus on region-specific action plans and targets but would share an overarching limited number of global goals. The ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN emphasized the importance of capacity building to enhance reporting and monitoring.

Indigenous Peoples called for the consideration of indigenous and tribal rights to land and resource tenure in any future IAF.

OUTCOME OF THE AHEG-PARAM: Andrea Albán Durán (Colombia) and Tim Rollinson (UK) presented the report of the outcomes of the *Ad Hoc* Expert Group on consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate to develop a legal framework on all types of forests (AHEG-PARAM) meeting (E/CN.18/2005/2), including an analysis of existing institutions and the identification of options for the future IAF. They noted that both non-LBI and LBI options would require common “building blocks,” but that an LBI would add the legal obligation to report on forests and send a stronger signal that forests are a global priority.

Rosalía Arteaga Serrano, Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, called for strengthening UNFF to promote implementation. She opposed an LBI and quantifiable targets, and said a future IAF should seek to increase SFM areas, integrate forest management and development, and promote long-term political commitment and implementation of regional agendas. CANADA stressed that forests’ potential to serve development goals remains unfulfilled. He favored an LBI and stated that a future IAF should, *inter alia*: be performance-based; incorporate a strengthened UNFF and CPF; integrate forest policy and development; include a voluntary review mechanism based on national commitments; utilize regional processes; and include a voluntary code of conduct. NORWAY said the IAF has not met expectations, noting unabated rates of deforestation. He said an LBI would strengthen political commitment and attract financial resources, and called for an IAF based on a limited number of objectives, regional processes to facilitate country implementation, linkage between SFM and development goals, and a strengthened CPF.

The US noted that the IAF had failed to place forests high on the political agenda, and called for a more focused and structured, but non-legally binding, arrangement. She proposed strengthening the CPF, involving major groups in an advisory capacity, and holding regional subsidiary body meetings on implementation.

CUBA stated its willingness to consider all options, including an LBI. He stressed defining goals as well as the means for obtaining SFM in terms of financial resources and technology transfer.

SWITZERLAND queried why country reporting and use of the questionnaire format developed at UNFF-4 were so limited. He identified obstacles to the current IAF, including a lack of: focus, a simple framework, and political will. He advocated a voluntary code and, supported by NEW ZEALAND, global goals and targets, regional processes, and provision of financial resources for implementation.

NEW ZEALAND expressed frustration with the limited progress of the current IAF, and expressed concern over the CPF’s effectiveness. He noted the unwieldiness of implementing the IPF/IFF PfAs, and called for help to countries in determining priorities. He noted insufficient support for an LBI, and called for high-level political engagement in order to mobilize international support and resources, with emphasis placed on implementation at the regional and national levels.

Youth and Children, on behalf of six major groups, noted gains made in increasing major group participation in the forest policy dialogue but called for, *inter alia*, formalized roles for major group focal points, financial support for major group participation, and an assignment of staff to work with major groups.

CHINA expressed support for an LBI that would balance the principle of national sovereignty with the fulfillment of international obligations and enhance cooperation and participation.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION noted the achievements of UNFF, and called for strengthening the IAF. He suggested that UNFF provide clear guidance to the CPF and regional processes, integrate SFM goals with the MDGs and formulate specific targets and timetables.

NIGERIA noted that UNFF has yet to fulfill its commitments with regard to capacity building, transfer of technology, and provision of financial assistance. He opposed an LBI, and supported strengthening UNFF.

Kathryn Buchanan, Montréal Process, stated that a revised C&I framework will be announced next year.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Some delegates are of the view that there is widespread agreement concerning the objectives of the future IAF, but that the issue of targets might be a point of contention over the coming weeks. At the end of the day, some even boldly speculated that resistance to an LBI might be weakening, noting that few strong statements against a convention were made during the day.