

SIXTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS: 13-24 FEBRUARY 2006

The sixth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-6) commences today at UN headquarters in New York, with the goal of completing the consideration of its review process, according to decision 5/2, made at UNFF-5, and based on the Chair's draft text contained in the annex to the decision (E/CN.18/2006/2).

Delegates are expected to convene in two working groups over the course of the next two weeks. Working Group I is expected to consider the general mandate of the UNFF, objectives of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) and global goals. It may also consider the prospects for the creation of an "Instrument" for all types of forests, including potential legal or voluntary frameworks. Working Group II is expected to address: means of implementation; working modalities; regional aspects of the IAF; the multi-year programme of work; monitoring, assessment and reporting, and enhanced cooperation and cross-sectoral, policy and programme coordination.

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, and form the basis for the UNFF Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) and Plan of Action, which have been discussed at annual sessions. Country- and organization-led initiatives have also contributed to UNFF. The current session will continue the review process started at UNFF-5, including review of 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. Delegates 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; the promotion of natural and planted forests; specific criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the IAF; and proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for 2002-2005.

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. Terms of reference were adopted for the voluntary reporting format, and three *ad hoc* expert groups designed to consider: monitoring and reporting; finance and transfer of technologies; and “consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests.”

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.

UNFF-5: UNFF-5 took place from 16-27 May 2005, at UN headquarters in New York, with the goal of reviewing the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (IAF). However, participants were unable to reach agreement on strengthening the IAF and did not manage to produce either a ministerial statement or a negotiated outcome. However they did agree, *ad referendum*, to four global goals on: significantly increasing the area of protected forests and sustainably managed forests worldwide; reversing the decline in official development assistance for SFM; reversing the loss of forest cover; and enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits. They also agreed in principle to negotiate, at some future date, the terms of reference for a voluntary code or international understanding, as well as means of implementation. Delegates decided to forward the draft negotiating text to UNFF-6.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

ENA FLEG PREPARATORY CONFERENCE: Over 130 participants from 32 countries representing governments, NGOs, international organizations, industry and an intergovernmental body met at the Europe and North Asia (ENA) Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) Preparatory Conference in Moscow, Russian Federation, from 6-8 June 2005. The event was co-hosted by the World Bank and the Government of the Russian Federation, with financial support from eight international donors. Participants at the meeting, *inter alia*: discussed regional and national experiences and emerging ENA FLEG issues; attracted views from a range of stakeholders on ENA FLEG; and began drafting a Ministerial Statement and Indicative Plan of Action for the ENA Ministerial meeting in late 2005.

ITTC-38: The thirty-eighth session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) and associated sessions of the Committees convened in Brazzaville, Congo, from 19-21 June 2005. Participants deliberated on, *inter alia*: ITTO missions to Liberia and Gabon; *ex-post* evaluations of project work, including on transboundary protected area work; phased approaches to certification; and the State of Tropical Forest Management report. Participants also discussed ITTO's support to the Conference of Ministers in Charge of Forests in Central Africa, and approved US\$7.6 million in project funding. A special event on the Congo Basin Partnership was held on 22 June.

UN CONFERENCE FOR THE NEGOTIATION OF A SUCCESSOR AGREEMENT TO ITTA, 1994, THIRD PART: The UN Conference for the Negotiation of a Successor Agreement to the ITTA, 1994, Third Part, convened at the

Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, from 27 June to 1 July 2005. Although delegates made some progress resolving outstanding issues, and reached agreement on over twenty articles, they were unable to reach agreement on core elements: the agreement's scope, objectives, financial arrangements, and voting calculations.

ITTC-39: The thirty-ninth session of the ITTC and associated sessions of the Committees convened in Yokohama, Japan, from 7-12 November 2005. Participants discussed pressing issues including, *inter alia*: the ITTO Biennial Work Programme for 2006-2007; negotiation of a successor agreement, ITTO Objective 2000; and phased approaches to certification. Delegates approved 11 projects, one pre-project, and pledged US\$5.2 million in project financing. Delegates also convened in the thirty-seventh sessions of the Committees on Economic Information and Market Intelligence, Forest Industry, and Reforestation and Forest Management to approve projects and pre-projects, review projects and pre-projects under implementation and *ex-post* evaluations, conduct policy work and set the Committees' work for the next biennium. The eighteenth session of the Committee on Finance and Administration also met to discuss the ITTO Biennial Administrative Budget for 2006-2007, the draft terms of reference for ITTO regional officers and the current status of the Administrative Account.

SCOPING FOR A FUTURE AGREEMENT ON FORESTS: Over 186 experts from 87 countries and over 20 organizations and institutions gathered in Berlin, Germany, from 16-18 November 2005, to participate in a country-led initiative in support of the UNFF, with a view to building consensus prior to UNFF-6. Participants, speaking in their personal capacities, considered three main themes: voluntary instruments, implementation, and regionalization, and produced a report forwarded to the UNFF Secretariat for consideration (E/CN.18/2006/3).

THE EUROPE AND NORTH ASIA FOREST LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GOVERNANCE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE: ENA FLEG, held in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, from 22-25 November 2005, brought together over 250 ministers, government representatives, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and research agencies from 48 countries, with the objective of improving law enforcement and governance and curtailing illegal logging in the European and North Asian forest sectors. Delegates discussed how to improve the investment climate and private sector incentives, and how to ensure resource access to local populations and equity in resource utilization. Ministers endorsed the St. Petersburg Ministerial Declaration and an Indicative List of Actions, which affirm political commitment and set a framework for action to combat illegal logging.

UN CONFERENCE FOR THE NEGOTIATION OF A SUCCESSOR AGREEMENT TO ITTA, 1994, FOURTH PART: The UN Conference for the Negotiation of a Successor Agreement to the ITTA, 1994, Third Part, convened at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, from 16-27 January 2006, and focused on resolving issues left outstanding at the end of ITTA-3, including financial arrangements, scope of the agreement, and voting structure. Through intensive negotiations in two working groups and informal contact groups, delegates managed to produce consensus, and a successor agreement was adopted. The ITTA, 2006 will be opened for signature on 3 April 2006.