

## UNFF-6 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 16 FEBRUARY 2006

On Thursday, 16 February, the sixth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-6) worked towards building consensus on the future of the international arrangement on forests (IAF). In morning and afternoon sessions, delegates convened in two Working Groups to complete a third reading of the Chair's draft text. Working Group 1 (WGI) discussed the general mandate of the IAF, strategic objectives, legal framework and the instrument. WGI considered the means of implementation, enhanced cooperation and working modalities.

### WORKING GROUP 1

**GENERAL MANDATE:** On strengthening the IAF, the US proposed, and delegates agreed to, deletion of reference to strengthening the IAF "within existing resources and through voluntary contributions," and, supported by SWITZERLAND, AUSTRALIA and AUSTRIA for the EU, but opposed by SOUTH AFRICA for the AFRICAN GROUP, BRAZIL for the AMAZON GROUP, GUATEMALA, MALAYSIA, INDONESIA and INDIA, requested deletion of reference to "increased new and additional resources and voluntary contributions."

On enhancing the contribution of forests to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, the US, supported by SWITZERLAND, but opposed by many, requested deletion of an EU-proposed reference to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

On encouraging and assisting countries to maintain their forest resources, BRAZIL, supported by INDONESIA and INDIA, opposed by IRAN, PAKISTAN, the EU, SWITZERLAND, CHINA and CHILE, requested deletion of reference to maintaining "forest quality," stating that the term was vague and encompassed too many elements. INDIA and CHINA called for reference to increasing the area of forest resources. The EU, supported by AUSTRALIA, GUATEMALA for the Central American Integration System (SICA) and MEXICO, opposed by VENEZUELA, the AFRICAN GROUP, INDIA and the US, preferred retaining language on maintaining the full range of forest values and services. AUSTRALIA cautioned that excluding the full range of forest values would narrow the focus of the IAF.

On meeting the needs of Indigenous Peoples and local communities whose livelihoods depend on forests, the EU, supported by VENEZUELA, SWITZERLAND, MEXICO and BRAZIL, opposed by the AFRICAN GROUP, INDONESIA and SICA preferred the term "indigenous and local communities." The EU, supported by SWITZERLAND, opposed by SICA, the AFRICAN GROUP and INDIA, requested deletion of text on taking into account fair and equitable benefit sharing.

On increasing the area of forests under sustainable forest management (SFM) to improve the quality of life of people living in and around forests, and to reduce the loss of forest cover and finalize and implement the rehabilitation and conservation strategies for all countries, including for forests in LFCCs, IRAN, with the EU, called for clearer language to identify this as a function as opposed to another objective or goal. As clarification, the AFRICAN GROUP proposed beginning with "encourage and assist countries to." AUSTRALIA proposed moving "rehabilitation strategies" to a separate section. INDIA opposed specific reference to low forest cover countries (LFCCs) and COSTA RICA proposed referring to this in a separate section.

On strengthening regional linkages, the US and AUSTRALIA, supported by many, proposed compromise text on strengthening the interaction between UNFF and relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related mechanisms, organizations, and processes. BRAZIL, supported by NORWAY, MEXICO and the EU, inserted reference to the participation of Major Groups and relevant stakeholders. INDIA, opposed by AUSTRALIA, NORWAY and the US, requested deletion of "processes" and "relevant stakeholders."

**GLOBAL GOALS:** In discussing the chapeau language to global goals, delegates expressed preferences from among 10 alternative formulations. JAPAN, the EU, AUSTRALIA, SICA and the AFRICAN GROUP argued for not re-opening discussion on agreed-*ad ref* text on global goals. The US agreed, but reserved the right to return to the discussion.

**LEGAL FRAMEWORK:** ARGENTINA, the US, AUSTRALIA, MALAYSIA, INDONESIA and JAPAN, opposed by INDIA, preferred the original text recognizing that the option of a legally-binding instrument (LBI) could be considered in the future review of the IAF. The AFRICAN GROUP called attention to its proposal to include "the need for on-going discussion regarding the option" of an LBI.

The US, supported by AUSTRALIA and INDONESIA, opposed EU-proposed text on discontinuing the instrument upon review in 2015 unless its effectiveness is established, stating that this would prejudice future outcomes.

AUSTRALIA, supported by many, requested deletion of reference to an interim Ministerial-level evaluation. INDIA, supported by INDONESIA, the AMAZON GROUP, PAKISTAN and the AFRICAN GROUP, opposed by SICA, NORWAY and MEXICO, requested deletion of text regarding the establishment of an LBI no later than the 2015 review.

**VOLUNTARY CODE/GUIDELINES/INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING:** The EU presented their compilation proposal containing elements on the international instrument on all types of forests and on strengthening the IAF, which combined elements from annexed proposals by the US, BRAZIL

and the AFRICAN GROUP. Several delegates commended the EU's efforts, and suggested returning to it after having time for consideration.

The AFRICAN GROUP, supported by INDONESIA, INDIA and the AMAZON GROUP requested deletion of China's proposed text on facilitating the achievement of a future LBI. CANADA requested retaining text on launching negotiations to develop an LBI within the next 12 months.

AUSTRALIA suggested moving its proposal on adopting a voluntary instrument on all types of forests at UNFF-7 in 2007, to the section on global goals. The AFRICA GROUP requested a synthesis of both working groups' efforts.

## WORKING GROUP II

**MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION:** On promoting the active participation of non-state, non-large scale landowners, INDIA, supported by CHILE, wanted to substitute "forest dependent communities" for "groups;" the EU wanted to specify "forest" resource owners; the AFRICAN GROUP, supported by INDONESIA and CAMBODIA, preferred "stakeholders;" INDONESIA wanted to add "forest dependent communities;" and PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PNG) argued for inclusion of "indigenous peoples." SWITZERLAND, supported by NORWAY, GUATEMALA, the AFRICAN GROUP, COLOMBIA, INDIA and CHILE, wanted to substitute that with "small" forest owners which prompted the AMAZON GROUP, supported by EL SALVADOR, to point out that size is a relative concept and therefore unclear.

On traditional knowledge, the US, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP and TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO emphasised the importance of "consent" and the EU suggested studying the recent outcome of the 2nd Meeting of the *Ad hoc* Open-ended Inter-sessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity to introduce agreed language.

On governance and law enforcement, the EU suggested less specific language. The AFRICAN GROUP suggested "enacting and enforcing national and sub-national forest legislation." SWITZERLAND remarked that this does not reflect good governance or the social and environmental impacts of illegal logging. CHINA suggested that addressing illegal logging is a means to SFM. BRAZIL, supported by many others, reiterated preference for alternative simplified text consistent with other processes, "encouraging the promotion of governance and law enforcement at the national level."

The US urged retaining mention of enforcement at the sub-national level and eliminating the sale and use of illegally harvested timber. The EU, supported by the US, AUSTRALIA, JAPAN, New Zealand and the EU suggested addressing illegal logging in a separate paragraph. The AMAZON GROUP, requested the paragraph be bracketed.

TRINIDAD and TOBAGO, SAINT LUCIA, and SAINT VINCENT urged consideration of the sub-regional level, while ECUADOR recalled that this section addresses the national level. PNG, supported by AUSTRALIA, argued that all levels are relevant. The AFRICAN GROUP, supported by the EU, proposed qualifying the various levels of governance with "as appropriate."

On encouraging private sector involvement, AUSTRALIA, SWITZERLAND, JAPAN and NORWAY supported current wording proposed by the US, while ECUADOR sought removal of the list of specific policy actors involved. CAMBODIA wished to add consideration of non-timber forest products (NTFPs).

BRAZIL, supported by COLOMBIA and VENEZUELA, objected to using "producer and consumer countries," and requested that the whole paragraph be bracketed.

On diversification of income sources, several countries supported the addition of "community and indigenous peoples." The AMAZON GROUP, supported by the EU and NORWAY,

urged adherence to the original intent of supporting income diversification for indigenous peoples. INDIA wished to bracket reference to environmental services.

On forest research and development, the AFRICAN GROUP suggested that it be "promoted and strengthened," while SWITZERLAND preferred "strengthened." CROATIA, supported by INDONESIA, called for the inclusion of "economies in transition," and the AFRICAN GROUP added "centres of excellence." The EU, supported by CHILE, opposed by the AFRICAN GROUP and COLOMBIA, cautioned against creating a new clearinghouse, urging better use of present mechanisms.

On the relationship between the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) members and other instruments, processes and UN bodies: COST RICA underscored that the main aim of the paragraph is to reinforce the Forum's capacity to engage at regional and sub-regional levels; the AFRICAN GROUP asked for clarification on the methods by which collaboration could be improved; the EU suggested deferring any decisions until WGI's work is finalized; and the AMAZON GROUP emphasised "collaboration and cooperation."

**WORKING MODALITIES:** On the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW), the seven thematic elements and meetings: ARGENTINA, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP, argued that the regional meetings should dovetail with other high-level meetings; NORWAY warned against the Forum becoming overly technical to the detriment of its political agenda; the US, supported by MEXICO and INDIA, called for a number of options for regional engagement to be explored; and the AFRICAN GROUP, supported by ARGENTINA, the EU and the US called for all existing regional mechanisms to be invited to contribute.

AUSTRALIA noted it is not the role of UNFF to create new regional meetings, but proposed allowing for UNFF's participation. SWITZERLAND, supported by NORWAY, stated they are not concerned with having multiple regional processes feeding into the global level. COSTA RICA suggested that the Forum should provide guidance to the regions, and identify a lead organization.

On urging consideration of the UNFF MYPOW, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP, cautioned against listing specific institutions to which this applies.

On holding sessions outside the UN, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP and PAKISTAN, suggested that UNFF "may" hold meetings outside headquarters. The US and the AMAZON GROUP cautioned this could be more expensive. The Secretariat noted that ECOSOC Resolution 2003/63 allows for this. The AFRICAN GROUP noted that holding meetings in developing countries can be cheaper.

The US, supported by SWITZERLAND and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, argued that the UNFF should take into account inputs provided by Major Groups. The AFRICAN GROUP emphasised the importance of the Forum supporting the participation of developing countries.

## IN THE CORRIDORS

"It is not too early to become very concerned," said one delegate upon conclusion of the afternoon session. It is widely felt that it is imperative to produce a strong resolution on strengthening the IAF and demonstrate progress on a non-binding instrument to make credible a commitment to finish it next year. Yet negotiations have repeatedly stumbled, with many delegates unwilling to make decisions, stating that "nothing is decided upon until everything is decided upon."

One delegate commented that WGII negotiations were so choked with brackets that it led him to seek refuge in the convoluted WGI discussions. However, after a much-welcomed EU effort to find middle-ground among the major players' views on the instrument and a strengthened IAF, several delegates felt prepared to start fresh tomorrow.