

## UNFF-6 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2006

On Tuesday, 21 February, the sixth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-6) resumed negotiations on the international arrangement on forests (IAF). Working Group I (WGI) discussed the preamble, general mandate, goals/objectives, legal framework and future instrument, while WGII addressed means of implementation and enhanced cooperation.

### WORKING GROUP I

**GENERAL MANDATE:** Delegates agreed to a paragraph on strengthening integration between the UNFF and relevant regional and subregional mechanisms with the participation of Major Groups.

**GOALS/STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:** Regarding reference to the MDGs in the chapeau, the AMAZON GROUP, supported by the EU, proposed beginning with achieving the main objective of the IAF, and noted that the MDGs only refer to developing countries. The EU, with MEXICO, proposed "with a view to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs and the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation." The US proposed specifying "the contribution of forests." SWITZERLAND, supported by MEXICO, the EU, IRAN, GUATEMALA and AUSTRALIA, opposed by the AFRICAN GROUP, the AMAZON GROUP and INDONESIA, supported the 2015 timeline for achieving the goals.

On goals/strategic objectives, agreed-*ad ref*, several delegates opposed reopening the goals for negotiation, while others supported amendments clarifying language. The US proposed: withdrawing amendments on reversing the decline in official development assistance (ODA); retaining an amendment on increasing the area of sustainably managed forests, "including the area of protected forests," rather than the area of "protected forests worldwide and the area of sustainably managed forests;" and, moving language on internationally agreed development goals to the chapeau. Noting that the text on goals represented a carefully negotiated package, Co-Chair Doig suggested that if delegates felt that current amendments addressed substantive issues, the text would not be reopened. NORWAY, INDONESIA and the AFRICAN GROUP, opposed by MEXICO, Central American Integration System (SICA), and SWITZERLAND, said they could go along with amendments that clarify language, but rejected reopening the text.

**VOLUNTARY CODE/GUIDELINES/INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING:** CANADA insisted on retaining reference to a legally binding instrument. The EU underscored their intention to negotiate a non-binding instrument and expressed surprise that some countries were unwilling to do this.

COLOMBIA suggested spending more time discussing annexed proposals on elements of a voluntary instrument. The AFRICAN GROUP, the AMAZON GROUP and SWITZERLAND supported finalizing the ECOSOC resolution prior to discussing the annex. Co-Chair Doig clarified that the resolution includes reference to an annex with indicative elements of an agreement and the process to finalize it at UNFF-7, which must be discussed in order to finalize a resolution. ARGENTINA urged addressing matters of substance contained in proposed annexes.

WGI convened an information session on countries' annexed proposals on indicative elements of an instrument. BRAZIL said that the instrument's modalities would be linked to the UNFF and that strategic objectives listed in his delegation's proposal were compatible with those in the resolution. The EU noted that there would be specific modalities for the instrument. The US said the instrument should be based on the Forest Principles and advocated elaborating a set of principles within the instrument. She also noted that universal adoption may be preferable to a subscription approach. Noting that a decision was still pending on the type of instrument, CANADA called for considering her delegation's proposal on elements of a forest convention. Based on concerns expressed by the AFRICAN GROUP and BRAZIL that an annex compiled by the Co-Chairs on indicative elements would include non-negotiated elements, the Co-Chairs agreed to only compile a list of common elements.

Regarding future discussions on an LBI, GUATEMALA said the proposal is only to discuss the option of discussing, rather than actually discussing, an LBI. MEXICO said it viewed a non-binding instrument as a first step towards a binding agreement. The EU said an instrument would need: a sunset clause; a mid-term evaluation of its contribution; and the instrument itself. BRAZIL said sunset clauses send the wrong message and that the time to refer to an LBI had long passed. The US suggested an effectiveness review to suggest further actions would be more manageable.

**PREAMBLE:** VENEZUELA, opposed by many, preferred referring to "all principles of" the Rio Declaration, and requested a reference to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The EU, supported by MEXICO, preferred a general reference to LBIs relevant to forests, but noted that if reference to the CBD was included, other LBIs should be included.

The US, opposed by BRAZIL and VENEZUELA, requested a separate paragraph recalling the 2005 World Summit outcome. The EU preferred "reaffirming" the outcome to "recalling." The text remains bracketed.

On recognizing the importance of the multiple benefits provided by forests, BRAZIL, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP and the AMAZON GROUP, requested deleting a list of specific benefits. MEXICO, supported by the EU, ARGENTINA, SWITZERLAND, COSTA RICA and

MALAYSIA insisted on retaining reference to non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and environmental services, stating these terms had been agreed in other fora.

## WORKING GROUP II

**MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION:** On international financial institutions (IFIs), the US noted that IFIs do not “generate and channel” resources, and instead proposed that IFIs consider ways and means to facilitate and respond to requests from developing countries. The US also proposed deleting language on offering attractive conditions for loans. The AFRICAN GROUP proposed language on facilitating access to resources, and, with the AMAZON GROUP, supported reference to development agencies and regional banks. ARGENTINA suggested “catalyzing, mobilizing and generating resources,” but the EU and others opposed, and the text remained bracketed.

Regarding private sector investment, delegates debated whether to refer to public sector investment in this context, as proposed by the AFRICAN GROUP, while the EU maintained that the public sector is addressed elsewhere. As a compromise, delegates agreed to broadly refer to creating an enabling environment for investment in SFM. They also debated whether to delete a clause on financial recognition of efforts to reduce deforestation. SWITZERLAND, supported by JAPAN, proposed another paragraph on public and private sector investment to reduce deforestation, in order to support the work of the UNFCCC and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). After numerous amendments, language on developing economic incentives with a view to avoiding deforestation and restoring forest cover remains bracketed, at the Amazon Group’s request.

On innovative financial mechanisms, INDIA, supported by AUSTRALIA, PAKISTAN, CHINA and COLOMBIA, proposed removing reference to “national, regional, interregional and international” levels of revenue generation. The AFRICAN GROUP questioned whether addressing financial mechanisms went beyond the UNFF’s mandate. AUSTRALIA, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP, INDIA and the AMAZON GROUP, supported deleting reference to “debt reduction programmes and payment for environmental services.” SICA, supported by MEXICO and SWITZERLAND, emphasized the importance of including “environmental services.” While the US underscored the importance of correcting market failures and adequately valuing forests, AUSTRALIA, supported by INDIA and VENEZUELA, suggested new text calling for the development of market mechanisms to capture the proper value of forest products.

On supporting traditional sources of income, the AFRICAN GROUP, supported by the US and the EU, redrafted the paragraph to include income from “timber and NTFPs and environmental services” for “small-scale forest owners,” “indigenous peoples” and “poor people living in and around forest areas,” consistent with SFM objectives. The AMAZON GROUP, supported by CHINA and INDIA, opposed by the PHILIPPINES and SWITZERLAND, argued against including “environmental services” stating that it risked violating the principle of sovereignty over natural resources. Co-Chair Ramadan reminded delegates that “environmental services” is agreed language from UNFF-3.

Regarding chapeau language on means of implementation relevant to capacity building and technology transfer, the US proposed that, in addition to national forest programmes, policies and strategies be developed and implemented, as appropriate. He also proposed reformulating language to reflect that promoting SFM is the overall goal. Many delegates supported the US proposal, but references to global goals and strategic objectives remain bracketed, contingent on WGI discussions.

A subparagraph on greater support to scientific and technological innovations was agreed.

Regarding a subparagraph on enhancing capacity of countries to increase forest products from sustainably managed forests, CHINA, with the AMAZON GROUP, but opposed by the US, SWITZERLAND, JAPAN and NORWAY, supported deleting reference to products from legally harvested forests. The AFRICAN GROUP noted the issue was dealt with in a subsequent paragraph, and the reference remains bracketed contingent on those discussions.

On new and additional resources, the EU, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP, CHINA and INDONESIA, suggested referring to “relevant” national action plans, and the paragraph was agreed.

On promoting participation, the EU suggested inclusion of “forest workers.” The AFRICAN GROUP suggested emphasizing the participation of “local and forest-dependant communities and small scale forest owners, indigenous peoples and women,” and this was agreed.

On protection and use of traditional knowledge, the EU suggested, and delegates agreed to delete the paragraph, noting that the CBD will address this.

On strengthening capacity to address illegal logging, the AFRICAN GROUP, supported by many, but opposed by the AMAZON GROUP, proposed new text addressing corrupt practices in the forest sector, including illegal logging. The EU and the US urged the AMAZON GROUP to reconsider, cautioning that omitting illegal logging would weaken the ECOSOC resolution. The AMAZON GROUP offered to include “current practices in the current sector,” but opposed any mention of illegal logging, and the text remains bracketed.

On encouraging private sector and civil society involvement in SFM, the EU, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP, called for inclusion of “certification schemes.” The US argued for “voluntary measures” while SWITZERLAND, supported by many, argued for “voluntary instruments.”

## ENHANCED COOPERATION AND CROSS-SECTORAL POLICY AND PROGRAMME COORDINATION:

Delegates agreed to chapeau language on encouraging countries to enhance cooperation and cross-sectoral policy and programme coordination, while maintaining brackets around global goals and strategic objectives contingent on WGI discussions. Delegates agreed to a subparagraph on strengthening forest research and development, after AUSTRALIA, supported by SWITZERLAND, added reference to strengthening education. With minor amendments, delegates agreed to subparagraphs on cooperation and partnerships at the regional level, as needed, and establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships and programmes.

On enhancing cooperation and cross-sectoral policy, the EU, ARGENTINA and CHILE, opposed by SWITZERLAND, the AMAZON GROUP, the US, AUSTRALIA, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and the AFRICAN GROUP, called for specific reference to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

ARGENTINA cited potential problems with a subparagraph on UN system-wide coordination when the resolution goes to ECOSOC, and delegates agreed to delete the paragraph.

## IN THE CORRIDORS

Many delegates commented that the side-event on efforts to combat illegal logging served as a much needed reality-check regarding the urgency of addressing deforestation, and contrasted with the paucity of substance observed during the day’s negotiations. Disparaging comments such as “feeling lost in a forest of brackets” and “inching towards irrelevance” circulated both in and out of the session. However, some progress was achieved in the working groups, with agreement secured on some key paragraphs on means of implementation.

While resistance to negotiations without translation may spare delegates from night sessions, one delegate commented that ultimately the length of negotiations will expand to fill the time allocated, and dates for UNFF-7 have already been set.