

SUMMARY OF THE 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) was held from 13-24 February 2006, at UN headquarters in New York. Nearly 600 participants attended the two-week session where delegates addressed unfinished business from UNFF-5 regarding the development of the international arrangement on forests. Negotiations revolved around the Chair's draft negotiating text, forwarded from UNFF-5, which was to be attached as an annex to a resolution for consideration by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This text was discussed according to issue clusters, including: global goals/strategic objectives of the international arrangement on forests; legal framework; voluntary code/guidelines/international understanding; means of implementation; working modalities; monitoring assessment and reporting; and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

Many of the same forest-related issues that have eluded consensus in previous years, resurfaced at UNFF-6 and led to a late final night of negotiations. These include reference to environmental services, new and additional financial resources, illegal logging, and the consideration of a legally binding instrument.

Negotiations proceeded slowly with little sense of urgency to force compromise and complete the agreement until the very final day. In the end, however, delegates were able to achieve consensus on all aspects of the Chair's text, including four "global objectives" on forests: reversing the loss of forest cover and increasing efforts to prevent forest degradation, enhancing forest benefits and their contribution to international development goals, increasing the area of protected forests and areas of sustainably managed forests, and reversing the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management. By the time UNFF-6 ended at 11:30 pm on Friday, 24 February, the Chair's text was adopted and forwarded to ECOSOC.

UNFF-7 is scheduled to be held from 16-27 April 2007, at UN headquarters in New York.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 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, 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.

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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's work.

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 forwarded the draft negotiating text to UNFF-6.

UNFF-6 REPORT

On Monday, 13 February, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs José Antonio Ocampo opened UNFF-6. Delegates elected Judith Mbula Bahemuka (Kenya) as Chair, and Majdi Ramadan (Lebanon), and José Antonio Doig (Peru) as Vice-Chairs. Chair Bahemuka noted that Tono Kruzic (Croatia) and Franz Xaver Perrez (Switzerland) had already been elected as Vice-Chairs and that Perrez would serve as rapporteur. She highlighted the need for the Forum to live up to its potential for achieving the globally agreed goal of reducing deforestation, making SFM a reality and increasing the contribution that forests make to human well-being. She said that this will require improving methods of work, developing a multi-year programme of work (MYPOW), and increasing official development assistance (ODA) for SFM, and urged delegates to keep the issue of a legally binding instrument (LBI) in perspective.

Chair Bahemuka appointed Doig and Perrez as Co-Chairs of Working Group I (WGI), and Ramadan and Kruzic as Co-Chairs of Working Group II (WGII). Chair Bahemuka said WGI would address the general mandate of UNFF, including declaration of message, global goals and strategic objectives, and an instrument for all forest types. She said WGII would consider: means of implementation; working modalities; MAR; and enhanced cooperation, cross-sectoral policy and programme coordination.

Ocampo encouraged strengthening linkages between the work of the Forum and other forest-related processes, institutions and instruments, mainstreaming SFM into the broader development agenda, and enhancing regional initiatives and collaborative networks for more effective implementation on the ground.

Chair Bahemuka proposed, and delegates agreed, to grant accreditation to the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), pursuant to a note from the Secretariat (E/CN.18/2006/4). The Chair proposed, and delegates agreed to adopt the Provisional Agenda (E/CN.18/2006/1).

Pekka Patosarri, head of the UNFF Secretariat, presented the note of the Secretariat (E/CN.18/2006/2) that transmits the Chair's draft text from UNFF-5, according to UNFF decision 5/2, and stated that this gives the Forum a clear mandate to complete the review of its progress. He suggested that the Forum should consider making reference to the 2005 World

Summit Outcome Document and global goals. He noted the need to clarify the objectives and functions of the IAF, and the institutional status of the UNFF, and to improve its ability to address emerging issues and make links to regional and national efforts. He noted the need to improve the global funding framework and to enhance the UNFF's role with regard to the CPF and other institutions.

Chair Bahemuka, supported by all participants, recognized the significant efforts of Hosni el Lakany, as former CPF Chair. El Lakany extended his gratitude to Forum participants and CPF partners, and noted the importance of the future of the IAF. He called for an increase in the length of forest rotation intervals, a reversal in the conversion of forests to other land uses, and cautioned that the forest sector risks being subsumed by other sectors. Speaking on behalf of CPF members, Michael Martin, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), offered appreciation for support and guidance received from UNFF, and supported enhanced collaboration with civil society.

OPENING STATEMENTS: Gabon, on behalf of COMIFAC, recalled that the Yaoundé Declaration recognizes the right of peoples to use their forests in development efforts, and called for a flexible and voluntary approach and increased financial assistance.

Austria, on behalf of the European Union (EU) and associated countries, expressed disappointment at UNFF-5's failure to reach consensus, and conceded that since achieving an LBI is not a realistic prospect, the EU wished to engage in a pragmatic dialogue that would contribute to SFM for all forest types. He also sought clarification of how the LBI issue would be handled at this session.

Cambodia, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries, highlighted regional efforts in enhancing multiple-use forest management, noted the option of establishing an ASEAN forest trust fund, and, with India, Pakistan, and Kenya, supported a dedicated global forest fund and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs).

Panama, for the Central American Integration System (SICA), called for the creation of innovative financial mechanisms and the reintroduction of a working document on payment for environmental services.

Ghana, for the African Group, called for: an international revenue fund; reversal of declining forest sector official development assistance; establishment of a Global Environment Facility (GEF) operational programme on forests; and the improvement of market access for African forest products.

Japan noted momentum in other fora regarding action against illegal logging and related activities and encouraged flexible and efficient regional mechanisms. Japan, with the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), India and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), supported a non-legally binding instrument.

Croatia restated her delegation's call for 2010 to be proclaimed the International Year of Forests. China called for avoiding further fragmentation of international forest policy. The Russian Federation noted the importance of the Europe and North Asia Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) conference.

Canada recalled his delegation's longstanding efforts towards an LBI, expressed skepticism regarding the ability of a voluntary instrument to meet these goals, and stated that they will pursue alternative avenues if UNFF fails to deliver beyond the status quo. Argentina said it wanted to work with others to develop an LBI, and noted that if UNFF-6 failed to achieve consensus, Argentina would pursue other alternatives, both within and outside the UN.

Australia announced the release of a non-paper describing the development of a regional mechanism.

Algeria noted the need to strengthen the framework for international cooperation, taking into consideration the needs of low forest cover countries (LFCCs), and noted the need for a global forest fund under the GEF. Chile highlighted the 2005 World Summit Declaration's call for a more coherent international approach to forest issues. Fiji clarified the need for a voluntary code and regional cooperation.

Nigeria noted the importance of UNFF objectives, but disagreed with the need for either an LBI or quantitative global goals and targets. He called attention to the African Group's call for increased support for capacity building.

India noted the limited financial resources for competing development agendas. The SPC highlighted initiatives to support member states to better understand the IPF/IFF proposals for action (PfA), and supported strengthening the CPF.

Children and Youth, on behalf of Major Groups, lamented that opportunities for Major Group participation in UNFF had been reduced, and called for developing SFM indicators that incorporate their many and varied interests.

Colombia, supported by Brazil, supported the creation of a global forest fund, but disagreed with quantifiable and time-bound goals. Brazil further encouraged: a focus on strategic objectives and adequate means of implementation; an international understanding on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all kinds of forests; a network of centers of excellence in all regions; and a clearinghouse mechanism.

Pakistan called for an enhanced and predictable flow of financial and technical resources, as well as priority attention to LFCCs. Kenya suggested raising the profile of the current arrangement and preferred setting global goals and targets.

The Secretariat of the Montreal Process on Criteria and Indicators for SFM said that the draft indicators for SFM were available and invited comments from delegates.

The Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe noted the achievements of pan-European regional partnerships and a framework for cooperation in implementation, and highlighted the value of regional inputs.

CHAIR'S DRAFT TEXT

The two working groups convened daily from Tuesday, 14 February, to Thursday, 23 February, to negotiate aspects of the Chair's draft decision according to issue clusters. WGI addressed: global goals/strategic objectives of the international arrangement on forests; legal framework; and voluntary code/guidelines/international understanding. WGII addressed: means of implementation; working modalities; monitoring assessment

and reporting (MAR); and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. The groups also met in joint working groups, informal plenary and in contact groups.

The following report is organized according to the structure of the Chair's text, which will be attached as an annex to UNFF report (E/CN.18/2006/L.1). This report will be forwarded to ECOSOC for its consideration.

PREAMBLE: The preamble was discussed by both working groups throughout the meeting, and in informal plenary sessions. Delegates debated several contentious issues, including references to: specific principles of the Rio Declaration, environmental services provided by forests, and resources for effective implementation of SFM.

On referring to the Principles of the Rio Declaration, the Amazon Group and the African Group, opposed by the US and others, insisted on a specific reference to the principles on sovereign rights of countries to exploit their own resources and common but differentiated responsibilities. Switzerland proposed including the full text of the Principle on sovereign rights, adding text on ensuring that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not damage the environment of other states, to which delegates agreed. The US stated, for the record, that her delegation does not accept any interpretation of the principle on sovereign rights that would imply a recognition or acceptance of any international obligations or liabilities, or any diminution of the responsibilities of developing countries under international law.

On multiple benefits provided by forests, the Amazon Group, supported by the African Group, India and China, but opposed by Mexico, the EU, Argentina, Switzerland, SICA and Malaysia, requested deleting reference to non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and environmental services. Countries proposing deletion of the use of the term "environmental services" stated this term had been agreed in commodity and trade negotiations, and its use was not appropriate in this Forum, while those requesting its retention said that the language had been previously used in this Forum.

Delegates agreed to "recognizing the importance of the multiple economic, social and environmental benefits derived from goods and services provided by forests and trees outside forests."

On resources for effective implementation of SFM by developing countries, developing countries urged inclusion of new and additional financing, capacity building and transfer of ESTs, and Fiji requested specific reference to small island developing states (SIDS). The EU and the US preferred "adequate" financing, deleting reference to transferring technology on "preferential and concessional terms," and retaining language on good governance. Cuba, the African Group, the Amazon Group and China opposed reference to good governance. On the final day of the meeting, delegates agreed to language on "emphasizing that effective implementation of SFM is critically dependant upon adequate resources, including finance, capacity development and transfer of ESTs, recognizing in particular the need to mobilize increased financial resources for developing countries.

Final Text: The final text of the preamble states that ECOSOC:

- recalls the 2005 World Summit Outcome;
- reaffirms its commitment to, *inter alia*, the Rio Declaration, including on sovereign rights and common but differentiated responsibilities; the IPF/IFF PfAs, the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation, the Monterrey Consensus, and internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
- recalls relevant existing international legally binding instruments;
- recognizes the importance of the multiple economic, social and environmental benefits derived from goods and services provided by forests and trees outside forests;
- emphasizes that SFM can contribute significantly to sustainable development, poverty eradication and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs;
- expresses concern about continued deforestation and forest degradation, as well as the slow rate of afforestation and forest cover recovery and reforestation;
- recognizes special needs and requirements of countries with fragile forest ecosystems, including those of LFCCs;
- emphasizes that effective implementation of SFM is critically dependent on adequate resources, including finance, capacity development and transfer of ESTs, and recognizes the need to mobilize increased financial resources, including from innovative sources, for developing countries, including least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries and SIDS, as well as countries with economies in transition;
- recognizes the contribution of voluntary public-private partnerships and private sector initiatives to achieve effective implementation of SFM and support forest-related national strategies, plans and priorities related to forests;
- recognizes the need to strengthen political commitment and collective efforts, and to, *inter alia*, include forests on national and international development agendas;
- welcomes the IAF's accomplishments, including the CPF's joint initiatives;
- reemphasizes the importance of the UNFF as an intergovernmental body on forests within the UN and the CPF's supporting role, and the need to continue to provide clear guidance to the CPF; and
- recognizes the need to strengthen interaction between the global forest policy dialogue and regional and subregional level processes.

GENERAL MANDATE: Delegates discussed the opening operative paragraphs of the Chair's text, on the principal functions of the IAF, in WGI throughout the meeting, as well as in informal plenary during the last two days. Main issues of contention included: strengthening the IAF through new and additional resources; references to the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals; use of the term "forest quality;" and text on regional initiatives.

On strengthening the IAF, delegates debated whether to include reference to new and additional resources in the first operative paragraph of the resolution, with the US noting that

this was inappropriate. Developing countries requested reference to “increased new and additional resources and voluntary contributions,” but were opposed by Switzerland, Australia and the EU. After several reformulations specifying resources from different sources, delegates agreed to delete reference to resources in this paragraph.

On the principal function of the IAF to contribute towards achieving internationally agreed development goals, the US proposed, but delegates disagreed, deleting reference to the MDGs. Co-Chairs Perrez and Doig suggested, and many delegates agreed to, refer to the MDGs, the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation, and the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development. Mexico, supported by Costa Rica, the African Group and the Amazon Group, but opposed by the EU and the US, proposed a separate paragraph on the Monterrey Consensus. Delegates agreed to “bearing in mind the Monterrey Consensus,” in the same paragraph.

On assisting countries to maintain and improve their forest resources, Brazil, with Indonesia and India, repeatedly objected to the term “forest quality,” stating that it was a vague term and encompassed too many elements. Pakistan, the EU, SICA and several others insisted on its retention, stating that it was an accepted forestry term. Australia proposed, and delegates agreed to, compromise text transforming the language into a reference to reducing forest degradation. The Amazon Group objected to a US proposal on “maintaining and enhancing benefits of forests to all people,” proposing text referring to improving the quality of life of people in and around forests. Mexico proposed, and delegates agreed to, “benefits of forests, particularly to the quality of life of people living in and around forests.” Brazil, supported by SICA and Indonesia, requested a reference to fair and equitable benefit-sharing deriving from access to and use of indigenous and local communities’ forest genetic resources, but this was later deleted.

Australia proposed text on strengthening linkages and dialogue between the UNFF and regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms or organizations. Delegates agreed to compromise on strengthening the interaction between the UNFF and relevant regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms, organizations and processes. Brazil inserted reference to the participation of Major Groups and relevant stakeholders, and delegates agreed to the text with minor amendments.

Final Text: The resolution decides to strengthen the IAF, and agrees that to achieve its main objective, as set out in ECOSOC resolution 2000/35, the IAF will perform the following principal functions:

- enhance the contribution of forests towards achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and to implementing the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation, bearing in mind the Monterrey Consensus;
- encourage and assist countries, including LFCCs, to develop and implement forest conservation and rehabilitation strategies, increase the area of forests under sustainable management, and reduce forest degradation and loss of forest cover; and

- strengthen interaction between the UNFF and relevant regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organizations and processes, with participation of Major Groups, to facilitate enhanced cooperation and effective implementation of sustainable SFM, as well as to contribute to the work of the Forum.

GLOBAL OBJECTIVES ON FORESTS: Global goals/strategic objectives were discussed throughout the two weeks in WGI, and in informal plenary sessions. A contact group, chaired by Tony Bartlett (Australia), convened during the final two days of the meeting. Discussion centered on chapeau language and amending the goals/strategic objectives, that were agreed *ad referendum* at UNFF-5, and text on national efforts to contribute to the global goals/strategic objectives.

Delegates could not decide between using global “goals” or “strategic objectives” with the Amazon Group preferring “strategic objectives.” Delegates decided on “global objectives,” and changed the section title to “Global objectives on forests.”

The Group debated whether to include reference to the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, in the chapeau, as proposed by the US, noting that text referring to them was already in one of the global objectives. Many delegates opposed this deletion, and decided to retain the reference in both the chapeau and the global objective.

On achievement of the shared global objectives, delegates debated between “affirms” and “decides to set” the goals/strategic objectives. After contact group consultations, delegates agreed to use “sets.”

The African Group, the Amazon Group, Indonesia and India, opposed by many, requested deletion of the 2015 timeline for making progress towards achievement of the global objectives.

The US proposed compromise text stating “aims to work collectively towards their achievement by 2015.” The contact group produced a compromise package, stating “agrees to work globally and nationally to make demonstrable progress towards their achievement by 2015.” The African Group later opposed the inclusion of “demonstrable,” and the text was agreed with this deletion.

Delegates debated whether to reopen the content of the agreed-*ad ref* global goals/strategic objectives, with the US and the African Group, opposed by many, proposing amendments to clarify language. Delegates decided not to reopen the goals, but agreed to a minor amendment by the US to clarify language in Global Objective 3, on increasing the area of protected forests and “other” areas of sustainably managed forests.

Delegates debated whether to reopen negotiations on a paragraph on national efforts to contribute to the global goals/strategic objectives, as it had also been agreed *ad referendum* at UNFF-5. Switzerland and China proposed amendments, but these were not agreed on, and the text remained unchanged.

Final Text: The final agreed text states that, with a view to achieving the main objective of the IAF, and to enhancing the contribution of forests to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, sets the following shared global objectives on forests and agrees to work globally and nationally and to make progress toward their achievement by 2015:

- Global Objective 1: Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation.
- Global Objective 2: Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits and the contribution of forests to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, in particular with respect to poverty eradication and environmental sustainability, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people.
- Global Objective 3: Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, and increase the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.
- Global Objective 4: Reverse the decline in ODA for SFM and mobilize significantly increased new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM.

The text includes language on national efforts to contribute to the global objectives through the development or indication of voluntary national measures, policies, actions or specific objectives.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION: Delegates first addressed means of implementation on Tuesday, 14 February, in WGII and revisited the issue throughout the two-week session. Sub-paragraphs were further debated in informal plenary sessions and in a contact group, chaired by Irena Zubčević (Croatia).

This section contains two paragraphs. The first paragraph addresses funding and resources, while the second focuses on capacity development. Debate revolved around contentious issues, such as ODA, financial resources, a global forest fund, and illegal logging.

On ODA, the EU and the US supported language on increasing ODA, while the Amazon Group, the African Group, Cuba, Ecuador, the Republic of Korea, Paraguay and China preferred language on reversing the decline in ODA, urging developed countries to make concrete efforts in accordance with their commitments.

Delegates were divided over whether to create a global forest fund. The African Group, supported by India, the Amazon Group and Papua New Guinea, called for a new fund, while Switzerland, Norway and the US argued against it. Japan requested a review of existing funds be undertaken before any decision on a fund is taken. Delegates discussed existing funds, including the FAO's National Forest Programme (NFP) Facility, the World Bank's Programme on Forests (PROFOR), and the ITTO's Bali Partnership Fund (BPF). A compromise was struck whereby the bodies of the National Forest Programme Facility, PROFOR and the BPF were invited to assess the funds' performance to identify the merits of a new fund.

Delegates agreed on language to strengthen existing forest-related funds, through new and additional financial resources, provided voluntarily, to implement SFM, with the Amazon Group, India, China and Cuba securing inclusion of the concept of integrating forest issues in poverty reduction strategies.

Costa Rica underscored the importance of the Forum engaging at the regional and subregional levels and delegates called upon CPF members to enhance the ability of developing countries to access additional national and international funding.

The African Group, Pakistan and India agreed that the GEF is underfunding forest programmes, and argued that it should increase its support of SFM. Some delegates stressed this should not prejudice other operational programmes under the GEF, and language was added to reflect this.

On developing countries' access to financial resources for forest-related projects, the US opposed language suggesting that international financial institutions "channel" resources and, after extensive debate, delegates agreed to "generate and facilitate access to resources."

On creating an effective enabling environment for investment in SFM and developing economic incentives, the US suggested combining text on the two issues, and the Group agreed. Ecuador voiced concern that "economic incentives" could legitimize subsidies, and it was removed. Switzerland called for inclusion of "forest restoration" to a list of forest-related activities and argued that the list be non-exhaustive. The text was agreed.

On developing innovative financial mechanisms, the US argued that this paragraph was inextricably linked to a later paragraph on developing market mechanisms, and suggested that they be discussed together. The Amazon Group supported deleting the latter paragraph, noting it did not acknowledge efforts made, and costs incurred, by heavily forested countries. Following intensive negotiations in the contact group on Friday, delegates agreed to compromise text on both paragraphs.

The Working Group worked intensely on a sub-paragraph dealing with innovative financial mechanisms for generating support for SFM, streamlining the language to a formulation reflecting India, Colombia and Brazil's wish not to include "environmental services." The same phrase caused a schism regarding its use in a sub-paragraph on supporting livelihoods and income diversification from forest products. The Amazon Group, supported by China and India, opposed by the Philippines and Switzerland, argued against its inclusion, 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. The Working Group was similarly split over the proposal by Switzerland, supported by Costa Rica and Canada, but opposed by India, Nigeria, Colombia, Saint Lucia and Brazil, to add "including timber and NTFPs." Neither phrase was included in the final text.

The second paragraph addresses country efforts to develop and implement NFPs, policies and strategies to achieve the global objectives and to promote SFM, through capacity building and transfer of ESTs, including traditional technologies.

On enhancing the capacity of countries to increase the production of forest products, there was much debate over how to better define "sources" of timber. Suggestions included "legally harvested," "regulated," and "sustainably managed sources," with China, India, Ecuador and Chile arguing that "sustainable" implies "legally harvested." This paragraph was linked to a later paragraph dealing with enhancing law

enforcement and governance. The Amazon Group opposed calls from the EU and the US to include reference to “illegal logging” in the sub-paragraph on forest products and debate on these paragraphs continued during Friday’s informal plenary and in the contact group. Delegates reached a compromise, agreeing to delete the reference in the sub-paragraph on forest products, and to reformulate a sub-paragraph on corrupt practices to include reference to strengthening countries’ capacity to address illegal practices, according to national legislation, and illegal international trade in forest products in the forest sector.

The Working Group agreed on a sub-paragraph on active participation and empowerment of stakeholders. 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.

Final Text: The final text of the first paragraph urges countries to make concerted efforts to secure sustained high-level political commitment to strengthen the means of implementation to provide support, in particular for developing countries, to promote SFM by:

- reversing the decline in ODA for SFM;
- mobilizing and providing new and additional resources for SFM;
- strengthening, through new and additional financial resources, provided on a voluntary basis, existing forest-related funds to support NFPs, national actions aimed at implementing SFM, and where appropriate, poverty reduction strategies;
- inviting the governing bodies of the NFP facility, PROFOR and the Bali Partnership Fund, to enhance their contribution to SFM and the achievement of the global objectives;
- assessing and reviewing the current funding mechanisms as well as the possibility of having a voluntary global funding mechanism;
- inviting CPF members to maintain and enhance support for analytical work and knowledge generation and to develop new tools and approaches to key issues within the forest sector;
- inviting the GEF Council to fully consider the potential for strengthened GEF support for SFM;
- inviting the governing bodies of international financial institutions, development agencies and regional banks to consider ways to generate and facilitate access to resources, and to respond to requests from developing countries to finance forest-related activities;
- creating an effective enabling environment for investment in SFM;
- creating an enabling environment for the involvement of local communities and other forest users in SFM;
- further developing innovative financial mechanisms for generating revenue to support SFM;
- encouraging the development of mechanisms that may include systems for attributing proper value to the benefits derived from goods and services provided by forests;
- fostering access by households and communities to forest resources and markets; and
- supporting livelihoods and income diversification from forest products and services for forest-related stakeholders.

The second paragraph urges countries to make concerted efforts to develop and implement NFPs, policies and strategies in order to achieve the global objectives set out in this resolution and to promote SFM, through capacity building and transfer of ESTs, by:

- providing greater support to scientific and technological innovations for SFM;
- enhancing the capacity of countries to increase the production of forest products from sustainably managed forests;
- integrating NFPs or other forest strategies into national strategies for sustainable development, relevant national action plans and, where appropriate, poverty reduction strategies;
- promoting international cooperation, including South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation;
- promoting the active participation and empowerment of all forest-related stakeholders in the development and implementation of SFM policies and programmes;
- strengthening of mechanisms that enhance sharing and use of best practices in SFM;
- strengthening the capacity of countries to address illegal practices in the forest sector, through the promotion of FLEG; and
- encouraging the private sector to promote and implement voluntary instruments, in order to adopt good business practices and to improve market transparency.

ENHANCED COOPERATION AND CROSS-SECTORAL POLICY AND PROGRAMME COORDINATION: Delegates first addressed enhanced cooperation and cross-sectoral policy and programme coordination in WGII on Tuesday, 14 February, and again on Tuesday and Wednesday, 21 and 22 February.

During the discussions, the EU emphasized the importance of close collaboration and coordination between the governing bodies of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), instruments, processes and UN bodies. Proposals put forward during the discussions included: facilitating implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action; a new web-based clearinghouse; enhancing major group participation; and considering a regional approach and strengthening regional activities. China said a regional approach must be linked to the global level, while Brazil suggested building upon existing regional efforts. Croatia noted a strong IAF and MYPOW were needed to coordinate regional activities.

Regarding a paragraph on improved collaboration between relevant MEAs, instruments, processes and UN bodies, Canada requested including text on an LBI, while Costa Rica and Switzerland argued for a regional approach. The Russian Federation supported strengthening the Forum’s coordinating role. Delegates agreed to a sub-paragraph on strengthening forest research and development, after Australia added reference to strengthening education. Delegates also agreed to a sub-paragraph inviting the CPF to enhance cooperation after initial opposition by some countries.

Final Text: The resolution encourages countries to enhance cooperation and cross-sectoral policy and programme coordination in order to achieve the global objectives and to promote SFM by:

- facilitating implementation of the IPF/IFF PfAs through clustering and further simplifying the language, as needed;
- strengthening forest education and research and development through global, regional and subregional networks, as well as relevant organizations, institutions and centers of excellence in all regions; and
- strengthening cooperation and partnerships at the regional level, as needed, to: increase political, financial and technical support and capacity, develop regional strategies and plans for implementation; collaborate on implementation activities; and exchange experiences and lessons learned.

Another paragraph invites the CPF to enhance cooperation and cross-sectoral policy and programme coordination by, *inter alia*, promoting the exchange of forest management-related experiences and good practices and considering the feasibility of serving as a clearinghouse. A final paragraph invites the relevant MEAs, instruments, processes and UN bodies to improve collaboration and cooperation with the IAF.

WORKING MODALITIES: Delegates addressed working modalities extensively during WGII sessions throughout the meeting, as well as in a contact group, chaired by Irena Zubčević (Croatia), on Thursday evening, 23 February. On Friday, during the informal plenary, the remaining outstanding issues were resolved.

Extensive debate revolved around paragraphs related to, *inter alia*, frequency and duration of meetings, participation of and support to Major Groups, and strengthening the Secretariat and the UNFF Trust Fund. On frequency and duration of meetings, some delegates suggested biennial meetings, while others preferred them to be held either annually or every three years, and there was disagreement over whether the Forum should meet for one or two weeks. The issue was referred to the contact group, during which participants agreed to meet biennially for a period of up to two weeks.

Delegates also debated participation of, and support to, Major Groups. The Russian Federation opposed language on encouraging voluntary contributions to support Major Group participation, noting the sub-paragraph was inappropriate in this context. The US proposed a paragraph on strengthening UNFF interaction with Major Groups and facilitating balanced representation of Major Groups at Forum meetings. During the informal plenary, the EU proposed deleting the paragraph on strengthening UNFF interaction with Major Groups, and retaining the one on financial support for Major Groups, which was opposed by the Russian Federation. After some debate, delegates agreed to delete the sub-paragraph on financial support to Major Groups, and maintain the sub-paragraph on strengthening interaction, with the deletion of the clause on facilitating regionally-balanced representation of Major Groups in Forum meetings.

During the initial debate on working modalities, some developed countries called for deleting language on strengthening the UNFF Secretariat, while developing countries emphasized the Secretariat's importance for implementation follow-up. During subsequent discussions, the US insisted strengthening of the Secretariat should be done within "its" existing resources, while the African Group said that resources

should also be able to come from elsewhere within the UN. Delegates agreed on language considering ways of strengthening the Secretariat within existing resources, as well as through voluntary extra-budgetary resources.

On voluntary contributions to the UNFF Trust Fund, the US suggested that donor countries, other countries in a position to do so, and other entities interested in the effectiveness of the IAF, contribute to the Trust Fund, which was agreed.

On working with regional bodies, mechanisms and processes to provide input to the Forum's work, delegates agreed to, *inter alia*: delete reference to "existing" bodies so as not to limit mechanisms and processes; specify "forest-related" bodies, mechanisms and processes; and add reference to coordination with the UNFF. Delegates also agreed to language related to: raising awareness of the Forum at regional and subregional levels; taking into account major group inputs; and supporting developing country participation.

Final Text: The final resolution decides that following UNFF-7 in 2007, the Forum will meet biennially for up to two weeks on the basis of a focused MYPOW to be adopted by UNFF-7. It also invites forest-related regional and subregional bodies, mechanisms and processes, in coordination with the UNFF Secretariat, as appropriate, to strengthen collaboration and to provide input to the work of the Forum by:

- raising awareness of the Forum's work;
- addressing topics identified in the MYPOW, with a view to sharing regional and subregional perspectives; and
- encouraging participation of interested Forum members, CPF members, relevant regional organizations and Major Groups. The resolution also:
- decides the Forum will seek to strengthen interaction with Major Groups and other forest stakeholders in Forum meetings;
- recommends that country-led initiatives address issues identified in the MYPOW for a given cycle;
- emphasizes that *ad hoc* expert groups could be convened to address issues identified in the MYPOW;
- stresses the Forum should consider inputs from forest-related regional and subregional bodies, mechanisms and processes and from country-led initiatives, as well as from Major Groups;
- reaffirms the Forum should continue to support participants from developing countries, with priority to LDCs and countries with economies in transition, in accordance with General Assembly decision 58/554;
- decides to consider ways of strengthening the Forum's Secretariat within existing resources, as well as through increased voluntary extra-budgetary resources, to enable it to fulfil its function more effectively, bearing in mind paragraph 163b of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document; and
- calls upon interested donor Governments, financial institutions and other organizations to make voluntary financial contributions to the UNFF Trust Fund, and urges other countries in a position to do so to contribute the Fund.

MONITORING ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

(MAR): On Wednesday, 15 February, and again on Wednesday, 22 February, WGII addressed MAR. On Thursday, 23 February,

a contact group, chaired by Irena Zubčević (Croatia), convened to discuss outstanding issues on reporting, and on Friday, during the informal plenary, the text was finalized.

On submission of national reports, the African Group, supported by the EU, suggested that countries be encouraged to submit national reports to the Forum at regular intervals. Indonesia said it was too early to set a date for submission of country reports, while the African Group proposed that countries begin to make submissions in 2007, and no later than 2009. The EU proposed submitting national reports in accordance with a timetable set out in the MYPOW.

Delegates agreed to a paragraph on harmonizing processes for voluntary MAR by CPF member organizations in collaboration with the Forum. On enhancing terms of reference for country reports by the Forum, there was extensive debate over references to voluntary reports, developing a process to encourage and support the achievement of global goals/strategic objectives and SFM, and CPF reporting of activities and joint initiatives.

On Friday evening, during the informal plenary, the EU proposed retaining, while others proposed deleting, a paragraph on developing by 2007 a process encouraging implementation of the global objectives and SFM, upon request by countries, through voluntary peer review. After some debate, the EU agreed to delete the paragraph.

Final Text: The resolution:

- agrees that countries should, on a voluntary basis, submit national reports to the Forum, in accordance with a timetable established by the Forum, on progress in implementing national measures, policies, actions or specific objectives towards achieving the global objectives, taking into consideration, as appropriate, the seven thematic elements of SFM;
- invites CPF member organizations in collaboration with the Forum to further harmonize processes for voluntary MAR, taking into account, the seven thematic elements for SFM, with a view to reducing the reporting burden on countries; and
- invites the CPF to continue to report to the Forum on its initiatives and activities, including progress on the means of implementation, in support of the work of the Forum.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP ON FORESTS:

Delegates addressed UNFF guidance to the CPF during numerous Working Group sessions throughout the two weeks. During the discussions, the US distinguished between the CPF as an entity and its members, and called for deleting reference to producing joint statements and an assessment of global forest issues. Delegates agreed to retain text on providing a report of scientific knowledge-based actions needed to achieve SFM, as well as language on continuing to strengthen the Tehran process, which addresses LFCCs.

Delegates agreed to reformulate language regarding a joint initiative on science and technology to clarify that it would not require new funding, and agreed to a paragraph on ensuring that forest-related priorities and programmes of CPF members are integrated and mutually supportive. Delegates also agreed to delete a paragraph on establishing an account to facilitate joint initiatives of the CPF within the UNFF Trust Fund, and to

replace it with a Swiss-proposed paragraph on urging support of CPF joint initiatives through voluntary financial contributions to respective lead CPF organizations, as appropriate.

Final Text: The resolution reaffirms that the Forum will provide guidance to the CPF and invites CPF members to:

- strengthen their collaboration and coordination to foster progress towards SFM at global, regional and national levels;
- continue and further develop ongoing MAR initiatives, streamlining national forest reporting, the sourcebook on SFM funding, harmonizing forest-related definitions and the Global Forest Information Service;
- translate relevant policy recommendations of the Forum into their work programmes;
- explore ways to involve Major Groups in CPF activities and strengthen the CPF contribution to activities at the regional level;
- provide, if requested by the Forum, an assessment of scientific knowledge-based actions needed to achieve SFM and the global objectives on forests at all levels; and
- continue to strengthen the Tehran process through developing and implementing strategies on conservation and rehabilitation of forests in LFCCs.

Additional paragraphs: welcome the joint initiative by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), in collaboration with other CPF members, on science and technology in support of the Forum; urge state members of the governing bodies of CPF member organizations to help ensure that forest-related priorities and programmes of CPF members are integrated and mutually supportive; and urge countries and parties interested in the CPF's work to support the CPF's joint initiatives by making voluntary financial contributions to respective lead CPF organizations, as appropriate.

NON-LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT: Delegates discussed the international instrument on all types of forests, as well as the legal framework, throughout UNFF-6 in WGI, informal plenary sessions, contact groups, chaired by Stephanie Caswell (US) and Tony Bartlett (Australia), and informal consultations. Paragraphs on the voluntary code/guidelines/international understanding and the legal framework were placed under the heading "non-legally binding instrument" on the last day.

Voluntary code/guidelines/international understanding: Discussion focused on the indicative elements of an instrument, the process by which an instrument would be developed and consideration of the LBI option.

The US, Brazil, the EU, the African Group and Canada submitted proposals outlining the indicative elements of an international instrument on all types of forests, which were initially annexed to the Chair's draft text. The EU presented a compilation proposal containing elements on the instrument that combined elements from annexed proposals by the US, Brazil and the African Group. A lengthy debate ensued on an EU request to discuss the annexed proposals prior to finalizing the ECOSOC resolution, but delegates decided to first work on the resolution. Co-Chairs Perrez and Doig compiled a draft

list of common elements among the annexed proposals. All proposed elements were annexed to the report of the meeting for consideration in developing an instrument.

On developing an instrument on all types of forests, Pakistan felt that 2007 was too ambitious a deadline, while the EU, opposed by many, pushed for adoption of an instrument at this session. Delegates decided to establish a contact group to address the process to complete a voluntary instrument at UNFF-7. The contact group's proposals were agreed on, and included, *inter alia*: efforts to develop the instrument within the UNFF itself; intersessional meetings of government representatives; country-led processes to generate ideas and build political consensus; and utilizing the contents of the country proposals and Secretariat's summaries as a starting point for further developing the instrument.

Delegates decided to convene an *ad hoc* working group, rather than an expert group, to consider the possible content of a document to assist the Forum in its deliberations, and agreed to conclude and adopt a non-legally binding instrument at UNFF-7. This section was re-titled, "Non-legally Binding Instrument."

Canada, supported by Chile, Mexico, Costa Rica and Guatemala, but opposed by the Amazon Group, the African Group, the US, Indonesia and India, insisted on retaining reference to continuing to consider an LBI. Canada proposed several compromise texts on this matter, but delegates decided to delete all reference to the LBI option in this section.

Canada, supported by Chile, said that if the Forum did not want to consider the option of an LBI for another 10 years, her delegation would pursue alternative options outside the UNFF.

Legal Framework: Delegates debated key issues on a 2015 timeframe for evaluation, keeping the LBI option open and a sunset clause linked to the evaluation.

The Amazon Group agreed to a thorough review of the effectiveness of the IAF in 2015. Costa Rica, with Iran, Guatemala and Mexico, said 2012 would be better, given the UN Commission on Sustainable Development's (CSD) focus on forests that year. Delegates agreed to a review of the effectiveness of the IAF in 2015. Chile, the Amazon Group and the EU said that the UNFF, not ECOSOC, should conduct the review, noting, *inter alia*, that unlike the UNFF, ECOSOC does not have universal membership. Delegates agreed to have the Forum contribute relevant input to the 2012-2013 CSD.

On the LBI option, the EU, supported by Argentina, Norway, SICA, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Chile, Switzerland, Iran and Australia, but opposed by Indonesia, the Amazon Group, the African Group, Pakistan and India, requested retaining in this paragraph language stating that an LBI remains an option for the future, with the EU specifying, and many agreeing, that it should be reconsidered after the 2015 review. The African Group proposed "recognizing the need for ongoing discussion regarding the option of an LBI," but this text was deleted. After much debate and several alternative proposals, delegates agreed to include a reference to considering the LBI option in a list of options to be considered in the 2015 review.

The EU, opposed by the Amazon Group, the African Group, the US, Indonesia and India, proposed language on a sunset clause to discontinue the instrument upon review in 2015 unless

its effectiveness is established. Specific language on this was not accepted, and instead delegates agreed to consider a full range of options in 2015, including strengthening the current arrangement, continuation of the current arrangement and other options.

Final Text: The final text on the non-LBI emphasizes the importance of strengthening political commitment and action to implement SFM and to achieve the global objectives set out in the resolution, by requesting UNFF-7 to conclude and adopt a non-LBI on all types of forests. The resolution states that ECOSOC, *inter alia*:

- requests the Forum Secretariat to circulate to Forum members a compilation of the draft indicative elements and other proposals submitted by members;
- invites Forum members to provide comments on this compilation;
- decides that the Forum should, within its existing resources, convene an *ad hoc* working group, open to all Forum members, CPF members and representatives of Major Groups, for up to five days to consider the content of a non-LBI;
- invites Forum members to consider sponsoring country-led initiatives to contribute to the Forum's work; and
- invites Forum members to contribute to the UNFF Trust Fund in support of the working group and initiatives.

The final text decides that the effectiveness of the IAF will be reviewed in 2015 and on this basis a full range of options will be considered, including, *inter alia*, a legally binding instrument on all types of forests, strengthening the current arrangement, continuation of the current arrangement and other options, and that the Forum should contribute relevant input, as appropriate, to the 2012-2013 cycle of the CSD.

CLOSING PLENARY

The closing plenary was convened at 10:30 pm, at which point Chair Bahemuka thanked the Co-Chairs, contact group facilitators and the Secretariat for their hard work. Chair Bahemuka proposed, and delegates agreed, to adopt the Chair's text, which will be annexed to the report of UNFF-6 and forwarded to ECOSOC for consideration.

The Russian Federation, although willing to support the resolution on the whole, expressed concern regarding working modalities, and the two-year meeting cycle, stating that it was inadequate, as it would not be able to address the integration of regional processes. The EU urged everyone to use the text to advance SFM and make UNFF-6 a "sunrise event." Chile reiterated their preference for a stronger IAF, but welcomed the development of a voluntary instrument as a step in the right direction towards addressing global responsibilities.

The African Group noted that the final text represents a true compromise. Mexico noted the flexibility shown by a large number of countries preferring an LBI, but said that a voluntary instrument is the first step towards the development of an LBI. SICA expressed concern over the weakness of the final text, and stated they will study other options that will better address their interests. Canada reiterated her preference for an LBI and expressed readiness to pursue other processes better able to address underlying causes of forest decline. Brazil, Cambodia, on behalf of ASEAN countries, Indonesia and India thanked the

Chair and Co-Chairs for their efforts in facilitating consensus. Malaysia said that UNFF-5 had been necessary in order to make way for gains made during this session.

The Chair suggested, and delegates agreed, to adopt by acclamation a draft resolution on declaring 2010 the "International Year of Forests."

Vice-Chair Franz Perrez introduced the draft report of the meeting (E/CN.18.2006/L.1), which delegates adopted.

Chair Bahemuka then presented the draft provisional agenda for UNFF-7, to be held from 16-27 April 2007. The draft provisional agenda is contained in a non-paper, which includes agenda items on, *inter alia*, the MYPOW, voluntary instrument on all types of forests, multi-stakeholder dialogue, and enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination. Brazil suggested that the fourth agenda item should read "non-legally binding" instead of "voluntary" instrument, and delegates agreed.

The report of the meeting also establishes that UNFF-7 will be held in New York. Pekka Patosarri, UNFF Secretariat, congratulated UNFF-6 participants on their hard work and successful outcome. The Chair closed UNFF-6 at 11:30 pm.

UNFF-7 REPORT

Chair Bahemuka opened the first session of UNFF-7. Delegates nominated and approved Amb. Cristián Maquieira (Chile) and Amb. Hamidon Ali (Malaysia) to the Bureau. Chair Bahemuka encouraged delegates from other regions to submit promptly their nominations to the Bureau, and suspended UNFF-7 at 11:34 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF UNFF-6

*We're just two lost souls
Swimming in a fish bowl
Year after year
Running over the same old ground
What have we found?
The same old fears
Wish you were here.
-Pink Floyd*

If there is a crisis in the world's forests today, it was not reflected in the most recent negotiations of the Forum designed to coordinate international efforts to stem the problem. It is clear that several factors have detracted from the sense of urgency needed to drive the process forward, leaving participants running over the same well-trodden ground.

UNFF-6 set out to complete unfinished business from UNFF-5 and negotiate an ECOSOC resolution on the future of the international arrangement on forests. Many previously intractable country positions were bridged in the final days of negotiation, and delegates worked hard to finalize a resolution. However, considering that most substantive issues on an instrument for all types of forests remain undecided and much language in the resolution substantially watered down, the seemingly successful outcome of the meeting has had a mixed reception. What remains apparent is that the sense of urgency that brought the forests issue into the mainstream of international environmental politics is no longer present within

the UNFF. Pursuit of consensus on forest issues at the highest level has produced a document limited by the lowest common denominator.

WHITHER THE TREES?

On the opening day of the meeting, and almost a year after what many thought would be the final meeting of the UNFF, one delegate exclaimed in session "how much forest has disappeared or been degraded since the last Forum?" Indeed, many have repeatedly noted that the situation of the world's forests has only worsened in the past decade and a half since the Rio Forest Principles were adopted. However, this sense of urgency to act did not permeate the meeting sufficiently to break the impasse that has been present since the 1992 Rio Summit. Instead, the impetus came from fear that another failed meeting would marginalize UNFF in the international forest policy arena even more than it already is.

"NOTHING IS AGREED UNTIL EVERYTHING IS AGREED"

Negotiations over the two weeks proceeded in fits and starts, with the phrase "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" oft repeated and stalling decision making. In comparison with UNFF-5 and the November 2005 meeting in Berlin on scoping for a future agreement on forests, UNFF-6 had a head start: most delegates, even many long-time supporters of a legally binding instrument (LBI), arrived in New York ready to base discussions on the idea of a voluntary instrument. With a more or less common end point in mind, the first week saw quick and multiple readings of the Chair's text and the bracketing of many predictable sticking points. But unlike past meetings, previous alignments of positions shifted significantly, as traditional negotiating blocs dissolved into new inter- and intra-continental coalitions. Most notably, since the disaggregation of the G-77/China during UNFF-5, Amazonian countries have parted ways with other Latin American countries over most substantive issues regarding the general mandate, global objectives and the instrument. Furthermore, longstanding LBI supporters Canada and the EU were on different pages this time around, as the EU was more amenable to put the LBI issue aside for now, in favor of developing a voluntary instrument.

Many of the same sticking points from UNFF-5 were revisited at UNFF-6, including the lengthy and seemingly specious debate on whether to pursue "goals" as opposed to "strategic objectives," the Amazon and African countries' objections to establishing a timeline for achieving them, and their insistence on specific mention of Rio Principles on national sovereignty and common but differentiated responsibilities. Delegates even took some steps backwards and spent many hours rehashing whether or not to open goals that were previously agreed *ad referendum*. While those in favor only wanted to do so to clarify language, Guatemala rightfully pointed out that what appeared to be minor amendments of "clarification" actually served to water down the goals considerably.

Predictably, many familiar arguments emerged over financial issues, with developing countries calling for new and additional resources for the establishment of a global forest fund, while developed countries advocated better use of existing resources

The issue of illegal logging caused a showdown between the US and the Amazon countries, China and India, with the US insisting that this be mentioned at least once in the text. In the end, the compromise to refer to illegal “practices” allowed both sides to save face. But it is clear that many developed countries are looking to forest law enforcement and governance processes as a stop-gap measure to combat illegal logging, which they see as precluding any attempt at promoting sustainable forest management (SFM). The recently concluded International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), 2006 contains fairly strong language against illegal logging. But this also happens to be part of the agreement that Brazil and others hold strong reservations about, and they, as well as other Amazon countries, actively resisted the inclusion of any reference to text from this agreement throughout UNFF-6.

Several new points of contention also emerged: Mexico and the Central American Integration System went head-to-head with Brazil and other Amazonian countries on mention of environmental services; foresters argued with diplomats on using the term “forest quality;” and the EU and others pushed for a sunset clause for the international arrangement on forests (IAF) that could not find favor with either the Amazon or African Groups. India joined Brazil and others in voicing concern over using language from ITTA, a “commodity agreement” in this context, while others argued that using internationally agreed language was appropriate.

Nevertheless, UNFF-6 did take some positive steps forward. Movement towards a strong regional component of the IAF achieved at UNFF-5 and the Berlin Scoping meeting continued at UNFF-6, with a constructive “Yellow Paper” proposed by Australia, firm discussion on alternating regional meetings, and talk of using FAO regional commissions. Another important step forward was the development of a process to negotiate the voluntary code/guidelines/international understanding (which, in the final hours of negotiations, was renamed the “non-legally binding instrument”), despite calls for its negotiation during UNFF-6.

“MAKE HASTE, SLOWLY”

It has been said that if it were not for the last minute, nothing would ever get done. For nearly two weeks, delegates scrutinized the many details of the Chair’s text, and before too long, negotiations were lost in a “forest of brackets,” as one delegate remarked, and moved another to urge delegates to “make haste, slowly.” In keeping with previous sessions of the UNFF, it was not until the final evening that a sense of urgency descended upon the group, derived from fear of political failure, lack of sleep and food, and concerns about missing flights home.

Most delegates were under the impression that UNFF-5 would conclude the Forum’s five-year mandate and determine the future path of the IAF. However, this proved to be incorrect, and the sense of urgency has been lost to what now appears to be an open-ended process. Similarly, whereas ITTA-4 negotiations were driven by the need to have an agreement before project funding cycles were affected, no similar impetus is attached to UNFF. This was reflected in negotiations at UNFF-6, which

expanded to fill the allotted time (and then some), with all delegates waiting until the last possible minute to compromise without losing face.

All of these detracting factors, combined with civil society agitators pursuing other avenues and other MEAs addressing issues such as biodiversity and carbon storage, leave little to drive the process forward and provide that urgency. This is likely to define the pace of negotiations and future willingness to compromise – so what’s the rush?

THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENT ON FORESTS

In the end, an 11th-hour effort secured the next step in the IAF– a process to develop a voluntary instrument. But how far will this take us in the face of factors detracting from this process, including countries in pursuit of an LBI, the fragmentation of international forest policy, and the lack of civil society engagement? In addition, as one delegate from a developed country noted, the voluntary subscription envisaged for the instrument weakens its status considerably.

At UNFF-5, several delegations hinted at pursuing other avenues if they felt that the IAF was not sufficiently strengthened under the UNFF, with many suggesting that only an LBI would attract an adequate level of financial commitment. The threat resurfaced at the Berlin scoping meeting, and whispers of an LBI “coalition of the willing” filled the corridors. At this meeting, however, talk of this was less subtle, as Canada stood out as a staunch supporter of an LBI, and informally sought supporters. While this like-minded group (mostly consisting of Latin American countries outside the Amazon region) may be on its way to building a critical mass of forested countries, the question is whether or not this mass is large enough to weigh down, or detract from, the UNFF process. Brazil even commented those seeking an LBI are also those seeking to abolish the only body that could negotiate one. But as it currently stands, most countries expressing interest in an LBI process have no intention of abandoning the UNFF, with many stating that the voluntary instrument is a good first step toward securing a more binding agreement.

The UNFF has been criticized for its inability to produce tangible results on decreasing deforestation or advancing sustainable forest management. However, a quick glance at the proliferation of forest-related agreements, both international and regional, suggests that this is not for lack of interest in forests, but that the political will behind forests as an international issue has been fragmented among the many instruments. While this is the very issue that UNFF was intended to address, the Forum has never been empowered with the resources or mandate necessary to pursue this ambitious endeavor, and it is doubtful that existing institutions will cede control over their forest-related programmes voluntarily.

Yet another factor detracting from the sense of urgency is the paucity of civil society engagement. Noticeably absent from the agenda this year was the multi-stakeholder dialogue, which in previous years had provided an opportunity for civil society actors to voice their concerns and engage with governments. However, due to a decision made at UNFF-5, this event was

relegated to the status of "side event," and resulted in the lowest level of NGO engagement since IAF talks began. There has been little or no engagement of key indigenous and environmental groups that played a central role in pushing the forests issue into the international arena in the first place. The process and outcome of UNFF-6 holds little to entice these groups back on board, especially when they have had better luck pursuing their agenda through MEAs such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, and alternative avenues such as forest certification initiatives like the Forest Stewardship Council.

It is clear that the IAF is in need of greater political will. However, even if this is secured, it is uncertain whether it would be directed towards UNFF as opposed to existing international or regional forest-related institutions. Even with an agreed resolution in hand, how far can the UNFF go in implementing sustainable forest management worldwide? Time will tell if this can be converted into tangible action that will be able to address the many underlying causes of the erosion of forest cover and integrity that require immediate attention.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

FORESTLEADERSHIP CONFERENCE "THE SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE": This Conference will be held from 1-2 March 2006, in Toronto, Canada. Topics to be addressed include: long-term planning for sustainability in forestry; intensifying production while protecting biodiversity and landscapes; improving livelihoods of local communities through sustainable practices; reconciling forest sustainability and financial performance; addressing challenges and opportunities arising from the Kyoto protocol; and expanding bio-energy production through co-generation. For more information, contact: Jean-Pierre Kiekens, Chair, ForestLeadership Conference; tel: +514-274-4344; fax: +514-277-6663; e-mail: conference@forestleadership.com; internet: <http://www.forestleadership.com>

EIGHTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (COP 8): The eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will meet from 20-31 March 2006, in Curitiba, Brazil. For more information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@biodiv.org; internet: <http://www.biodiv.org>

WORKING PARTY ON THE MANAGEMENT OF WILDLIFE AND PROTECTED AREAS/AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION: This Commission will meet from 27 March - 1 April 2006, in Maputo, Mozambique. The sixteenth session of the Working Party on the Management of Wildlife and Protected Areas of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission will be held from 27-28 March, and will be followed by the fifteenth session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission from 29 March - 1 April. A special session on implementation of Sustainable Forest Management in Africa also will be organized. For more information, contact: Pape Djiby Kone, FAO Regional Office for

Africa; tel: +233-21-675-000 ext. 3198; fax: +233-21-668-427; e-mail: pape.kone@fao.org; internet: http://www.fao.org/world/regional/raf/govbodies/afwc_en.htm

21ST SESSION OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY COMMISSION: This Commission will meet from 17-21 April 2006, in Dehradun, India. Participants will also attend a special session on sustainable forest management in the Asia-Pacific. For more information, contact: Patrick Durst; FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; tel: +66-2697-4000; fax: +66-2697-4445; e-mail: patrick.durst@fao.org; internet: <http://www.apfweb.org/>

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE ROUND TABLE MEETING: This round table meeting will be held from 24-25 April 2006, in Wroclaw, Poland. For more information, contact Bożena Kornatowska; tel: +48-22-331-7031 ext. 12; fax: +48-22-331-7032; e-mail: b.kornatowska@lu-warsaw.pl; internet: <http://www.mcpfe.org/>

INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL FOREST INVESTMENT FORUM: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT IN NATURAL TROPICAL FORESTS: This Forum will be held from 26-27 April 2006, in Cancún, Mexico. The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Forest Trends and the Mexican National Forestry Agency will bring together senior executives of private and public sector financial institutions, leading forestry and conservation agencies from around the world and managers of forest products companies in tropical countries. The Forum aims to increase the level of understanding on opportunities and constraints for investing in natural tropical forest based enterprises, and on the kind of information and tools available or needed to promote more responsible investment in natural tropical forests. For more information, contact: Paul Vantomme, ITTO Assistant Director for Forest Industry; tel: +81-45-223-1110; fax: +81-45-223-1111; e-mail: vantomme@itto.or.jp; internet: <http://www.itto.or.jp>

FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CSD-14 will be held from 1-12 May 2006, at UN headquarters in New York. CSD-14 begins the second cycle of the Commission's new work programme and will review progress on atmosphere/air pollution, climate change, energy and industrial development. For more information, contact: UN Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-2803; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: dsd@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/>

33RD SESSION OF THE EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION (EFC): This Commission will meet from 23-26 May 2006, in Bratislava, Slovakia. For more information, contact: Kit Prins, UNECE Timber Branch; tel: +41-22-917 1286; fax: +41-22-917 0041 e-mail: christofer.prins@unece.org; internet: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/31096/en>

ITTC-40: The 40th session of the International Tropical Timber Council and associated sessions of the Committees will convene from 29 May to 2 June 2006, in Mérida, Mexico. For more information, contact: Manoel Sobral Filho, ITTO Executive Director; tel: +81-45-223-1110; fax: +81-45-223-1111; e-mail: itto@itto.or.jp; internet: <http://www.itto.or.jp>

17TH SESSION OF THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION (NEFC): This Commission will meet from 5-9 June 2006, in Larnaca, Cyprus. Participants at this session will also attend a special session on implementing sustainable forest management in the Near East. For more information, contact: Hassan Osman Abdel Nour, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for the Near East; tel: +20-2-3316136; fax: +20-2-7495981; e-mail: hassan.abdelnour@fao.org; internet: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/31113/en>

24TH SESSION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION (LACFC): The Commission will meet from 26-30 June 2006, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Participants will also attend a special session on implementing SFM in Latin America and the Caribbean. For more information, contact: Carlos Marx R. Carneiro, Senior Forest Officer, FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean; tel: +562-337-2214 fax: +562-337-2101; e-mail: carlos.carneiro@fao.org; internet: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/31107/en>

CONFERENCE ON NEW CHALLENGES IN MANAGEMENT OF BOREAL FORESTS: This Conference will be held from 28-30 August 2006, in Umeå, Sweden. This conference is organized by the International Boreal Forest Research Association (IBFRA). For more information, contact: IBFRA Faculty of Forest Sciences; tel: +46-90-786-8100; fax: +46-90-786-8102; e-mail: info@ibfra.org; internet: <http://www.ibfra.org/page.cfm?page=11>

23RD SESSION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN FOREST COMMISSION (NAFC): The 23rd session of the NAFC will be held from 23-25 October 2006, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. For more information, contact: Douglas Kneeland, FAO; tel: +39-06-570-53925; fax: +39-06-570-52151; e-mail: douglas.kneeland@fao.org; internet: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/31118/en>

TWELFTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNFCCC AND SECOND MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL: UNFCCC COP 12 and Kyoto

Protocol COP/MOP 2 will take place from 6-17 November 2006. Kenya has offered to host these events. These meetings will also coincide with the 25th meetings of the UNFCCC's subsidiary bodies. For more information, contact: UNFCCC Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.int; internet: <http://www.unfccc.int>

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS: UNFF-7 will be held from 16-27 April 2007, at United Nations headquarters in New York. For more information, contact UNFF Secretariat; tel: +1-212-963-3160; fax: +1-917-367-3186; e-mail: unff@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests>

GLOSSARY

ACTO	Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization
BPF	ITTO's Bali Partnership Fund
COMIFAC	Central Africa Forests Commission
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
FLEG	Forest Law Enforcement and Governance
IAF	International arrangement on forests
IFF	Intergovernmental Forum on Forests
IPF	Intergovernmental Panel on Forests
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
LBI	Legally binding instrument
LFCC	Low forest cover countries
MAR	Monitoring, assessment and reporting
MEAs	Multilateral environmental agreements
MYPOW	Multi-Year Programme of Work
NFP	National Forest Programme
NTFPs	Non-timber forest products
PfAs	Proposals for Action
PROFOR	World Bank's Programme on Forests
SICA	Central American Integration System
SFM	Sustainable forest management

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