

UNFF7 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 17 APRIL 2007

On Tuesday, 17 April, the Seventh Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF7) convened at UN Headquarters in New York to discuss the non-legally binding instrument (NLBI) on all types of forests, and the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) for the period 2008-2015. In the morning plenary, delegates heard ministerial statements and a performance by the Young People's Chorus of New York City in celebration of the launching of the preparations for the 2011 International Year of Forests (IYF), followed by a presentation of background papers on means of implementation. In the afternoon, delegates convened in two working groups: Working Group I, co-chaired by Hamidon Ali (Malaysia) and Hans Hoogeveen (the Netherlands), discussed the NLBI; and Working Group II, co-chaired by André-Jules Madingou (Gabon) and Arvids Ozols (Latvia), addressed the MYPOW.

PLENARY

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS: Pekka Patosaari, Director, UNFF Secretariat, said the IYF will stimulate action on forests, urged participation of all stakeholders, in particular children and youth, and stressed education as the main awareness-raising tool.

Ivica Grbac, Assistant Minister, Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Croatia, highlighted the potential role of forests in mitigating climate change, and proposed an annual International Day of Forests. Emile Doumba, Minister for Forests, Fisheries and National Parks, Gabon, said the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) demonstrates political commitment in the region, and said an NLBI must provide for appropriate means for implementation. M.S. Kaban, Minister of Forestry, Indonesia, highlighted national pledges in support of the IYF, including enacting a law on combating illegal logging in 2008.

Pembe Didace Bokiaga, Minister of Environment, Democratic Republic of the Congo, outlined national actions undertaken to ensure sustainable forest management (SFM), and appealed to partners to provide financing for these activities. Jorge Rodriguez, Vice Minister of Environment, Costa Rica, noted his country's achievement in doubling its forest cover and its aim to become the first developing country to reduce its carbon emissions. Agnieszka Bolesta, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Environment, Poland, highlighted Poland's active contribution to developing regional policy on forests through the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. José Cibrián Tovar, Director General, National Forest Commission, Mexico, highlighted: the importance of pursuing international cooperation and

coordination; innovative aspects of Mexico's forestry programme; and Mexico's long-term commitment to SFM.

Shamsul Momen Palash, Organization of Art for Children, Bangladesh, announced the launch of the Child Forest Campaign to plant one million trees and develop leadership for SFM in Bangladesh, and highlighted linking local-level sustainable activities to the global environment.

UNFF7 Chair Hoogeveen said that the IYF should raise public awareness on the links between poverty alleviation and SFM.

GENERAL STATEMENTS: Sudan, for the AFRICAN GROUP, called for: a concise and action-oriented NLBI that includes a global forest fund and a mechanism for the transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs); and a MYPOW that emphasizes regional collaboration, financial investments, ESTs and capacity building. COSTA RICA said the NLBI must strengthen financial resources and the MYPOW must enable regional dialogue to feed into future UNFF sessions. NEW ZEALAND called for the MYPOW to give prominence to regional processes. Papua New Guinea, for the SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY, emphasized the role of regional collaboration in SFM implementation, information exchange and coordination among member countries.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION: Gerhard Dieterle, World Bank Programme on Forests (PROFOR), introduced a background paper on means of implementation, stating that it analyzes trends in official development assistance (ODA), and identifies potential new donors and mechanisms for financing and facilitating SFM investments. Hosny El-Lakany, independent consultant, reported the paper's major findings, including: the need to mainstream SFM into national development strategies; a shift towards using ODA as seed money for private sector engagement; and the need for a portfolio approach to financing. Michael Jenkins, independent consultant, outlined the suggested structure of the portfolio approach, consisting of: a mechanism to mobilize forest investment from the private sector, ODA and philanthropy; implementing and catalyzing functions of the NLBI; and a portfolio of activities including donor collaboration, improved governance, carbon markets and national forest monitoring analysis.

Chair Hoogeveen said the Bureau, building on the PROFOR report, had prepared a paper to help focus discussions on means of implementation, especially on finance. The Secretariat presented the paper, which proposes the establishment of a global forest partnership trust as the funding mechanism to implement the Global Objectives. He outlined principles that would govern the proposed fund, including a portfolio of multiple funding sources, results-driven disbursement and minimization of new structures and transaction costs. He also

highlighted funding sources, including public funding to be used as seed money, international trade and forest-based companies. He said UNFF would act as the governing body of the trust. The EU questioned the timing of the paper's introduction, and said NLBI negotiations must begin prior to discussions on financing. The US said it was premature to begin discussing mechanisms, until a full exchange of views is undertaken.

WORKING GROUP I

PRINCIPLES AND USE OF TERMS: The EU, supported by many and opposed by Nigeria for the AFRICAN GROUP, requested deleting a section on defining use of terms. MAURITANIA requested stating the instrument's scope at the beginning of the section.

MEXICO, supported by the US and others, noted that the instrument should be open to States and regional economic integration organizations, but not Major Groups.

The EU, the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC and the US proposed referring to each State's responsibility for ensuring good governance rather than promoting it. VENEZUELA requested deleting reference to good governance.

BRAZIL, supported by PANAMA and the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC and opposed by the EU, preferred "new and additional" financial resources to "adequate" resources, while SENEGAL suggested "predictable" resources. The AFRICAN GROUP called for resources to meet the incremental costs of SFM. AUSTRALIA cautioned that these general principles should be broadly applicable to all countries.

PURPOSE: Delegates debated whether to delete references to purposes beyond achieving the Global Objectives. VENEZUELA, INDIA, COLOMBIA and BRAZIL requested deleting references to the NLBI serving as a policy framework for cooperation and implementation and providing policy guidance. SWITZERLAND, the EU, the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC and MEXICO opposed. Delegates proposed, *inter alia*, specifying that the NLBI: strengthens commitment to reinforce the role of forests in reversing global ecosystem deterioration (CHINA); bridges key gaps in SFM implementation (INDIA); and takes into account multisectoral approaches to SFM (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC). Opposed by many, the US suggested referring to the NLBI as the codex rather than international instrument/understanding/code, with NIGERIA requesting that the NLBI be referred to only as the instrument.

SEVEN THEMATIC ELEMENTS: On defining SFM, NIGERIA suggested moving the definition to the section on use of terms; AUSTRALIA and the EU opposed separating the definition from the elements; and the US and BRAZIL requested deleting the definition of SFM and stating only the thematic elements. Delegates agreed to delete a redundant paragraph on IPF/IFF Proposals for Action and efforts to increase stakeholder understanding.

NATIONAL POLICIES AND MEASURES: On the section's chapeau, URUGUAY, opposed by SWITZERLAND, proposed specifying that the section presents "guidelines for national policies and measures," while IRAN proposed specifying that countries "will make every effort to pursue" these measures. THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC and ARGENTINA suggested deleting the chapeau, while NEW ZEALAND and BRAZIL suggested streamlining and refining the whole section instead.

VENEZUELA questioned inclusion of the subsection on national policies and instruments, noting redundancy with the Global Objectives. AUSTRALIA, supported by SWITZERLAND, suggested streamlining text on taking action at the national and subnational levels to implement SFM and contributing to the achievement of the Global Objectives. The EU noted that text on formulating, implementing and publishing national forest programmes or equivalents is central to the instrument. MEXICO, supported by the EU and SWITZERLAND, requested reference

to quantifiable and timebound targets. SWITZERLAND requested retaining text on commercializing wood and non-wood forest goods and services.

WORKING GROUP II

COSTA RICA, supported by the EU, BRAZIL, PAKISTAN and ARGENTINA, stressed implementation and attainment of SFM and the four Global Objectives. PAKISTAN stated that developing countries' realization of the Global Objectives depends on additional financial resources. The US highlighted opportunities presented by the MYPOW to transform the nature of future meetings, such as minimizing the time spent on negotiations. The EU, with ARGENTINA, questioned the benefit of intergovernmental preparatory meetings (IPMs).

FORUM SESSIONS: COSTA RICA said sessions should focus on implementation of the Global Objectives, IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, and country action plans, and, with ARGENTINA, opposed specifying central themes for sessions. CUBA said UNFF8's main theme should be means of implementation for SFM.

MEXICO supported discussing the NLBI during each session, while the US said sessions should only discuss NLBI commitments relevant to the MYPOW. The EU suggested a separate NLBI agenda item, and proposed an additional paragraph on dialogue with Major Groups.

Regarding ministerial segments, NORWAY stressed clarifying their purpose in advance. The EU called for clarity on inputs to the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review and Development Cooperation Forums. The US suggested that other bodies report to UNFF on relevant matters. On timing and venues of future sessions, the EU and SWITZERLAND proposed locations other than UN Headquarters, but ARGENTINA, CUBA and PERU opposed. The EU proposed including text encouraging contributions from relevant processes, organizations and stakeholders to session debates.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETINGS: COSTA RICA, supported by SWITZERLAND, NORWAY, JAPAN, INDONESIA and CHINA, questioned the need for IPMs and proposed deleting this section. The US, supported by BRAZIL, the EU and AUSTRALIA, agreed, but suggested discussing relevant preparatory processes after clarifying the work programme and content of sessions.

REGIONAL INPUTS: The US proposed establishing regional points of contact to facilitate communication between regional and subregional bodies and UNFF, and suggested they submit a summary report of activities to UNFF, to reduce reporting burdens. The US and ARGENTINA proposed deleting text referencing IPMs. URUGUAY said regional and subregional meetings must consider ways of implementing Forum decisions.

EMERGING ISSUES: The US, AUSTRALIA and the EU expressed concern with identifying emerging issues two years prior to each session, and proposed deleting or reformulating the existing section.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The morning session began harmoniously with a children's choir singing "give us hope and we'll show you the way," but by lunchtime many voices were in discord after sudden new developments in the debate on means of implementation. Several developed countries expressed appreciation for the World Bank's paper on means of implementation, but felt that the Bureau's accompanying proposal was unexpected and, at this stage, was "jumping the gun" on several ideas that are still up for discussion. Many developing country delegates openly welcomed the Bureau's proposed global trust for forests; however, pointing towards the paper's specifics on results-based funding disbursements, one delegate noted that the proposal may be unacceptable for some developing country regional groups. With potential opposition from both sides, it remains to be seen whether the proposal will give hope and show delegates their way out of dissonance on a financial mechanism for the NLBI.