

## UNFF7 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 18 APRIL 2007

On Wednesday, 18 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 a panel discussion from member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), followed by a multi-stakeholder dialogue. In the afternoon, delegates convened in two working groups: Working Group I (WGI), co-chaired by Hamidon Ali (Malaysia) and Hans Hoogeveen (the Netherlands), discussed the NLBI draft composite text; and Working Group II (WGII), co-chaired by André-Jules Madingou (Gabon) and Arvids Ozols (Latvia), completed the first reading of the MYPOW draft text.

### PLENARY

**CPF PANEL:** UNFF7 Chair Hoogeveen invited representatives of CPF member organizations to report on their organizations' priorities regarding sustainable forest management (SFM) and the Global Objectives on Forests. Jan Heino, CPF Chair, said clear UNFF guidance to CPF members and consistent messages by member States to CPF member governing bodies are essential for enhancing inter-agency cooperation.

Luis Macchiavello, International Tropical Timber Organization, called for inter-agency cooperation to address complex SFM issues in tropical forests including illegal logging, certification and indigenous rights. Jorge Rodriguez, UN Development Programme, urged mobilization of resources through multilateral environmental organizations to implement the Global Objectives and IPF/IFF Proposals for Action.

Andrew Bennett, Center for International Forestry Research, called for clear guidance from partners about their priorities, underlining the importance of national systems for delivery of implementation support. Warren Evans, World Bank, outlined the proposed Global Forest Alliance that will engage partners toward achieving targets related to climate change, poverty reduction, protected areas and sustainability of production forestry, and which could provide a means of implementation to support the Global Objectives and NLBI. Jan Heino, FAO, called for strengthening existing instruments, funds and organizations instead of creating new layers of governance.

Risto Seppala, International Union of Forest Research Organizations, highlighted a new joint CPF science and technology initiative supporting UNFF and other forest-related processes by providing state-of-the-art scientific knowledge. Mark Zimsky, Global Environment Facility (GEF), highlighted a framework strategy for SFM to be presented to the GEF

Council in June, outlining opportunities for countries to implement SFM through GEF projects, and a process to shorten and simplify the GEF project cycle.

In the ensuing discussion, GUATEMALA advocated fair and transparent GEF financing procedures and hiring local experts to revise projects. AUSTRALIA proposed allocating more time for dialogue with CPF members in the future. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC advocated effective use of resources focused on national priorities. CUBA requested a report from the CPF that would provide feedback on cooperation with UNFF.

**MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE:** CHILDREN AND YOUTH highlighted the relationship between SFM and intergenerational equity, and called for criteria and indicators on education and capacity building. WOMEN underscored concerns about women's insecure land tenure and lack of capacity within forestry institutions to design and monitor gender-responsive strategies. FARMERS AND SMALL FOREST LANDOWNERS called for clear and secure tenure and land use rights and a mechanism to support public-private partnerships. NGOS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES cautioned against relying on market solutions to combat forest destruction and called for: recognizing indigenous and local communities' rights; and community and small landholder access to the financial mechanism. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES supported a trust fund for forests and NLBI text on increasing scientific and technological capacity and cooperation. Noting the role of fair wages and labor group empowerment for SFM, WORKERS AND LABOR UNIONS called for references in the NLBI to relevant conventions of the International Labor Organization.

Many delegates welcomed the participation of Major Groups and their proposals. URUGUAY and the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC supported addressing workers' rights in the NLBI. On financing capacity building for stakeholder involvement, TANZANIA proposed expanding social financing rather than relying solely on donor support. On future multi-stakeholder dialogues, AUSTRALIA urged participation of the Business and Industry Major Group, CROATIA, certification organizations, and SENEGAL, local communities involved in SFM. Supported by many, AUSTRALIA encouraged textual proposals from Major Groups, with SWITZERLAND suggesting allowance for Major Groups' participation in WGs. MALAYSIA opposed, calling instead for stakeholder participation at the national level.

### WORKING GROUP I – NLBI

**NATIONAL POLICIES AND MEASURES:** AUSTRALIA and MEXICO, supported by CUBA, the EU, COSTA RICA and GUATEMALA, requested taking action to implement the NLBI, rather

than only implementing SFM and achieving the Global Objectives. BRAZIL and COLOMBIA opposed.

On developing national forest programmes to support SFM, INDIA, BRAZIL, the US and VENEZUELA opposed reference to quantifiable and timebound targets.

On promoting use of management tools for projects potentially impacting forests, CHINA, opposed by many, requested reference to “environmentally-friendly” tools rather than “tools, such as environmental impact assessments.” The US opposed deleting reference to promoting tools subject to national legislation. The AFRICAN GROUP, opposed by INDIA, requested deleting a reference to tools for life-cycle assessment.

VENEZUELA, INDONESIA, INDIA and BRAZIL requested deleting a paragraph on promoting sustainable forest goods production. MEXICO and COSTA RICA opposed, while SENEGAL and SINGAPORE requested only deleting reference to equal distribution of benefits of commercialization. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC requested specifying that benefits be equitably distributed among forest-dependent communities rather than the rural poor.

On promoting an enabling environment for SFM, the AFRICAN GROUP, supported by VENEZUELA and INDIA and opposed by SWITZERLAND, preferred deleting reference to supporting mechanisms such as secure land tenure or appropriate tax policies. MEXICO requested reference to environmental services mechanisms.

Opposed by SWITZERLAND and the EU, AUSTRALIA proposed combining paragraphs on promoting enabling environments for the private sector and local communities.

VENEZUELA, opposed by SWITZERLAND, the EU, MEXICO and others, suggested deleting a paragraph on encouraging the development of mechanisms to value costs and benefits derived from forest goods and services.

On enhanced cooperation, AUSTRALIA, CHINA, the US, BRAZIL and the EU, proposed removing text irrelevant to national level implementation. The US preferred establishing or strengthening “public-private” rather than “multi-stakeholder” partnerships and programmes.

Delegates debated references to governance and forest law enforcement. Developing countries urged reference to governance in the forest sector only. VENEZUELA proposed deleting the section but retaining a paragraph on capacity building, and with PANAMA and BRAZIL, proposed text on international commitments to build capacity to enforce forest legislation.

On threats to forest health, the EU and others proposed reference to necessary counteractions to deforestation and threats to forest health. URUGUAY preferred reference to preventative policies. The US suggested reference to the threat of alien invasive species, and CHINA, of natural disasters and human activities. On protected areas, the EU and the US each suggested alternative text regarding measures to conserve representative forest types.

Several developing countries opposed references to sharing traditional knowledge. The US suggested referring to methodologies for assessing the condition of traditional knowledge. IRAN suggested addressing traditional knowledge under governance.

Many delegates supported moving a subsection on research to the section on means of implementation and proposed deleting or simplifying references on joint research initiatives with CPF member organizations.

#### **WORKING GROUP II – MYPOW**

**ENHANCED COOPERATION:** The US proposed: shifting emphasis from UNFF provision of policy guidance to enhanced cooperation through information sharing; a new subsection entitled Multi-Stakeholder Perspectives and Inputs; and, opposed by CUBA, deleting a paragraph on synergy-building with other relevant bodies. AUSTRALIA advocated including clear guidance to CPF partners.

**INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS 2011:** AUSTRALIA, with the EU, proposed deleting this subsection to avoid repetition.

PAKISTAN called for specific focus on low forest cover countries. The US proposed language inviting States and Major Groups to inform the Forum of efforts and activities to “celebrate” rather than “commemorate” the IYF. The INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS INTERNATIONAL advocated an annual international day of forests, and proposed the first one focus on “forests with people.”

**NLBI:** AUSTRALIA, with the US and VENEZUELA, proposed deleting this section. Supporting retention, the EU, with the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC and SWITZERLAND, proposed alternative language stating that UNFF will give policy guidance for NLBI implementation, rather than act as the governing body, and opposed text on the UNFF Secretariat overseeing NLBI implementation. ARGENTINA said the Forum should act as the governing body, but that WGI should discuss this issue. The AFRICAN GROUP preferred retaining the original text stating that the UNFF should be the governing body.

**MONITORING, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING:** The EU, with NORWAY and MEXICO, proposed language on assessing progress of NLBI implementation. The EU suggested the Secretariat prepare a report for each session based on country and CPF reports on NLBI implementation. ARGENTINA, ECUADOR and VENEZUELA opposed a paragraph reiterating the seven thematic elements of SFM. The EU requested bracketing the paragraph, noting dependency on WGI deliberations. The US, SWITZERLAND, AUSTRALIA and MEXICO supported its retention.

**REVIEW:** The US requested bracketing this section, while the EU, with MEXICO, proposed language on reviewing progress in NLBI implementation. AUSTRALIA opposed a paragraph on undertaking a mid-term review during UNFF9. On reviewing the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (IAF) at UNFF11, MEXICO, supported by PERU, proposed language on beginning negotiations for a legally-binding instrument.

**AD HOC EXPERT GROUPS:** The US proposed: renaming the section “Intersessional Work of the Forum”; and language to reflect that *ad hoc* groups’ purposes need not be predetermined. ARGENTINA, with VENEZUELA, proposed deleting this section while SWITZERLAND and the AFRICAN GROUP suggested amendments based in part on clarifying proposed biennial and intersessional work. AUSTRALIA proposed that *ad hoc* groups also address forest certification schemes and IAF evaluation.

**DETAILED MYPOW:** PAPUA NEW GUINEA, opposed by INDIA, proposed retaining climate change in the 2008-09 cycle. MEXICO proposed a paragraph addressing the link between the MYPOW and NLBI.

**RESOURCES:** On ensuring appropriate resources for the Forum’s work, AUSTRALIA, with the EU, opposed reference to “additional” resources. The US bracketed this paragraph and another on reviewing Secretariat capacity at each session. MEXICO proposed deleting these paragraphs, while the EU proposed deleting the latter.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

While some delegates found the morning’s multi-stakeholder dialogue to be a stark reminder of real-world concerns facing forest users, the dialogue did little to detract from the pressing issue of financing. The PROFOR paper on means of implementation, presented in a side event, though stimulating innovative thinking about financing, left many with more questions than answers on how money for implementation will materialize. Several delegates are hoping to decide on a rough framework concept at UNFF7, leaving the nitty-gritty details for future meetings, while others pointed out that it is precisely the particularities of funding that need to be agreed before headway can be made on the NLBI. Meanwhile, delegates in WGII made speedy progress on the first reading of the MYPOW draft text, but some predicted that Thursday’s discussions will be more divided on the nature of future Forum themes and the necessity of intersessional preparatory meetings.