

UNFF7 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 24 APRIL 2007

On Tuesday, 24 April, the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF7) convened to discuss the non-legally binding instrument (NLBI) on all types of forests, and the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) for the period 2007-2015. Delegates convened in two working groups: Working Group I addressed the NLBI; and Working Group II discussed the MYPOW. In the evening, a contact group convened on the NLBI.

WORKING GROUP I – NLBI

NATIONAL MEASURES: CANADA, the EU, NEW ZEALAND, COSTA RICA and URUGUAY favored either deleting the section's chapeau or specifying that States should take measures "taking into account" national conditions "as appropriate." BRAZIL, supported by many, proposed that States take measures "subject to" national conditions, and that measures "may include" the ones listed. The US and SWITZERLAND said this considerably weakened the language. The EU and MEXICO preferred that States take measures to achieve "the purpose of this instrument" rather than "SFM and the Global Objectives."

On national forest programmes, BRAZIL and others opposed quantifiable and timebound targets for SFM without equivalent targets for means of implementation.

On promoting the use of management tools, COLOMBIA suggested deleting reference to assessing environmental impacts; many opposed.

The US, with VENEZUELA and others, proposed deleting reference to implementing policies to promote "sustainable production" of forest goods and services. COSTA RICA, the EU and others preferred retaining the original language, including reference to benefits fostering poverty reduction and rural community development.

On protecting and using traditional forest-related knowledge (TFRK), the AFRICAN GROUP proposed inserting reference to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. INDIA, VENEZUELA and PAKISTAN opposed specific reference to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the World Intellectual Property Organization. The EU, opposed by the US, proposed deleting reference to benefit sharing. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC and others preferred retaining both references.

The AFRICAN GROUP, COLOMBIA, BRAZIL and CAMBODIA suggested reference to developing SFM criteria and indicators based on the seven thematic elements of SFM; the EU, the US, SWITZERLAND, URUGUAY, the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC and MEXICO objected.

The US and others proposed creating enabling environments for investment by "and involvement of" local communities. BRAZIL,

opposed by SWITZERLAND, suggested creating environments through "land tenure arrangements serving as incentives for SFM" rather than "secure land tenure." The EU suggested inserting language on national financial strategies for SFM implementation.

On environmental costs and benefits, the AFRICAN GROUP, with others, proposed adding goods and services provided by woodlands. INDIA and VENEZUELA, opposed by COSTA RICA and MEXICO, proposed deleting "goods and services," and VENEZUELA, deleting "costs." The US specified "as appropriate" and proposed alternative language on promoting recognition and reflection of values in the marketplace.

On forest law enforcement and governance, COLOMBIA, VENEZUELA and ECUADOR proposed deleting reference to corruption, while GUATEMALA and INDIA specified corruption between producer and consumer countries and INDONESIA and CAMBODIA specified in "forest and forest-related sectors." SWITZERLAND and others opposed these amendments. The AFRICAN GROUP, supported by the US, suggested that strengthening forest law should take into account the safety and health of forest workers.

On scientific and technological innovation, the US proposed deleting reference to TFRK. This was bracketed along with alternative subparagraphs separately promoting such innovations and TFRK.

On education to reduce pressure on forests, delegates agreed to proposals by INDIA and the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC on specifying "particularly" fragile ecosystems. BRAZIL's proposal deleting "participatory research" was accepted. MEXICO proposed educating "all relevant stakeholders," with the US adding "forest owners." On encouraging the development of voluntary measures, COLOMBIA, VENEZUELA, INDIA and BRAZIL proposed deleting reference to forest certification schemes; the EU, AUSTRALIA, ARGENTINA and others opposed.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: On financial resources, BRAZIL and INDIA suggested deleting reference to strengthening resources to "and within" developing countries. Developed countries objected, stressing the need to emphasize recipient country commitments to mobilize resources. PAKISTAN, opposed by the EU, requested reference to low forest cover countries (LFCCs).

On prioritizing SFM, delegates agreed to: prioritize SFM in development "and other plans, such as poverty reduction strategies" (EU); and facilitate increased allocation of official development assistance "and other sources of funding" (EU, NEW ZEALAND).

On financial incentives, the EU suggested deleting "financial." The AFRICAN GROUP preferred "financial and other" incentives. Delegates agreed to delete: a reference specifying that incentives be provided for developing countries and countries with economies in transition only; and a reference to incentives for planted forests.

On forest governance, BRAZIL added “at national and international levels.” The US queried “promoting” forest legislation.

On illegal trafficking, the US, opposed by COLOMBIA, proposed inserting “in wildlife and other” forest-related biological resources.

WORKING GROUP II – MYPOW

PREAMBLE: The US, with ARGENTINA, reinserted a paragraph on taking into consideration lessons learned from the Forum’s MYPOW for 2001-2005. The EU preferred “having regard to” rather than “recognizing” the NLBI.

FORUM SESSIONS: In addressing progress made at sessions, the US proposed, and COSTA RICA opposed, deleting reference to national plans. The US, AUSTRALIA, the AFRICAN GROUP and others, proposed adding language on progress towards achieving SFM. FIJI said means of implementation should include strengthening of national processes. Delegates reiterated their positions on whether to include means of implementation as a flagship theme.

For flagship themes, the US proposed, *inter alia*: “Forests and the environment: biodiversity, climate, land and water (UNFF8)”; and “Integrating forests into economic development” (UNFF10). SWITZERLAND proposed greater emphasis on climate change for UNFF8. For UNFF10, VENEZUELA proposed “Forests in the context of economic development.”

Under common items, the EU proposed including NLBI implementation and emerging issues and opposed monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR) and country reports. NORWAY supported land and forest tenure as cross-cutting issues, but PERU opposed reference to land tenure.

The AFRICAN GROUP proposed a paragraph focusing on LFCCs’ special needs. ARGENTINA, COSTA RICA, GUATEMALA and MEXICO objected, resisting discrepancy in treatment of different forest types.

On UNFF sessions being a platform for dialogue, the EU expressed interest in harnessing the political visibility of the heads of the Rio Conventions. The US, the EU, ARGENTINA and the AFRICAN GROUP discussed an appropriate formulation on dialogue with both technical and political stakeholders and organizations.

INTERSESSIONAL WORK OF THE FORUM: Delegates debated the need for, and nature of, intersessional work. The EU, supported by MEXICO and GUATEMALA, proposed deleting reference to intergovernmental preparatory meetings (IPMs). Regarding session preparation, the US proposed a substitute section referring to Bureau and Secretariat preparation drawing on regional and subregional processes, CPF member organizations, major group activities, country-led initiatives, *ad hoc* expert groups and other advisory bodies. NORWAY, UKRAINE, INDONESIA, SWITZERLAND, COSTA RICA and AUSTRALIA supported this as a basis for discussion, while some preferred retaining reference to ECOSOC resolutions. ARGENTINA urged consistency with ECOSOC mandates and, supported by VENEZUELA and FIJI, proposed one-week IPMs three months prior to UNFF sessions.

REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL INPUTS: ARGENTINA proposed deleting a subparagraph on the Secretary General’s report on the MYPOW. The EU opposed reference to IPMs.

EMERGING PRIORITY ISSUES: Delegates debated the definition of emerging issues along with procedures and timing for identifying them. Some felt the Bureau, in consultation with member States, CPF members, the Forum Secretariat and stakeholders, should discuss how to address and identify emerging issues. ARGENTINA questioned giving the Bureau authority. AUSTRALIA cautioned against attempting to identify emerging issues too far in advance. BRAZIL agreed, saying that sessions should provide for unforeseen issues such as disease outbreak. The US clarified that emerging issues should be, *inter alia*, urgent, global in scope, and not already addressed in the agenda. SWITZERLAND cautioned against imposing rigid criteria.

ENHANCED COOPERATION: To avoid repetition of other sections and previous UNFF resolutions, the US, ARGENTINA and

VENEZUELA proposed streamlining this section. The EU cautioned that employing outdated text might forgo new ideas, such as on LFCCs. IRAN recommended replacing reference to the Rio Conventions with “multilateral environmental agreements.” SWITZERLAND supported more active links between CPF members, major groups and member States, and the US called for provisions to enable more active stakeholder participation. FIJI and PAPUA NEW GUINEA called for elaborating references to participation of other stakeholders and major groups.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FORESTS: The US, supported by ARGENTINA and the AFRICAN GROUP and opposed by the EU, proposed alternative text highlighting information-sharing on activities among member States, major groups and stakeholders.

MAR: The US and the EU postponed discussing this section, pending WGI deliberations on the NLBI. ARGENTINA agreed, cautioning against duplication of or contradiction with pre-existing ECOSOC mandates.

DETAILED MYPOW: The US proposed deleting text on intersessional activities and the dynamic nature of the MYPOW. Some expressed concern that allowing for adjustments as needed would lead to lengthy debates at future sessions. PAPUA NEW GUINEA said the MYPOW should be adapted as needed.

RESOURCES: AUSTRALIA, with the EU, bracketed reference to “additional” resources. The US reserved comments pending further consideration. The EU, with NORWAY, said donors should be “invited” rather than “urged” to make contributions. CUBA, with the AFRICAN GROUP, added language on facilitating developing countries’ participation in Forum sessions.

NLBI: Delegates agreed to postpone discussions on this pending WGI outcomes.

REVIEW: AUSTRALIA expressed concern with undertaking a mid-term review at UNFF9. MEXICO, the AFRICAN GROUP, CHINA, CUBA and others favored a mid-term review. To reduce reporting burdens, the EU advocated a scaled-down review for UNFF9, for which the US expressed interest in seeing a proposal.

CONTACT GROUP ON THE NLBI

Chair Hoogeveen presented elements for further deliberations on finance, the facilitative process, national targets and the conceptual framework for SFM. Developing countries called for defining the financial mechanism’s scope at UNFF7 and adopting it at UNFF8, while developed countries cautioned against tight deadlines. On the facilitative process, some developed countries suggested it be demand-driven and based on assessments of existing processes, while others called for a clear definition of its task. Developing countries said it should build on existing mechanisms, such as the CPF or the FAO’s National Forest Programme Facility. On national targets, one developed country suggested that countries report to UNFF on existing national and regional targets, while others noted the importance of SFM-related targets. Deliberations continued into the night.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Admonitions that NLBI negotiations were threatening to take two steps backwards for every step forward, as the African Group had cautioned earlier, appeared to go unheeded Tuesday. A frustrating morning saw several countries continuing to stall on making commitments, such as on quantifiable timebound targets, without reciprocal commitments on implementation assistance. One observer noted that with no indication as yet of possibilities for *quid pro quo* exchange, the only direction for compromise will be towards already agreed language without any added value.

Meanwhile, the MYPOW made some headway after appearing to get bogged down in the details of the matrix for two days, and, as one delegate put it, losing sight of the bigger picture. As the working group completed a reading of the Chair’s draft text, and informal consultations sprang up among delegations on various issues, some commented that they could see light at the end of the tunnel, one that was not so bright on Monday.