

EIGHTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS: 20 APRIL – 1 MAY 2009

The eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF8) commences today at UN headquarters in New York. The main topics to be discussed at UNFF8 are: forests in a changing environment, including forests and climate change, reversing the loss of forest cover and degradation, and forests and biodiversity conservation; and means of implementation. Delegates are expected to adopt one of three proposed options for financing sustainable forest management (SFM): a dedicated fund; a facilitative mechanism; or a combination of the two.

Other agenda items include: a Multi-stakeholder Dialogue, with a panel discussion on forests, women and fuelwood; regional inputs; enhanced cooperation; progress towards achieving SFM; and forest law enforcement and governance as a cross-cutting issue.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNFF

The UNFF was established in 2000, following a five-year period of forest policy dialogue facilitated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). In October 2000, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in resolution E/2000/35, established the UNFF as a subsidiary body, with the main objective being to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

To achieve its main objective, the UNFF's principal functions were identified to: facilitate implementation of forest-related agreements and foster a common understanding on 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.

The IPF/IFF processes produced more than 270 proposals for action towards SFM, which 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.

UNFF1: The first session of UNFF took place from 11-23 June 2001, at UN headquarters in New York. Delegates discussed and adopted decisions on the UNFF 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 (MAR); finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs); and consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests.

UNFF2: 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 international arrangement on forests (IAF); and proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for 2002-2005.

UNFF3: UNFF3 met in Geneva, Switzerland, from 26 May-6 June 2003, and 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: MAR; 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.

UNFF4: UNFF4 convened in Geneva, Switzerland, from 3-14 May 2004, and adopted five resolutions on: forest-related scientific knowledge; social and cultural aspects of forests; MAR and criteria and indicators; review of the effectiveness of the IAF; and finance and transfer of ESTs. UNFF4 attempted to, but

could not reach, agreement on resolutions on traditional forest-related knowledge and enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination.

UNFF5: UNFF5 took place from 16-27 May 2005, at UN headquarters in New York, with the goal of reviewing the effectiveness of the IAF. However, participants were unable to reach agreement on strengthening the IAF and did not produce either a ministerial statement or a negotiated outcome. 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 (ODA) 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 on forests, as well as means of implementation. Delegates decided to forward the draft negotiating text to UNFF6.

UNFF6: UNFF6 took place from 13-24 February 2006, at UN headquarters in New York. Negotiators reached agreement on how to proceed with reconstituting the IAF. Delegates generated a negotiating text containing new language on the function of the IAF, a commitment to convene UNFF biennially after 2007, and a request that UNFF7 adopt a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. UNFF6 also set four global objectives for the IAF: reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation; enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits and the contribution of forests to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals; increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests; and reverse the decline in ODA for SFM and mobilize significantly increased new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM.

UNFF7: UNFF7 was held from 16-27 April 2007, at UN headquarters in New York. After two weeks of negotiations culminating in an all-night session, delegates adopted the Non-legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (the Forest Instrument) and a MYPOW for the period 2007-2015. Delegates also participated in two multi-stakeholder dialogues, a panel discussion with member organizations of the CPF, and the launching of preparations for the International Year of Forests 2011. Delegates agreed that a "voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework for all types of forests" would be developed and considered, with a view to its adoption at UNFF8.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

REGION-LED INITIATIVE ON REGIONAL INPUT:

This Initiative in support of the UNFF took place from 28-30 January 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland. Participants identified priority areas for regional and subregional organizations, including implementation of SFM, capacity building and mobilization of financing. Participants expressed their views regarding challenges faced in implementing SFM, including: translating high-level policy into action; means of implementation and the need for information exchange; and integrating forestry issues into national development strategies. They also discussed the interaction between regional and subregional organizations and the UNFF.

COUNTRY-LED INITIATIVE ON DECENTRALIZATION AND FOREST GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA:

This CLI in support of the UNFF took place from

8-11 April 2008 in Durban, South Africa. Participants discussed country experiences with: decentralized forest management and livelihoods; conservation, SFM and governance; and international trade, finance and forest sector governance reform, particularly in the context of earlier structural adjustment reforms undertaken by many African countries. Proposed recommendations and lessons that emerged included: the necessity of strengthening institutional adaptive capacities and mechanisms for negotiation among interest groups; the need for conflict resolution and collaboration to achieve common goals; improving equity in forest revenue sharing; and enhancing reinvestment in the forest sector and local social services for forest communities.

COUNTRY-LED INITIATIVE ON FINANCING: This CLI on financing for SFM in support of the UNFF, the "Paramaribo Dialogue," was held from 8-12 September 2008 in Paramaribo, Suriname. The conference provided a forum for participants to share experiences with mobilizing forest funding and generating revenues, identify emerging and existing public and private financing sources, and examine the relationship between forest financing and forest-related governance. Throughout the week, participants discussed: producer, consumer and community perspectives on financing SFM; financing from ecosystem services; and institutional and governance strategies at the national and international levels for increasing SFM financing.

AD HOC EXPERT GROUP ON FINANCE: This meeting convened in Vienna, Austria, from 10-14 November 2008. The meeting aimed to develop proposals for the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework to support the implementation of SFM, the achievement of the global objectives on forests and the implementation of the Forest Instrument. There was considerable discussion about potential funding through reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD). A number of experts expressed support for a facilitative mechanism that would help mobilize existing and emerging funds and facilitate access to other sources of finance to help achieve national and subnational priorities, while many experts reiterated their support for a distinct fund dedicated or earmarked for SFM and the global objectives.

FOREST DAY 2: The second Forest Day event took place in Poznań, Poland, on 6 December 2008, in parallel with the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Forest Day 2 considered cross-cutting themes such as: adaptation of forests to climate change; addressing forest degradation through SFM; capacity building for REDD; and options for integrating REDD into the global climate regime. Key messages from the event were forwarded to the UNFCCC Secretariat, including that: climate change adaptation and mitigation are linked, particularly in the context of forests; it is important to involve women, the poor, and indigenous peoples in the design and operation of forest-related climate change policies; and forests provide significant co-benefits beyond carbon storage. Differing views were expressed on whether and how these benefits should be monetized and included in a potential regime for REDD.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON FINANCING

SFM: UNFF informal consultations on finance were held from 12-13 March 2009 in Rome, Italy. Participants discussed forest finance based on the Report of the Secretary-General on Finance and other Means of Implementation for SFM, and focused on identifying key elements in relation to three financing options: a dedicated fund; a facilitative mechanism; or a combination of these two.