

UNFF8 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 21 APRIL 2009

In the morning, UNFF8 delegates discussed forests in a changing environment, including a panel discussion on forests and biodiversity, climate change and desertification. In the afternoon, plenary addressed regional inputs to the UNFF. Delegates later convened in two working groups (WG): WGI focused on forests in a changing environment; and WGII discussed means of implementation.

PLENARY

FORESTS IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT: Jan McAlpine, UNFF Director, introduced this agenda item (E/CN.18/2/2009/4-8). She said cross-sectoral coordination in member states is crucial to address the threats of climate change, biodiversity loss, forest degradation and desertification, and commended current international collaboration within the UN and through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

Risto Seppälä, Chair, Global Forest Expert Panel on Adaptation of Forests to Climate Change (GFEP), presented the Global Assessment on Adaptation of Forests and People to Climate Change, stressing, among other key messages, that climate change is already affecting forests and creating major socioeconomic impacts, and could offset forests' carbon regulating functions. He suggested that UNFF8 adopt a message to be delivered to UNFCCC, and consider using GFEP as an advisory body.

The Czech Republic, for the EU, stressed that SFM can play an important role in addressing global challenges in a coherent and integrated manner, and said that UNFF8 should provide guidance on how SFM contributes to meeting international agreements related to forests.

COLOMBIA said that UNFCCC remains the most appropriate forum in which to address the role that forests play in climate change. She highlighted Colombia's efforts to protect its forests, but noted the "ecocidal" impacts that armed groups and cocaine production have had on its forests.

BRAZIL noted that forest law enforcement issues must be addressed at the national level and opposed references to illegal logging in the background documents. He discouraged UNFF from working on bioenergy issues, noting that it would duplicate work in other fora, and cautioned against prejudging outcomes of UNFCCC negotiations. INDIA noted that UNFF could play a role in exploiting synergies amongst the forest-related conventions and organizations by avoiding duplication and improving communication.

CROATIA emphasized the need to incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies into national forest management and development policies, and noted that effective management of protected forest areas is critical to ensure their conservation.

PANEL ON FORESTS AND BIODIVERSITY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND DESERTIFICATION: Moderating the panel, Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary General, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, emphasized that the physiology, structure and species composition of forests is threatened by climate change, and that the two billion people living in drylands are at risk.

Ahmed Djoghlafl, Executive Secretary, UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), emphasized enhanced cooperation between forest-related multilateral environmental agreements. He underlined key findings of the CBD *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change, including that: conservation of primary forests is of particular importance to reducing emissions and biodiversity loss; and that forest peoples will only benefit from reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) if their land rights are secure and the principle of free prior informed consent is upheld.

Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), noted that the primary objective of creating synergies between sustainable land management (SLM) and sustainable forest management (SFM) is to improve the condition of degraded ecosystems. He stressed that areas of potential cooperation include: knowledge management; mainstreaming SLM and SFM at the regional and country level; and the setting of targets and formulation of incentive mechanisms to promote the conservation and improvement of drylands.

Jan Heino, CPF Chair, presented the CPF Strategic Framework for Forests and Climate Change, noting that the Framework addresses how to maximize the forest sector's contributions to reducing emissions and sustainable development. He outlined the Framework's key messages, including that: SFM provides an effective framework for forest-based mitigation and adaptation; intersectoral collaboration, economic incentives and alternative livelihoods are needed to reduce deforestation and forest degradation; and capacity-building and governance reforms are urgently required.

Maria Sanz-Sanchez, on behalf of Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of UNFCCC, said forests and a REDD-plus approach are prominent in the UNFCCC negotiations. She said ongoing REDD initiatives will provide valuable lessons for future REDD mechanisms to be agreed by UNFCCC COP 15. She underlined the importance of coordinating stakeholder efforts at the national level.

Gustavo Fonseca, Global Environment Facility (GEF), recalled GEF's successful experiences with forest funding and noted that GEF enhanced its commitment to SFM in the next replenishment period, starting in June 2010.

In the ensuing discussion, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA called for immediate adaptation actions making use of traditional knowledge and synergies with actions combating desertification. MAURITANIA urged action towards making forests a vector for

development. SURINAME encouraged donors to increase support to the GEF's SFM programme. SWITZERLAND urged addressing forests' multifunctional roles, and called on forest delegates to participate in UNFCCC negotiations. ISRAEL asked how national success stories can be translated into global initiatives. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO asked how similar resources could be raised for SFM as for bank bailouts during the financial crisis. BENIN suggested support to local small-scale wood processing to reduce wood waste. SENEGAL called for more efficient use of financial resources. ARGENTINA asked how UNFF8 could increase resources for SFM implementation, and the US how it could improve coordination among funding mechanisms. Heino suggested building capacity in countries for forest inventories. Gnacadja said that the real synergies to be achieved are at the country level and not between secretariats.

REGIONAL INPUTS: McAlpine presented on regional inputs (E/CN.18/2009/3). She noted that mandates and concerns vary among regional groups, and said regional groups could be instrumental in national cross-sectoral coordination and in the preparations for the International Year of Forests 2011.

PANEL ON REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON FORESTS IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT: Moderator Heino pointed to the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions as long-established mechanisms for coordinating policy and advancing common positions at the regional level.

Christian Kuchli (Switzerland) reported the outcomes of the Austrian-Swiss Region-Led Initiative on Regional Inputs, and the South African-Swiss Country-Led Initiative (CLI) on Forest Governance and Decentralization in Africa. He noted that the latter recommended that UNFF take a pro-active role in setting standards for forest sector governance, in particular with regard to REDD.

Abdul Wahid Abu Salim, Chair of the ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry, outlined ASEAN regional activities on forest governance, including a regional reference framework for certification standards, efforts to address illegal logging and associated trade, and regional indicators for monitoring, assessment and reporting.

Martin Tadoum, Central African Forestry Commission (COMIFAC), described how the Forest Instrument has contributed to COMIFAC's regional convergence plan and stakeholder dialogue on SFM, including participation by indigenous peoples and women. He highlighted that regional cooperation has enabled a common stance within negotiations for a post-Kyoto climate change agreement.

Richard Huber, Organization of American States, presented on market-based instruments for SFM. He described the relative merits of various market mechanisms, stressed the need to eliminate subsidies, and highlighted Costa Rica and Mexico's successes in rewarding forest restoration and protection. Noting that lush forested areas are often candidates for "high input, high output" agriculture, he stressed the need to target areas vulnerable to deforestation.

Arne Ivar Sletnes, Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), outlined MCPFE activities aiding Forest Instrument implementation, including: facilitating multilevel coordination of implementation activities; and promoting effective and active stakeholder participation. He noted that future UNFF work should encompass: governance and land tenure; strengthening cooperation with the Rio Conventions; and SFM contributions to challenges and demands of other sectors.

The PACIFIC COMMUNITY called for establishing a global forest fund, and said that REDD funding should not be seen as an alternative to SFM funding.

The MONTREAL PROCESS outlined its work implementing SFM indicators, and noted that its work supports technical groups and enhances communication. JAMAICA called for an inter-regional exchange of experiences. CHINA noted the Asia-Pacific

Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation's work on forest policy, management and research issues in Asia. The SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY said funding mechanisms should also consider regional entities.

In closing, Heino said the UNFF must acknowledge regional diversity and not look for a single format for regional participation.

WORKING GROUP I

ENHANCED COOPERATION AND PROGRAMME

COORDINATION: The Secretariat introduced the document (E/CN.18/2009/10), noting that aspects of this issue have been addressed under other agenda items.

FORESTS IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT: Upon hearing further information from the GFEP study on adaptation, Co-Chair Arvids Ozols (Latvia) invited general statements. The EU, ARGENTINA, the US and INDONESIA stressed addressing all forest values, not only carbon sequestration. The US outlined its domestic framework for response actions, including priority setting, risk analysis, institutional support and integration across all sectors.

BRAZIL and COLOMBIA said UNFF should not encroach on the mandate of the three Rio Conventions, with COLOMBIA noting that the Forum should focus on promoting cooperation on SFM and REDD but that decisions on REDD pertain to UNFCCC.

NEW ZEALAND said the impacts of climate change on forests and forest biodiversity vary significantly among forest types and regions. MCPFE highlighted pan-European priorities including cross-sectoral communication and cooperation in bioenergy, water and climate change policies.

WORKING GROUP II

Co-Chair Glen Kile (Australia) outlined the outcomes of the *Ad Hoc* Expert Group on Financing, including the need for new and additional funding and a facilitative mechanism as the first step in developing the financing architecture for the Forest Instrument.

Sudan, for G-77/CHINA, noted that a global fund would promote capacity building, allow technology transfer to developing countries, and promote research as a tool for SFM.

SURINAME presented findings from the CLI on SFM Financing, including that: the proliferation of forest-related funds since UNFF7 needs to be countered with increased coordination; good governance, law enforcement, and clear land tenure are pre-requisites to REDD; and that payments for environmental services are a key source of SFM financing.

JAPAN outlined its new initiative, the Cool Earth Partnership, and noted that it will allocate funds for technical and financial assistance to developing countries over the next five years. The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) highlighted the vast gap between existing forest financing and that required to achieve SFM in all the world's tropical forests, and highlighted the creation of new ITTO Thematic Programmes that allow funding to be directed towards specific issues, such as REDD.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Mirroring recent discussions at the 19th session of the FAO's Committee on Forestry, most delegates agreed on the need to convey a clear message to climate negotiators: SFM must be included in a post-Kyoto agreement, as a holistic approach that considers forests as more than just carbon sinks. While some pointed to the need to develop a common definition of what exactly SFM is, and in turn, what range of activities would be eligible for climate funding, many cautioned against opening the "black box" of defining SFM, as this would jeopardize achieving any agreement on the message in the first place.

UNFF regulars, however, raised different concerns: pointing to countries stating that UNFF should not encroach on the mandates of other UN bodies, some noted that putting that message on paper may still prove challenging, even if all were to agree on its content.