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HIGHLIGHTS FROM IPF-3 MONDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 1996

The third session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests convened on Monday, 9 September 1996 in Geneva. After addressing procedural matters in the opening plenary, delegates broke into two working groups. Working Group I began consideration of programme element I.1 (national forest and land use plans) and Working Group II began consideration of programme element I.2 (international cooperation in financial assistance and technology transfer).

PLENARY

Co-chairs Sir Martin Holdgate (UK) and Manuel Rodriguez (Colombia) opened the session, emphasizing its importance because delegates must arrive at negotiated conclusions and recommendations for transmission to the CSD. They applauded the level of progress made during the intersessional period and encouraged consideration of reports produced at intersessional workshops. A workshop on traditional forest-related knowledge sponsored by Denmark and Colombia was announced for January of next year.

The Director of the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Joke Waller-Hunter, highlighted progress made during the intersessional period and encouraged the Panel to take advantage of work accomplished. Common understanding has emerged with regard to several programme elements including land-use planning, national forest plans and forest assessments. Further deliberation on C&I, valuation of forest goods and services and underlying causes of deforestation is needed. The IPF should adopt realistic recommendations and refrain from taking a "wish list" approach.

The provisional agenda (E/CN.17/IPF/1996/13) was then introduced. The proposed agenda of work consists largely of two parallel working group sessions. Preliminary conclusions are to be drafted during the first week and negotiated into final text during the second week. Programme element V.2 (legal mechanisms) will be discussed in plenary. SWITZERLAND suggested that plenary be extended to facilitate the adoption of conclusions. The provisional agenda was adopted. The EU, supported by GABON and SENEGAL, expressed concern regarding the unavailability of certain documents in all working languages. The Panel's work could be impeded.

The floor was open for general comments. The EU highlighted the need to formulate clear and appropriate conclusions as well as concrete proposals for action. Cross-sectoral issues must be acknowledged and incorporated.

COLOMBIA and the ALLIANCE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES emphasized the importance of intersessional activities, such as the upcoming meeting sponsored by the Colombian and Danish governments on traditional forest-related knowledge. MEXICO said the Panel should deliver practical conclusions that spell out means to implement them. FINLAND reported that the Nordic forestry ministers met in July and expressed their support for the IPF's work and urged it to formulate recommendations for concrete action. He underlined that the Panel's work should be holistic and intersectoral, and a policy forum must continue to exist after IPF-4 to maintain momentum.

WORKING GROUP I

Working Group I convened with discussion of programme element I.1 (national forest and land use plans). Jean Clement (FAO) introduced the Secretary General's Report (E/CN.17/IPF/1996/14) on the issue. The report, based largely on the outcomes of the workshops held in South Africa and Germany, is divided into three sections: definitions of terms, future challenges and proposals for IPF action. He urged the adoption of a universal concept for national forest programmes but noted the need to retain national sovereignty, particularly with regard to implementation. National forest programmes should consider the needs of all stakeholders and employ international cooperation.

GERMANY presented the options for action produced by the German expert consultation on implementing the Forest Principles, including a code of conduct. On international cooperation, the experts proposed a new "Forum for International Cooperation on Forests." SWEDEN highlighted the upcoming Sweden/Uganda initiative on sustainable forestry and land use and the process of consensus building. The WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT highlighted the problems of plantation workers and recommended that member governments ratify relevant international instruments.

The EU supported the basic principles of national forest programmes proposed in the report and stressed the fundamental need for commitment in future policy. She emphasized the need for public and private investments and said that development must have capacity-building as an objective. SENEGAL requested clarification on the new forum for international consultation and said he saw no need for a forum that is independent of national institutions. There has been duplication of efforts that has undermined the planning process in many countries. FINLAND emphasized several key issues, including: full integration of forest planning with wider land use planning;

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decentralized participatory planning; coordination of various international planning frameworks; and, incorporation of C&I into NFPs.

SWITZERLAND endorsed further deliberations on the proposed consultative forum and said that national level mechanisms need to be developed to ensure comprehensive support. He supported the proposed efforts toward partnership. NEW ZEALAND said NFPs are essential to obtain optimum use of land where competing claims exist and noted the need for flexibility in planning to address countries' different needs and resources. IUCN noted that primary forest users have the right to be involved in the development of NFPs. He called for participatory planning and community involvement. The US sought different planning processes for different countries, given the variance of land ownership patterns and mechanisms for public participation. All processes should be holistic, transparent and geared toward the long-term.

MALI, supported by the AFRICAN NETWORK FOR FORESTS, called for flexibility in planning processes, stating that NFPs should reflect established policies. The NETHERLANDS supported the universal development of NFPs and offered to assist countries with implementation. He said that agencies involved in NFP development should be involved in evaluation.

JAPAN acknowledged the lack of funding, capacity and international cooperation as obstacles to the development of NFPs. He called for support from local communities in the implementation of NFPs and suggested that a pilot phase be conducted. NORWAY said NFPs must be sensitive to the needs of various types of forests and small forests. He sought the use of universal terminology and supported the development of a consultative body. PAPUA NEW GUINEA supported forest planning for all countries and international cooperation for capacity building.

THE ORGANIZACION DE LOS PUEBLOS INDIGENAS DE LA AMAZONIA COLOMBIA noted that land use was closely linked to social and cultural issues. Implementation of NFPs should address indigenous concerns. AUSTRIA called for greater recognition of mountain ecosystems in forest management plans. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA said NFPs should be flexible and accommodate each country's specific circumstances. He suggested balancing top-down and bottom-up approaches to forest planning. CANADA said NFPs are the best way to achieve SFM and should incorporate national-level C&I, the views of all stakeholders and biodiversity concerns.

UNESCO stressed the need to address the divergence between principles, plans and practices in forest management. Disincentives as well as incentives should be considered for private funding mechanisms.

CHINA supported the development of NFPs but urged that planning be flexible. Plans should balance use and conservation objectives. The PHILIPPINES said NFPs need to account for each country's unique natural conditions. Local participation is vital for implementation. She sought clarification regarding the proposed consultative body.

MALAYSIA endorsed the report's NFP concept and basic principles, but noted that working definitions warranted further elaboration. He expressed concern about international consultations on NFPs. A NGO representative said some fundamental constraints have not been included, such as the lack of political will, and recommended a more explicit elaboration of the ecosystem approach. He noted that "stakeholders" should be used rather than "partners."

WORKING GROUP II

Working Group II, chaired by Manuel Rodriguez (Colombia), opened with a summary of the Secretary General's report on programme element I.2 (international cooperation in financial assistance and technology transfer). DENMARK presented the results of its workshop, co-sponsored with South Africa and UNDP, on financial mechanisms and sources of finance for sustainable forestry held in Pretoria, South Africa from 4-7 June 1996. Participants discussed the roles of ODA and national governments; the possibilities for effective coordination; new and innovative mechanisms; and implications of increased private capital investment. The mutual recognition of shared responsibilities for the world's forests was a breakthrough achieved at the workshop.

COLOMBIA underscored the importance of generating new and additional funding as promised at UNCED, especially for SFM. He highlighted the need to create a code of conduct for private investment and an information clearinghouse on marketing of forest products. The EU noted that private capital flows are increasing, but are still directed towards unsustainable forestry practices. They should be channeled into investments that meet the wider public interest. He stressed that the EU does not intend to use increased private sector flows as an excuse to reduce ODA for SFM. ZIMBABWE stated that the report's consideration of private investment is too optimistic. He also noted that the report fails to recognize the important contributions of local communities to SFM. COSTA RICA, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, said that financial assistance and technology transfer are cross-cutting issues and should therefore be discussed in a horizontal fashion. INDONESIA stated that the report overemphasizes market-based instruments within recipient countries. IUCN expressed concern that the potential for community investment had been overlooked. He proposed adding text to the report on increasing community-level benefits and responsibilities to promote local investment in SFM.

The UK noted the need to direct forest sector investment into SFM. He said private investors are not always attracted to countries with low forest cover and development cooperation should play an important role in supporting them. The US said the potential for increasing the proportion of ODA devoted to forests would depend upon the priorities of recipient countries. She questioned the utility of the proposed working group and the definition of the proposed code of conduct. SWITZERLAND noted that while private sector investment has increased, much of it has not been for SFM. She supported the proposed code of conduct and said the proposed working group should have a mandate to ensure that ODA is deployed more effectively.

GERMANY highlighted the need for closer involvement of the private sector in development of NFPs. CHINA said the report overemphasizes national and private investment at the expense of international financing and technology transfers from North to South. NORWAY recognized that ODA will continue to be important to support SFM, but to be most effective these funds should be combined with other sources. Ways and means to combine ODA and private investment should be explored. AUSTRALIA asserted that the costs of achieving SFM in developing countries exceeds existing ODA, so it is critical to implement enabling policies and legal frameworks.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

Working Group I: Working Group I will meet at 10:00 am in Room XIX

Working Group II: Working Group II will meet at 10:00 am in Room XX.