

## UNFF8 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 30 APRIL 2009

UNFF8 delegates convened throughout the day and into the night in Working Group I (WGI) and a contact group. WGI continued discussions on the draft resolution on forests in a changing environment. The contact group continued deliberations on the Co-Chairs' draft text on financing for SFM. Delegates also convened in a Friends of the Chair group in the morning to discuss text on a global forest fund.

### WORKING GROUP I

**PRESENTATION ON WOMEN AND VIOLENT CONFLICTS:** Marie-Ange Lukiana Mufwankolo, Minister for Gender, Family and Children, Democratic Republic of Congo, presented on forests and women in areas of armed conflicts and impacts on forests. She said that the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the consequent displacement of two million people have had devastating effects on the forests, including forests in protected areas, and on biodiversity. She called for UNFF to associate itself with the campaign on raising awareness of the conditions faced by women and child victims of the armed gangs in the Congo's forests.

**FORESTS IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT:** On the UNFF Secretariat cooperating with international organizations outside CPF, delegates agreed to reference only CITES and the Ramsar Convention, deleting reference to "other agreements with significant forest-related mandates."

On indicators for reporting progress towards SFM and the global objectives, delegates agreed to: the EU's proposal to report also on national measures and policies; and China's proposals to develop a reporting format and report on international cooperation. Delegates debated at length whether to specify that indicators should be "based on the seven thematic elements of SFM," and eventually agreed to emulate NLBI language, by taking them into account "as a reference framework." BRAZIL and COLOMBIA, opposed by the EU and SWITZERLAND, requested adding "as appropriate." Many opposed an EU proposal to explore the need for new indicators, which the EU later withdrew.

Delegates agreed on a paragraph to explore opportunities for collaboration with the Secretariats of the Rio Conventions to develop joint targeted activities. On seeking participation in the Rio Conventions' Joint Liaison Group when forest-related

matters are discussed, delegates agreed on text enhancing cooperation and coordination in the area of forests.

On promoting efforts to facilitate cooperation, SWITZERLAND asked for the deletion of "workshops and guidelines." He also suggested, and after objection by some withdrew, adding "innovative and effective approaches" such as country- and region-led initiatives. The AFRICAN GROUP requested adding intergovernmental processes, while CHINA suggested requesting the Secretariat to facilitate regional contributions.

On arranging for an interactive panel on the impacts of current crises, the EU asked for maintaining reference to specific crises, with the AFRICAN GROUP requesting "energy" instead of "fuelwood," and COLOMBIA "economic" instead of "financial." Delegates agreed to Co-Chair Mero's proposal for "challenges" instead of "crises," and CHINA asked for adding "opportunities."

Delegates agreed to delete a paragraph inviting the Secretariat to prepare background studies on issues relevant to UNFF9's theme on forests for people, livelihoods and poverty reduction, and other issues.

On the Secretariat synthesizing current information on the valuation of forest goods and services, the AFRICAN GROUP requested deleting "including payments for ecosystem services," which was opposed by many delegations. Delegates eventually agreed on NLBI language referring to "the range of forest values as well as ways to reflect such values in the marketplace."

On the paragraphs for strengthening cooperation, the EU queried the purpose of referencing South-South cooperation specifically. BRAZIL, with COLOMBIA and CHINA, stressed that South-South cooperation is of particular importance as the countries concerned have the chance to share lessons learned regarding, *inter alia*, capacity building and implementation. He also questioned why the strategy for supporting the development of South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation should be presented at UNFF11. The US supported the calls for South-South cooperation but preferred text referring to strategies as opposed to initiatives. URUGUAY proposed text reflecting all types of cooperation. BRAZIL, supported by the US, suggested that, due to the importance of South-South cooperation, a new paragraph should be inserted specifically referencing South-South initiatives. BRAZIL, with CHINA, the AFRICAN GROUP and others, called for the strategy to be presented at UNFF9.

In the evening, delegates engaged in the third reading of the Co-Chairs' draft resolution. They agreed to delete a preambular

paragraph recognizing the vulnerability of low forest cover countries and small island developing states to climate change and their challenges and needs to adapt to climate change, agreeing to Brazil's concern that this would alter the list of vulnerable countries recognized under the UNFCCC.

On SFM's role in addressing environmental change, delegates debated at length how to refer to environmental problems addressed by other conventions, with BRAZIL and VENEZUELA opposing references to mitigating climate change, and the EU and the AFRICAN GROUP insisting on reference to desertification and forest land degradation. They eventually agreed to a simplified list of environmental problems SFM can contribute to, including climate change, forest and land degradation, and conservation of soil, water and forest biodiversity.

Delegates agreed on the paragraph on taking note of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report and recent joint initiatives of the CPF on forest and climate change including the Strategic Framework for Forests and Climate Change. Delegates agreed on welcoming regional and subregional initiatives as well as the contribution of Major Groups.

On the text recalling the relevant decisions of the UNCCD, UNFCCC, CBD and the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), delegates agreed to refer to "relevant decisions and objectives." VENEZUELA asked for more time to consult on the CCPCJ decision and its implications. Discussions continued into the night.

#### **CONTACT GROUP ON SFM FINANCING**

In the morning, the G-77/CHINA stressed that the outcomes of the negotiation on financing are considered as a package, with the first component being a global forest fund, and the second being the facilitative process. She noted if donors continued to bracket text referencing the global forest fund during negotiations, then the G-77/CHINA wished to bracket text referencing the facilitative process.

JAPAN recalled their earlier amendment to the G-77/China's proposal, to consider the need to establish a fund, and urged delegates to continue negotiations along these lines. AUSTRALIA and the EU said that it would be useful to discuss the text on the facilitative process, even though views were still polarized and text bracketed. Chair Tharyat suspended the meeting while a Friends of the Chair group convened to discuss a way forward.

Two proposals emerged from the Friends of the Chair discussion. The G-77/CHINA proposed deciding to establish a global forest fund following a review to be undertaken by an *ad hoc* working group, which would be established with the mandate to elaborate the terms of reference of the fund by UNFF9. The EU made a counter proposal, to decide to convene an *ad hoc* working group with a mandate to consider the need, appropriateness and feasibility of a financing arrangement including the possibility of a voluntary fund, for consideration at UNFF11.

Delegates discussed these two proposals in a smaller contact group in the afternoon. After clarifying the differences between a working group and an expert group, delegates agreed to refer to an *ad hoc* expert group (AHEG). After the G-77/CHINA and the EU continued to oppose each others' proposals, Chair Tharyat tabled compromise text, deciding to establish an AHEG with a mandate to consider the appropriateness and feasibility of establishing a voluntary fund, taking into account the

Forum's review of the performance of the facilitative process, for UNFF10's consideration. Donor countries supported the Chair's proposal, and made minor amendments. G-77/CHINA proposed alternative text to decide to establish an AHEG with a view to establishing a voluntary global forest fund at UNFF9, taking into account the Forum's review of the performance of the facilitative process, and that the AHEG's mandate would be to make recommendations for the operationalization of the fund for its adoption by UNFF9. Not reaching agreement, delegates decided to move on to discussing paragraphs on the facilitative mechanism.

In the evening, noting the need to streamline several paragraphs on the facilitative mechanism, the G-77/CHINA proposed text on deciding to establish a facilitative process, undertaken by the UNFF Secretariat and the CPF, which would: mobilize financial resources; facilitate access to SFM finance and technology; enhance coordination among relevant funding sources; and support the global forest fund's implementation. They also proposed that an implementation committee would monitor the process's implementation. Noting the need for informal consultations on the new proposal, delegates decided to move on to the rest of the text. Discussions continued into the night.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Seeing delegates stocking up on food and drink is a clear sign that a UNFF session is nearing its end, and agreement is yet far away.

As the adventurers of financing set out to cross the forest of brackets, some were frightened by the ultimate question of their undertaking "what happens if we cannot reach agreement?" Most did, however, keep their optimistic spirit, even through bleary eyes and hoarse voices, and continued in their search for compromise text. But the decision on whether or not to establish a global forest fund, which took up most of the day's deliberations, had delegates commenting that compromise proposals by either side, donors and recipients alike, were "compromising progress" rather than reconciling polarized positions. One delegate contemplated that donors would never agree to set up a fund without establishing a facilitative process and assessing its performance beforehand to see if a fund was even appropriate. Others were dispirited by the time lost at this session, having only found out near the last day that several donor country delegates had come to New York without a mandate to negotiate a fund in the first place.

The companions seeking to save forests from the changing environment, on the other hand, were haunted by the ghosts of the NLBI. As delegates tried to resort to NLBI text as a way out of repeated deadlock over references to concepts such as the seven thematic elements of SFM, they encountered unexpected difficulties in using such quotes "appropriately," meaning without reinterpreting the NLBI. One group of delegates commented that "it's the ambiguity embedded in the NLBI that will keep us here all night." Others pointed to the "finance drain" referring to the problem that the discussions on financing are using up most of the energy and creativity of many delegations, making it harder than ever to compose text around the many linguistic pitfalls of international forest policy.

**ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:** The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of UNFF8 will be available on Monday, 4 May 2009 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/forestry/unff/unff8>