



ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS: 4-15 MAY 2015

The eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF11) opens today at UN Headquarters in New York. The meeting will address a number of issues, including reviewing: the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (IAF) and consideration of all future options; progress towards achieving the Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs) and implementing the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (NLBI or Forest Instrument); and the contribution of forests and the international arrangement on forests (IAF) to the internationally agreed development goals.

Other topics for discussion include, *inter alia*: regional and subregional inputs; means of implementation (MoI) for sustainable forest management (SFM); and enhanced cooperation, and policy and programme coordination, including the provision of further guidance to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). A multi-stakeholder dialogue and high-level segment will also be convened.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNFF

The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was established in 2000, following a five-year period of forest policy dialogue within 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 2000/35, established the IAF, which established the UNFF as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC with the main objective of promoting the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

The UNFF's principal functions are to: facilitate the 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 well as to address forest issues and emerging areas of concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner; enhance cooperation, and 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.

ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION: The UNFF organizational session 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 made progress towards the establishment of the 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 in New York. Delegates discussed and adopted decisions on the UNFF Multi-Year Programme of Work, a Plan of Action for the implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, and the UNFF's work with the CPF. Delegates also recommended establishing three *ad hoc* expert groups (AHEGs) to provide technical advice to UNFF on: approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting; finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs); and 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 in New York. Delegates adopted decisions on, *inter alia*, specific criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the IAF. UNFF2 agreed that specific criteria related to the implementation of the Proposals for Action are the extent to which: countries, the CPF and other actors progressed in implementing the Proposals for Action; countries developed and started to implement national forest programmes or equivalent processes; the IAF facilitated and promoted countries' implementation, focusing on MoI; and countries progressed in assessing the Proposals for Action in order to determine their relevance in their national contexts. Resolution 2/3 outlined specific criteria related to continued policy development, including the extent to which: the IAF enhanced forest policy development and dialogue and worked in a transparent and participatory manner; CPF members responded to the UNFF's guidance; and progress was made in reaching a common understanding of forest-related concepts, terminology and definitions.

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.

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UNFF4: UNFF4 convened in Geneva from 3-14 May 2004 and adopted five resolutions on: review of the effectiveness of the IAF; forest-related scientific knowledge; social and cultural aspects of forests; monitoring, assessment and reporting, and criteria and indicators; and finance and transfer of ESTs. On the review of the IAF, delegates agreed to request that Member States submit a voluntary questionnaire based on the specific criteria agreed to at UNFF2. UNFF4 attempted, without success, to reach agreement on resolutions on forest-related traditional knowledge, enhanced cooperation, and policy and programme coordination.

UNFF5: UNFF5 took place from 16-27 May 2005 in New York. Participants were unable to reach agreement on strengthening the IAF and did not produce 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 MoI.

UNFF6: UNFF6 took place from 13-24 February 2006 in New York. 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 GOFs for the IAF to: reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM, including through 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 in New York. After two weeks of negotiations, culminating in an all-night session, delegates adopted the Forest Instrument and a Multi-Year Programme of Work for the period 2007-2015. 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.

UNFF8: UNFF8 was held from 20 April - 1 May 2009 in New York. Delegates discussed: forests in a changing environment, including forests and climate change, reversing the loss of forest cover and degradation, and forests and biodiversity conservation; and MoI for SFM. After an all-night session on the last night, delegates adopted a resolution on forests in a changing environment, enhanced cooperation and cross-sectoral policy and programme coordination, and regional and subregional inputs. Delegates did not agree on a decision on financing for SFM, and decided to forward bracketed negotiating text to the Forum’s next session.

UNFF9: UNFF9 took place from 24 January - 4 February 2011 in New York and launched the International Year of Forests 2011. The Forum adopted by acclamation a resolution on forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication, which addressed,

inter alia: procedures for assessment of progress; increased regional and subregional cooperation; enhanced cooperation, including with Major Groups; and MoI for SFM, particularly the AHEG process on forest financing.

UNFF10: UNFF10 met from 8-19 April 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey. Among other items, delegates adopted the “Resolution on Emerging Issues, MoI and the UNFF Trust Fund,” which decided that the effectiveness of the IAF will be reviewed in 2015, and established an open-ended intergovernmental AHEG to review the IAF’s performance and effectiveness. The resolution set out the elements to be included in the review and decided that the review shall have the following components: submissions by countries, the CPF, its members and other relevant organizations and stakeholders; an independent assessment of the IAF; and an AHEG on the IAF review.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

AHEG1: The first meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental *ad hoc* expert group on the international arrangement on forests (AHEG1) convened from 24-28 February 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya. The expert group took note of the Co-Chairs’ conclusions, which, *inter alia*, outline the achievements, strengths and weaknesses, as well as areas and options for action or improvement, of the: UNFF and its Secretariat; the Forest Instrument; the CPF; regional processes and organizations; and Major Groups.

WORKSHOP ON INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENT ON FORESTS BEYOND 2015: Held in Beijing, China from 29-31 October 2014, this Country-Led Initiative (CLI), in support of UNFF, aimed to examine and consider options for a renewed IAF based on strengths and weaknesses of the current IAF, as reported at AHEG1 as well as in the report of the independent assessment. Participants discussed six topics on the IAF: strengthening regional and subregional involvement; strengthening the role and functioning of the CPF; strengthening the involvement of Major Groups; low-cost, high-value, achievable actions relevant to a two- to three-year time horizon; up-scaling the Facilitative Process; and possible elements of a strategic plan for the IAF. A Co-Chairs’ Summary Report of the Workshop was compiled and reviewed by participants, and forwarded to AHEG2.

AHEG2: AHEG2 convened from 12-15 January 2015 at UN Headquarters in New York. AHEG2 took note of the Co-Chairs’ Summary of Discussions and Recommendations, which, *inter alia*, identifies areas of emerging convergence and requiring further discussion on the future of: the Forest Instrument; implementation and financing of SFM after 2015; UNFF and its Secretariat; and involvement of Major Groups and regional entities. The recommendations include elements or components of a possible resolution to be adopted at UNFF11.

GOVERNING FOREST LANDSCAPES:

INTERLAKEN+10: This CLI convened from 3-6 February 2015 in Interlaken, Switzerland. Organized jointly by Switzerland, Indonesia, South Africa, Mexico and Ukraine, the workshop provided a platform for participants to exchange ideas on how to include governance issues in a post-2015 IAF. They also took stock of experiences gained since the first Interlaken Workshop in 2004, identified key issues to be addressed in the context of global forestry, and worked on a set of recommendations on how to foster good governance of forest landscapes for the consideration of the UNFF.