



## UNFF11 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 7 MAY 2015

UNFF11 reconvened on Thursday, 7 May, to continue its deliberations in WGs. WG1 addressed the draft ministerial declaration “Future international arrangement on forests we want.” It met in the morning before adjourning for regional consultations. WG2, discussing the draft resolution “International arrangement on forests beyond 2015,” met throughout the day.

### WORKING GROUPS

**WG1:** WG1 began its discussions on the zero draft of the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of UNFF11 (E/CN.18/2015/L.1) with Co-Chair Wu inviting countries and regional groups to make general statements.

Some delegates stressed that UNFF is at a turning point and should send a global message—including to other forest-related conventions—stressing the importance of forests and their multi-functionality, and acknowledging both the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Delegates suggested that a more “inspirational” title is required for the declaration, proposing “a transformative” IAF beyond 2015. Several missing elements were highlighted, with requests being made to include, among other things: a reaffirmation of ministers’ commitment to SFM; a stronger, “more punchy” statement on forests’ contribution to SDGs; and clearer mentions of the challenges involved in SFM.

Some considered the declaration to be too technical and suggested focusing on the overall vision for the UNFF and SFM. They also called for stronger political language to emphasize that “business as usual” is not an option. Regarding the required commitments to implement the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (NLBI) and the GOFs, there were suggestions to make such statements more concise.

On finances, whereas some delegates remarked that budgetary and administrative issues should not be included in the declaration, others said existing financial mechanisms should be prioritized. One delegate said that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is unlikely to dedicate specific support for the NLBI and that the request to the GEF should encourage support for SFM in a broader sense. Others cautioned against duplication with discussions to be held at the third International Conference on Financing for Development in July 2015.

On collaboration with conventions, some expressed concern with language calling upon conventions to integrate the Forest Agreement/Instrument/Framework into their outcome documents, suggesting it be framed as an invitation. One opposed the use of “Forest Agreement” in the entire text.

Many countries suggested strengthening mention of cross-sectoral approaches and the effects of agriculture, mining and infrastructure on forests. On implementing the NLBI, there were calls for integrating the instrument into national sustainable development and poverty alleviation strategies and policies.

**WG2:** WG2 Co-Chair Vicente Bezerra opened discussions on the draft resolution (E/CN.18/2015/L.2), inviting delegates to express general views on the draft as a whole. He proposed this be followed by a discussion of concerns on specific sections, following a “cluster approach,” with the sections split as follows: **cluster one** contains sections I (IAF beyond 2015), II (UNFF beyond 2015) and III (the NLBI beyond 2015); **cluster two** contains sections IV (catalyzing implementation and financing), V (monitoring, assessment and reporting) and VI (Secretariat of the Forum); **cluster three** contains sections VII (CPF), VIII (regional and subregional involvement) and IX (Major Groups and other stakeholder involvement); **cluster four** contains X (strategic plan), XI (review of the IAF), XII (follow-up to UNFF11) and XIII (resources for implementation); and **cluster five** contains the preambular section.

Certain delegates welcomed the draft resolution, saying it was a good basis for going forward, but pointed to the need for some restructuring to avoid repetition and disconnection among different elements. Others expressed strong reservations about the length and scope of the proposed resolution, saying it may be difficult to complete negotiations on the resolution in less than two weeks. Several delegates urged those present to work towards a more focused, high-level document that prioritizes issues that must be resolved during UNFF11.

Delegates were heard restating their main priorities for the resolution, which include: the future of the IAF and NLBI beyond 2015; institutional aspects; financing; and follow-up and review. Others suggested there is a need to consider whether the defined IAF objectives are sufficiently comprehensive. One delegate lamented insufficient reference to ecosystem services.

Some recommended that the resolution acknowledge the role of forest instruments other than the NLBI, saying this could open the door to partnerships. Others said that proposed functions of

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the UNFF makes it more of an implementing body than they would like to see.

Concerns were also expressed about the monitoring, assessment and reporting section of the text, where it was suggested that reference to existing reporting systems is missing. Some delegates raised concerns over expanding the role of the UNFF and the resolution's focus on governance.

Delegates underlined that proposals should be cost-effective and avoid fragmentation and duplication of work. They also urged for drawing on elements discussed during the intersessional period that enjoyed broad support, such as high-value, concrete, achievable actions, and for bearing in mind the overall objectives of the IAF.

**CLUSTER ONE:** It was suggested that additional aspects necessary for implementing the IAF could be mentioned, such as governance and enabling environments. There was also concern that the expanded UNFF functions may be too focused on implementation. Many stated they would not support reopening and renegotiating the text of the NLBI.

Diverse views on the proposed CITA were expressed, including: a lack of support for its establishment; a request for clarification on its role; and a call to establish the CITA so that the UNFF can remain relevant in a changing landscape.

Some urged for increased reference to SFM and capacity building in the text. Many stated that while they saw value in holding high-level sessions, these should be held as part of regular UNFF sessions.

On renaming the NLBI, while some expressed support for renaming it the "Forest Instrument," others queried the merit of renaming it.

**CLUSTER TWO:** On upgrading the facilitative process, some delegates said this should be cautiously addressed. Many questioned whether it is necessary to upgrade it to an entity. Others suggested that upgrading it does not necessarily require this. Views on the merit of the proposed global forest indicators partnership were split.

Delegates also stated that: establishing a global forest fund and a voluntary strategic trust fund are not mutually exclusive; UNFF cannot assume to be the primary body responsible for monitoring forest-related SDGs; establishing a forest financing window in GEF should be viewed with caution; and anchoring the role of the Secretariat in the strategic plan will help prioritize UNFF's strategic role.

**CLUSTER THREE:** On the CPF, one delegate saw merit in reaffirming the UNFF's relationship with the CPF, and in providing input to enhance its accountability, transparency and communication with the UNFF and others. Several delegates said they did not support the proposal to transform the CPF into UN-Forest. One delegate noted that the role of Member States in strengthening the NLBI and its components should not be diminished by emphasis on the CPF, whilst another suggested the CPF could be invited to develop its own model for further formalization.

On regional and subregional involvement, many noted that language on regional and subregional organizations and processes should be maintained throughout the section. It was mentioned that this section could capture some of the specific challenges faced by LFCs, LDCs and SIDs.

On Major Groups and other stakeholder involvement, it was noted, *inter alia*, that this section is "of critical importance." The

need to consider how concrete suggestions from Major Groups could be integrated under ECOSOC regulations was cited. The key importance of the private sector was also underlined. Other delegates said the Secretariat should strengthen participation of all, rather than specific, Major Groups.

**CLUSTER FOUR:** On the strategic plan, some delegates said it should: focus on the work of the UNFF, rather than the IAF as a whole; be flexible; and consider emerging issues. Some emphasized synchronizing the MYPOW with monitoring, assessment and reporting. One delegate said synergies and cooperation with other forest-related processes should be reflected.

On follow-up to UNFF11, several delegates called for removing reference to negotiations to develop text for a legally-binding agreement on all types of forests. One delegate noted that UNFF is not entitled to request the SG to ensure full implementation of the resolution and its budgetary requirements, and questioned the Bureau's mandate to invite donor countries and organizations to fund the Forum Trust Fund. Another said the next UNFF session should be held earlier than 2018 in order to take advantage of several ongoing discussions in the international forest community.

On resources for implementation of the resolution, one delegate said there is no need to include details on budgetary provisions for travel support.

**CLUSTER FIVE:** General comments on the preamble included statements on what prominence should be given to the CPF and other IAF components. One delegate suggested recognizing all significant forest-related developments over the last decade. There was disagreement on whether the preambular text should make specific reference to Rio Principles 2 and 7 on countries' sovereign right to exploit their own resources and the principle of CBDR. Some said that singling out these principles would take them out of context, while another pointed out that they are already specifically cited in the NLBI.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

Following almost a full day of regional consultations on Wednesday, the working groups were expected to begin in earnest on Thursday, with Member States putting forward their initial positions.

While both working groups got off to good starts, it soon became apparent that not all negotiating groups were ready to address all sections of the draft ministerial declaration and draft resolution. WG1 adjourned early to afford more consultation time. WG2 made halting progress, eventually ending early so that all Member States would be ready to make textual changes.

That being said, it became apparent from discussions in both working groups that financing issues are quickly becoming one of the overriding concerns. Indeed, one delegate was heard saying that this could be "the entire crux of the negotiations."

The issue at hand is what will be the best way forward with regard to financial mechanisms. Some delegates said that given the "wealth" of existing financial mechanisms, there should be prioritization rather than establishment of new mechanisms. Suggestions for new mechanisms included a global forest fund or a dedicated window for forests under the GEF. The latter was met with caution, as one delegate was heard opining that "establishing such a financial relationship rather than a strategic relationship could be 'detrimental'."