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UNFF11
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UNFF11 HIGHLIGHTS: FRIDAY, 8 MAY 2015

UNFF11 met Friday, 8 May, to continue its deliberations in two working groups. Both WG1, on the draft ministerial declaration “Future international arrangement on forests we want,” and WG2, on the draft resolution “International arrangement on forests beyond 2015,” met throughout the day. Due to insufficient progress made in working group discussions, the stocktaking plenary was cancelled to allow the working groups more time. WG2 discussions continued into the night.

WORKING GROUPS

WG1: Delegates’ views on the title of the declaration were split on whether the proposed alternative title “a transformational IAF” is appropriate or accurate. There was general support for a preamble that stresses the importance of forests, with suggestions to add reference to, *inter alia*, forests’ contribution to: the 1.6 billion people directly dependent on them; cultural and spiritual values; sustainable soil management; the ‘planet,’ as recognized as Mother Earth; and combating desertification.

On welcoming all efforts to advance SFM, many countries urged acknowledging the role of indigenous peoples and local communities. Regarding pressures on forests, views were split on whether, and how, to include agricultural expansion, inadequate financing for SFM, and illegal harvesting and associated trade.

On recognizing UNFF’s role in promoting policy coordination, some delegates supported a reference to the fragmentation of global forest policy. One delegate suggested deleting reference to being “deeply concerned” about policy fragmentation. New paragraphs were proposed to emphasize: the need for a common understanding of SFM and the importance of good governance, secure land tenure rights, and stakeholder participation in achieving SFM; SFM’s role in economic and social development; and the need for UNFF’s cooperation with other forest-related processes.

Concerning UNFF’s role in integrating forests into the post-2015 development agenda, one delegate suggested reference to “sustainable development commitments” rather than SDGs.

On commitments to strengthen the current NLBI and IAF, views were split on how strong the language relating to implementation and taking appropriate action should be. A number of countries suggested minimizing references to specific actions, keeping the outcome a political declaration rather than a detailed text. Others responded that a political statement should

still contain actionable commitments and assured promises. Some delegates noted the need to commit to all forest-related goals and targets, not just those under the NLBI. There was disagreement on whether, or how, to refer to the IAF’s original goal of establishing a potential UN convention on forests.

On working with CPF members’ governing bodies in implementing the Forest Agreement/Instrument/Framework, some favored specific reference to the three Rio Conventions as well as: strengthening national forest-related governance; adopting cross-sectoral approaches to address drivers of deforestation; and recognizing the value of forests’ goods and services. Many favored reverting to agreed language from the UNFF9 Ministerial Declaration (E/CN.18/2011/20) regarding working with the three Rio Conventions to integrate SFM into their strategies and programmes.

Delegates had divergent opinions on SFM implementation and financing. Many disagreed with including financial commitments in the declaration, proposing this be left to WG2. They proposed: mobilizing funds from all sources and enhancing access to existing forest-related funds; ensuring better coordination across “the plethora” of new and existing financing mechanisms; and strengthening technical and scientific cooperation. Some supported reverting to agreed text from the UNFF9 Ministerial Declaration that deals with creating enabling conditions in developing countries in order to enhance SFM.

On engaging relevant stakeholders in the work of the IAF, there were suggestions to add mention of, *inter alia*, small farmers and landowners, international financial institutions, LFCCs, SIDS, women and youth. On monitoring, assessment and reporting, there was disagreement on whether to focus on the NLBI or strengthen monitoring, assessment and reporting that encompasses the GOFs and other forest-related targets, both inside and outside the UN.

There was general agreement to invite, rather than call upon, other forest-related conventions to reflect the ministerial declaration in their outcome documents. On financing, there were calls to invite all relevant existing and emerging forest-related financing agencies, including the GEF and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), to give due consideration to forests and SFM, with one delegate also suggesting the inclusion of the private sector.

Some delegates agreed that strengthening the involvement of the CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC in the work of UNFF and CPF should include their use of the outputs of the current and future IAF, as well as their increased participation in the CPF.

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Many questioned the rationale behind the choice of 2020 for ministers to meet again, and the purpose of such a meeting. All accepted that the date should be left open, adding that such a meeting should involve key stakeholders rather than just the chief executive officers of private sector, philanthropic and community organizations.

WG2: The UNFF Secretary provided a brief report back on the feasibility of changing the name of the NLBI and establishing subsidiary bodies of UNFF. He said that any name change to the NLBI would have to be sanctioned by the UNGA. He noted that: the term “instrument” is broad and does not have legal implications; “Agreement” with a capitalized “A” implies a formal, legally-binding agreement subject to ratification procedures; and “agreement” with a non-capitalized “a” denotes a more generic term, not subject to legal processes. On the legality of forming a subsidiary body, the Secretary said that UNFF is able to establish subsidiary organs after consultations with the SG and with ECOSOC’s consent. The delegates then turned to the text in the draft resolution.

On the IAF beyond 2015, the Secretariat noted that a balance is being struck between the previously agreed objectives of the IAF and “streamlining” the objectives for going beyond 2015.

One delegate proposed that the UNFF decide to facilitate the development of a legally-binding global agreement on all types of forests. Several groups focused on broadening the scope of this section beyond the UNFF, for instance through: reference to adapting to new demands and developments; acknowledging that there are other tools and instruments at work besides the NLBI; and recognizing the IAF also consists of, *inter alia*, regional and subregional processes and Major Groups. One delegate urged mention of global stewardship of forests and trees outside of forests. Others suggested including the word “voluntary” in the context of the UNFF Trust Fund and for bracketing text on the voluntary strategic trust fund/global forest fund as discussions are still ongoing.

On the UNFF beyond 2015, one delegate requested to include that monitoring and assessment be on the basis of voluntary reports submitted by Member States. Here others proposed narrowing the scope, for example through promoting the implementation of the NLBI instead of “sustainable management of all types of forests.”

Some delegates suggested text that references the implementation of SFM through the forest-related SDGs and the GOFs. Others suggested text on facilitating synergies through receiving and considering CPF reports, as well as providing guidance to the CPF.

Some delegates called for streamlining text through deleting paragraphs that had been based on text from ECOSOC Resolution E/2000/35 (Report on the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests). The Secretariat cautioned that some nuances might be lost if all text is unilaterally streamlined or deleted.

The Secretariat also clarified that the intention of the proposed world forest partnership forum/dialogue is to enable dialogue and experience and best practice sharing.

Some delegates stated their opposition to establishing a CITA. One speaker favored a subsidiary body similar to the former UN Conference on Sustainable Development, suggesting that sessions in “even years” deal with political issues, while sessions in “odd years” address scientific advice and implementation issues. Each would meet for five consecutive days. Others expressed concern that the text expands the functions of the

Bureau. On text reaffirming the validity of the NLBI, it was suggested that “validity” be replaced with “value,” since the UNGA has already approved the NLBI.

A number of delegates proposed deleting reference to renaming the NLBI to the “Forest Agreement,” preferring “Forest Instrument” instead. One delegate urged deleting text on renaming the NLBI, saying that resources could be better spent on activities other than the renaming of the NLBI.

On upgrading the facilitative process, there was some support for the proposed functions of an upgraded process, while others called for enhancing it, rather than upgrading it to an entity or financing mechanism. Some proposed replacing this section with wording that emphasizes assisting countries to access existing forest-related financing. This would include assisting them to design strategies for NLBI implementation for submission to various financing mechanisms. Additionally, some supported referencing a global forest fund; others opposed this, preferring wording on a voluntary strategic trust fund.

There was some support for language inviting new actions from the GEF, while others suggested encouraging the GEF to continue its SFM strategy in its sixth replenishment period, and for Member States to use this potential.

On the section on monitoring, assessment and reporting, there was a suggestion to amend the title of the section to include text on the NLBI and follow up and review of the forest-related SDGs and targets. One delegate suggested including monitoring, assessment and reporting as a component of follow-up and review activities. Another urged for stating that the establishment of a global forest indicators partnership should be based on “existing systems of criteria and indicators of SFM.”

Delegates also considered deleting language, *inter alia*: implying that Member States carry out monitoring, assessment and review activities; and requesting the Secretariat to prepare quadrennial global publications.

IN THE CORRIDORS

“Everything starts with forests, and forests provide us with everything.” Whether in plenary, working groups, side events or informal consultations, the first week of UNFF11 has been characterized by innumerable mentions of the multifunctional nature of forests. Given such “multi-functionality,” it is no wonder there are so many forest-related goals, targets, approaches and tools spread throughout various fora at all levels. At an international level the diversity, or according to some opinions “fragmentation,” of policies is apparent: it has also been noted to cause confusion, and touched many elements of the week’s negotiations.

One observer noted this fragmented policy landscape “should be prompting a thorough reflection on what role the UNFF should fulfil” going beyond 2015. Indeed, Friday’s discussions dwelt on the future of UNFF beyond 2015; some delegates cautioned against bodies that may be too closely associated with implementation functions, while others agreed that establishing a CITA is necessary as it is a mechanism that would potentially further SFM implementation.

With these discussions continuing into Friday night, and given that UNFF’s mandate expires at the end of this session, many delegates felt a strong need to move beyond this “fragmentation” of views on the future of the UNFF and find some common ground.