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UNFF11
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UNFF11 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 12 MAY 2015

UNFF11 reconvened on Tuesday, 12 May, to continue discussions on the draft ministerial declaration and resolution. WG1's contact group resumed in the morning to undertake a second reading of the draft ministerial declaration. In the afternoon, WG1 Co-Chairs presented and distributed a "Co-Chairs' proposal," containing compromises on the text, for further consideration by the WG. WG2 established a contact group to discuss the potential establishment of a subsidiary body of UNFF, its functions and modalities, and means of implementation (MoI). In the afternoon, WG2 Co-Chairs introduced their "Vice-Chairs' proposal" for the draft resolution.

Both working groups continued their discussions into the night.

WORKING GROUPS

WG1: In the morning, WG1 reconvened in their contact group to continue a second reading of the draft ministerial declaration.

A number of delegates disagreed on language for promoting implementation and finance, a section that many countries felt is fundamental. Many urged for language that reflects a commitment to take action to mobilize new and emerging resources, while others felt that their respective forest ministers do not have such a mandate, and therefore the text should rather "recognize the importance" of mobilizing forest-related finance.

On enhancing capacity building, some delegates preferred not including "technical and scientific cooperation." Several delegates objected to text on strengthening the UNFF and its Secretariat, saying it is not appropriate for the declaration to address such administrative issues. Delegates adjourned for brief informal discussions to "iron out" disagreement on the placement of issues, including resource mobilization, capacity building and administrative arrangements. They agreed to bracket the relevant text to allow coordination with WG2.

Text was discussed regarding collaboration between UNFF and other forest-related conventions. There was general agreement to invite delegates at the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in July 2015, to consider SFM as one of their priorities. It was also agreed to invite the UNFCCC to consider the importance of forests and SFM in their forest-related outcomes. On this

issue, however, some urged deleting detail on encouraging the inclusion of forests and SFM in Member States' intended nationally determined contributions to climate change mitigation. One delegate reiterated their preference for shorter, more concise text that leaves detail to the resolution. Another noted discomfort with the resulting language relating to the UNFCCC, saying it "loses the spirit" of the original text.

There was discussion on language inviting other conventions to strengthen their collaboration—consistent with their mandates—with the UNFF and CPF, and/or to consider the outputs of the IAF in their conventions' work. Delegates agreed on text that invites the CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC to actively "collaborate" with the CPF and UNFF, where appropriate.

Delegates agreed, *ad referendum*, to invite existing and emerging forest-related financing initiatives—including the GEF and GCF—to support implementation of SFM, consistent with their mandates.

On text for ministers to meet again in 2020, some delegates said the paragraph should contain a vision for the meeting, suggesting that ministers "meet to explore other options to further strengthen forest management at the international level, including the conclusion of an international convention on forests beyond 2030." Many objected, saying this precludes the outcomes of that meeting. Some suggested that the future meeting be held in conjunction with the review of the future IAF, while others stressed that ministers do not need to commit to meet again. The text remained bracketed.

WG1 reconvened in the late afternoon to be presented with a "Co-Chairs' Proposal" for the draft ministerial declaration to be further considered by the WG, saying it contains compromises on many concerns that had been highlighted throughout the text. After further informal consultations, Co-Chair Wu invited delegates to present major concerns only, noting the Co-Chairs' reluctance to reopen the text for further negotiation. Unresolved concerns highlighted by delegates included: a statement that a ministerial declaration needs to contain actionable commitments; a call to "promote" rather than "advance" a common understanding of SFM; a disagreement on whether or not ministers should commit to considering a legally binding instrument on all types of forest; and a call to delete reference to "Mother Earth" as a common expression for planet earth. It was noted that the morning's contact group made progress on many

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paragraphs, and that it would be time-efficient to include such changes in the Co-Chairs' proposed text. Discussions continued into the night.

WG2: A contact group was established in order to address: establishing a CITA and articulating its functions; a CITA's modalities; and catalyzing implementation and financing.

On the potential CITA, the contact group co-facilitators clarified that the proposed committee, regardless of its final form, is intended to be a body that operates during intersessional periods. They said it would be structurally different from previous UNFF bodies as it would: be permanent; have a more open membership; and have a set of defined functions rather than one particular task.

One delegate expressed strong support for a CITA, saying it could play a significant role in implementing the NLBI by, *inter alia*, making recommendations to the UNFF on implementation, and increasing the efficiency of financing mechanisms.

Several delegates opposed creating new entities, saying the current UNFF structure could fulfil these different functions. Some cautioned against creating a new body that will have budgetary implications without clarity on how it will be financially supported. One delegate reiterated a proposal on an alternative restructuring of the Forum's work, noting the proposed work envisaged for the potential CITA could still be valid. Another suggested an alternative name for the proposed CITA, saying that there is a need to be clear that the UNFF is not an implementation body.

There was also concern regarding a proposed paragraph on having a CITA make recommendations on enhancing policy coherence and strengthening a common international understanding of SFM. It was noted that such a function could potentially lead to a reformulation of the current understanding of SFM. Some noted that a definition of SFM is already captured in the NLBI. Others said that the paragraph aims to encourage outreach to a wider audience.

On who such a body would serve and for what purpose, some delegates suggested more generic language listing its potential functions, which should then be cross-checked with those of the UNFF. They also said that the language on its functions can be refined once the relevant discussions have been completed.

Among the actors who would be served by this body, some delegates called for explicit reference to Member States. Others noted that this is implicit in the reference to UNFF contained in the text. Some also urged for mention of regional and subregional platforms. Delegates agreed that the body will also serve the CPF and its member organizations.

Delegates chose to maintain a paragraph on the need to advance the science-policy interface and facilitate sharing of knowledge and best practices, noting the importance of retaining text that specifies the type of knowledge being sought.

Discussions then turned to whether a new subsidiary body is necessary for the UNFF to enhance the implementation of its functions. One delegate explained the rationale behind their proposal to replace a CITA with a previously proposed model based on the UNCSD, saying that they wish to avoid creating a new body whose role and function is not completely understood. This prompted the question of whether other delegates are "wedded" to the idea of establishing a UNFF subsidiary body for implementation. Some responded that they saw a strong need to emphasize implementation and wanted a "break" from the status quo. They suggested the proposed subsidiary body could signal

such a new way forward. Other delegates echoed this call for change and assured that they did not intend UNFF11's decisions on implementation and technical advice to be a "window-dressing exercise."

This discussion led to new text being proposed for delegates' consideration which, in order to improve the exchange of information and quality of discussions, would have the UNFF meet in odd years for implementation discussions and technical advice "in order to focus Member States' attention on these issues."

Several delegates said that this reformulation, if anchored on a permanent basis, captures most of their concerns. One delegate also emphasized the importance of implementing a few tasks well, rather than having a "shopping list" of poorly implemented activities.

Delegates then moved into discussions on the proposed modalities for a new implementation body, including who should chair it, and how its meetings and delegates' participation should be funded. Some wished to bracket such details as long as other aspects remained undecided.

Reporting back on the contact group's morning and afternoon discussions, it was noted that the group had made headway on the question of retaining implementation and technical advice functions within the UNFF as opposed to establishing a new subsidiary body for this purpose. Areas of general agreement included: the need for intersessional work on these issues and a body to facilitate this; and the type of work such a body might carry out.

WG2 Co-Chair Granholm introduced the Vice-Chairs' proposal on the draft resolution. He explained it aims to streamline delegates' comments, noting that text on catalyzing financing for implementation was not included as this topic is still under the contact group's consideration. He also noted the original section on monitoring, assessment and reporting has been split into two sections: provisions on monitoring, assessment and reporting on the NLBI have been retained in the section; and language on linkages with the post-2015 development agenda has been moved to a later section. Co-Chair Granholm requested more guidance on the follow-up to UNFF11. Delegates were invited to provide feedback on the Vice-Chairs' proposal on Wednesday morning, in parallel to the high-level segment.

In the evening, the contact group reconvened to consider text on the MoI. Discussions continued into the night.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates arrived red-eyed on Tuesday morning having been "burning the midnight oil." They continued to blearily contemplate both texts as the two working groups, having broken into smaller contact groups, steadily resolved bracketed text.

One delegate, observing the impasses in WG1, suggested this could be due to two principal types of negotiators—one predominantly composed of foresters, and another composed of lawyers and seasoned negotiators.

Recalling an African proverb that "when two bulls fight, the grass suffers," some delegates expressed concern that after another night of long, hard negotiations, it may well be the trees that suffer. They suggested that the substantive divisions between the two types of negotiators may not be overcome in time for clean text to be presented to ministers when the high-level segment commences on Wednesday morning.