Earth Negotiations Bulletin

UNFF AHEG FINAL

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Online at http://www.iisd.ca/forestry/unff/ecosoc/aheg1/

Vol. 13 No. 200 *Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)* *Saturday, 30 April 2016*

FIRST MEETING OF THE UN FORUM ON FORESTS' OPEN-ENDED INTERGOVERNMENTAL *AD HOC* EXPERT GROUP ON THE INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENT ON FORESTS STRATEGIC PLAN: 25-27 APRIL 2016

The UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) held the first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental *Ad Hoc* Expert Group (AHEG1) on Matters Referred to in Paragraph 48 of UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 2015/33 "International Arrangement on Forests Beyond 2015" from 25-27 April 2016 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Over 130 participants attended the AHEG meeting, including representatives from 56 Member States, eight members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, one regional organization, and four representatives of Major Groups.

Just prior to the AHEG1 meeting the first meeting of the twelfth session of the Forum (UNFF12) met briefly to elect its Bureau.

AHEG1 explored the required strategic approaches and actions to achieve the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) objectives, including the mission, vision, communication strategy, possible goals, targets and priority actions, the roles of IAF components, and the organizational structure of the Strategic Plan; suggestions for the Quadrennial Programme of Work (4POW) for 2017-2020; possible elements for the "framework for reviewing implementation" of the Strategic Plan; and planned follow-up activities leading to AHEG2. The AHEG discussed and took note of a draft Co-Chairs' summarizing these discussions.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNFF

The UN Forum on Forests 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, ECOSOC, in resolution 2000/35, established the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF), including 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 sustainable forest management (SFM); provide for continued policy development and dialogue among governments, international organizations and Major Groups, as well as 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's 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 Collaborative Partnership on Forests (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

IN THIS ISSUE

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Keith Ripley, Lynn Finnegan and Ana-Maria Lebada. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org>. The Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are the European Union, the Government of Switzerland (the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN)) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. General Support for the *Bulletin* during 2016 is provided by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, SWAN International, the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Japanese Ministry of Environment (through the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies - IGES), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Funding for translation of the *Bulletin* into French has been provided by the Government of France, the Wallonia, Québec, and the International Organization of La Francophonie/Institute for Sustainable Development of La Francophonie (IOF/IFDD). The opinions expressed in the *Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD or other donors. Excerpts from the *Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications with appropriate academic citation. For information on the *Bulletin*, including requests to provide reporting services, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <kimo@iisd.org>, +1-646-536-7556 or 300 East 56th St., 11D, New York, NY 10022 USA.

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recommended establishing three *ad hoc* expert groups (AHEGs) to provide technical advice to UNFF on: approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR); 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 (NFPs) or equivalent processes; the IAF facilitated and promoted countries' implementation, focusing on means of implementation (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.

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; MAR, 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 (NLBI). UNFF6 also set four global objectives on forests (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 NLBI 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. 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 would 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 it should 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.

UNFF11: UNFF11 was held from 4-15 May 2015 in New York. The Forum forwarded a resolution to ECOSOC recommending, *inter alia*: renaming the NLBI the "United Nations Forest Instrument"; strengthening and extending the IAF to 2030; deciding that the IAF is composed of the UNFF and its Member States, the Secretariat of the Forum, the CPF, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (G3FNet) and the UNFF Trust Fund; deciding to set clear priorities for the Network in the 2017-2030 IAF Strategic Plan; and convening an open-ended

intergovernmental AHEG to develop proposals on a replacement for the reference to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the UN Forest Instrument with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, the Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2030, and the quadrennial programme of work (4POW) for the period 2017-2020.

ECOSOC approved the UNFF11 recommendations on 22 July 2015 in Resolution 2015/33, and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) gave effect to the changes recommended by the Council on 22 December 2015 in resolution 70/199.

REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF UNFF12

On Monday morning, 25 April, Srećko Juričić (Croatia), UNFF Bureau Vice Chair, convened the first meeting of UNFF12, explaining that the sole purpose of this short meeting was the election of new officers for the UNFF Bureau. He announced that the Asia-Pacific Group had nominated Wu Zhimin (China), the Eastern European Group had nominated Tomas Krejzak (Czech Republic), the Latin American and Caribbean Group had nominated Clarissa Souza Della Nina (Brazil), the Western European and Others Group nominated Peter Besseau (Canada), and the African Group had not yet submitted a nomination.

The meeting elected the nominees by acclamation, with Besseau as Chair and the others as Vice-Chairs. It was agreed that once the African Group submitted a nominee, that person could serve on the Bureau on a provisional basis until he/she is formally elected at the start of UNFF12 session in May 2017.

The meeting closed at 10:15 am.

AHEG1 REPORT

On Monday morning, 25 April, new UNFF12 Bureau Chair Peter Besseau opened the meeting and announced the two nominations for AHEG Co-Chairs, Hans Hoogeveen (Netherlands) and Gholamhossein Dehghani (Iran), who were elected by acclamation.

Co-Chair Hoogeveen said the AHEG should strive to achieve the third milestone for forests after the UN Forest Instrument and G3FNet, namely the IAF Strategic Plan 2017-2030. He outlined the tasks of AHEG as developing proposals on: a replacement for the reference to the MDGs in the UN Forest Instrument with appropriate references to the SDGs; the Strategic Plan for 2017-2030; and the 4POW for 2017-2020.

Co-Chair Dehghani urged creating a Strategic Plan that is an actionable framework that can be implemented on the ground. He emphasized the need to maximize and tap into the potential of the G3FNet to support activities, and closely collaborate with financial mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Manoel Sobral Filho, Director, UNFF Secretariat, noted that in order to facilitate the AHEG's work, the Secretariat: engaged experts to prepare a background paper on elements for the Strategic Plan; convened an expert group to discuss possible elements of the Strategic Plan; held a public forum in parallel to the expert group to exchange views and ideas on actions needed to promote SFM in the context of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. He also highlighted: forest-related SDGs and their indicators; forest-related provisions in the Paris Agreement; the UNGA resolution on the UNFF; four new Secretariat posts; the initiation of G3FNet operations, including two national and three regional capacity-building workshops and the preparation of project proposals for multilateral donors regarding Cameroon and Senegal; Secretariat engagement with the GCF and GEF; and the 2016 International Day of Forests.

Peter Csoka, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), delivering a statement on behalf of René Castro Salazar, CPF Chair and FAO Assistant Director-General, highlighted the importance of forests in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of which SDG 6 ("Ensure access to water and sanitation for all") and SDG 15 ("Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss") speak directly to forests. He highlighted that forests will be essential to achieving 14 of the 17 SDGs, and many of the targets in SDGs 6 and 15 (6.6; 15.1; 15.2; and 15.b). He stressed that the Strategic Plan will be an important tool in unlocking the potential of forests for supporting the SDGs' implementation, for which the AHEG could identify key issues.

Co-Chair Hoogeveen introduced the proposed agenda for the meeting (E/CN.18/2016/AHEG/1) and the provisional organization of work, which were adopted without amendment.

The Netherlands, for the European Union (EU), said the meeting should provide a clear understanding of the key elements for the Strategic Plan and the 4POW for 2017-2020, including the table of contents and a proposed implementation timeline. He stressed the need to ensure clear deliverables for AHEG2 and give "enough guidance" to the Bureau for setting the Strategic Plan modalities, while drawing on CPF expertise.

TASKS OF THE EXPERT GROUP

On Monday morning AHEG members listened to and discussed presentations on the background paper on elements for the Strategic Plan, and the outcome of the March 2016 expert panel on the Strategic Plan. On Monday afternoon and into Tuesday morning they began discussing: the required strategic approaches and actions to achieve the IAF objectives, including the mission, vision, communication strategy and possible goals and targets of the Strategic Plan; and suggestions for the 4POW for 2017-2020. On Tuesday afternoon and into Wednesday discussion turned to the elements for the "framework for reviewing implementation" of the Strategic Plan. On Wednesday afternoon the AHEG discussed and took note of a draft Co-Chairs' summary of AHEG1.

BACKGROUND PAPER ON "ELEMENTS FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2030": Stephanie Caswell, Independent Consultant, presented a background paper on "Elements for the Strategic Plan 2017-2030." She suggested the Strategic Plan should include: IAF mission and vision statements; an introduction that sets the stage; a "strategic approach" aligned with the five IAF objectives and incorporating existing forest-related goals, objectives, targets and actions; an implementation framework; and a review framework. She suggested that, if not in the main body of the Strategic Plan, annexes could include the 17 SDGs; SDG 15 targets and target

6.6; priority actions; a communication strategy and highlights; the current 4POW; and indicators to measure progress on the Strategic Plan targets.

SUMMARY DISCUSSIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL ON THE IAF STRATEGIC PLAN: Toshimasa Masuyama, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan, presented a summary of the discussions of the expert panel on the IAF Strategic Plan, held in Tokyo, Japan, from 7-11 March 2016. He explained that the panel specifically considered and exchanged views on three aspects: possible mission and vision statements; a possible table of contents for the Plan; and possible goals and targets and implementation framework of the Plan. He presented an illustrative matrix developed by the panel organized around six possible goals aligned with the five IAF objectives and encompassing the 4 GOFs, as well as SDG target 15.2 and MOI.

DISCUSSION ON THE REQUIRED STRATEGIC APPROACHES AND ACTION TO ACHIEVE THE IAF OBJECTIVES: In the opening general discussion on this item, China emphasized that the Strategic Plan should focus on implementation and provide guidance to national governments. He urged that the Plan address the realities of policy fragmentation at all levels. The EU said coherence must be at the forefront of the Strategic Plan, and emphasized that fragmentation of global forest policy must be avoided.

Indonesia highlighted the need to improve coherence between UNFF and institutions that set the targets to be included in the Strategic Plan. India highlighted the need for the Strategic Plan to have a clear strategy on implementation. Switzerland called for a simple and concise Strategic Plan that communicates the IAF's function and objectives to the world.

Canada noted the unprecedented prominence and credibility of forests in current international discussions, including the climate change and sustainable development agendas, and urged the AHEG and UNFF to capitalize on this opportunity.

Caswell agreed that brevity is important, but pointed out that there is usually an inherent tension between brevity and ambition.

Chile emphasized the importance of communications and capacity building. The US supported China's call for simplicity and usefulness, and urged continued focus on what role to set for UNFF and determining what UNFF can do.

The European Commission urged that the Strategic Plan be "attractive, effective and efficient," and clearly demonstrate added value to the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and why the IAF beneficial to their processes.

Independent consultant Ivan Tomaselli agreed with the US that the Strategic Plan should be viewed as an organizing tool and set of priorities.

Brazil said that clear indications of MOI should be spelled out in the Strategic Plan and 4POW.

Independent consultant Caswell said a key question facing the AHEG is how to divide content between the Strategic Plan and the 4POW, since keeping the Plan concise and powerful would require more details to be provided in the 4POW.

Strategic Plan Title: The Republic of Korea called for first identifying the name of the Strategic Plan and then going into its mission. He proposed, supported by Chile, China, the EU, India and Switzerland, "The UN Strategic Plan on Forests." Caswell said the proposed title would be a good start to strengthening the profile of the IAF.

Zambia, supported by India, requested indicating in the title the period for which the plan is going to be implemented. Ukraine supported the title "UN Strategic Plan on Forests 2017-2030." Zambia suggested removing "UN" from the title, to which India objected.

Mission and Vision: The EU, supported by Switzerland, suggested agreeing on mission and vision statements after identifying the goals and targets for the Strategic Plan. They suggested as a mission statement: "For the benefit of present and future generations: to promote policy dialogue and encourage inter-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration for the achievement of the sustainable management of all types of forests; to contribute to the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda including the SDGs; to halt deforestation in cooperation with other policy areas and prevent forest degradation; and to strengthen long-term political commitment towards all these objectives."

Brazil proposed "To enhance cooperation, coordination and political commitment at all levels to promote the implementation of SFM."

As for a vision, the EU proposed "A world where forests are sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development and benefit to all." Brazil proposed "The world's forests are protected and sustainably managed, providing economic, social and environmental benefits for all." Switzerland suggested "Forests are protected, sustainably used and restored and their services are recognized and valued by all." Chile proposed "Forest ecosystems have multiple benefits that constitute the basis of SFM."

Children and Youth suggested drawing from the Youth Vision contained in the XIV World Forestry Congress' Durban Declaration.

Tuvalu proposed including language on respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and other forest dwellers.

Co-Chair Dehghani said the mission and vision must be clear and self-explanatory, not open to multiple interpretations.

Goals and Targets: The EU supported the six goals proposed by the Tokyo expert panel as a "good basis" for discussions, making clear there are many targets below those goals, among which priorities need to be set.

Brazil, supported by Ukraine, said it could not support any new goals and targets beyond the existing SDGs and GOFs, in particular goals for REDD+ (Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation of existing forest carbon stocks, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks) or carbon sinks.

The International Family Forestry Alliance said the draft Strategic Plan should: recognize the role of Major Groups in the UNFF process; emphasize the role of the small- and medium-sized farm producers and their organizations in the agriculture and forest sectors; contain concrete and measurable targets

and indicators that would enable time-bound assessment of progress and achievements; emphasize the country, regional, and sub-regional levels; and highlight that the locus of primary monitoring should be at the regional level.

The US, supported by the EU and Switzerland, proposed using as basis for discussion the matrix developed by the Tokyo expert panel.

Switzerland submitted a proposal for a possible format, outline, and content of the Strategic Plan based on the format of the Strategic Plan 2016-2021 of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, adopted by its 12th Conference of Parties in 2015.

Germany highlighted the need for the Strategic Plan to define concrete deliverables, attract external actors to work with UNFF and provide concrete guiding objectives for CPF member organizations. Switzerland emphasized the need for coordination within national governments, reminding participants that it is the same governments working within UNFF, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the CBD and these processes "are not meant to be separate worlds."

On the time frame of the Strategic Plan's targets, Zambia noted the different time frames involved in forest-related goals and targets, such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which end in 2020.

Japan pointed to the flexibility of time frames within the SDG targets, and Japan and China suggested the Strategic Plan allows for such flexibility so original time frames are used for targets already defined elsewhere.

The Science and Technological Community questioned the 2030 time frame of the Strategic Plan given the changing dynamics of climate change and social contexts.

The US highlighted the need for flexibility in the Strategic Plan's targets to allow for states who are not signatories to other forest-related processes.

On the scope of the Strategic Plan's targets, Sweden asked whether they should include targets beyond the GOFs, Aichi Biodiversity Targets, SDGs, and climate-related targets.

China supported the inclusion of non-UNFF targets into the Strategic Plan, but said it needs to explain what value UNFF can add to these targets.

Japan suggested many forest-related targets could be set within the goal of enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits.

Iran stressed the need to reflect interlinkages with the 2030 Agenda, the Global Forest Action Plan, the Paris Agreement, and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. He also called for addressing emerging issues in the Strategic Plan, such as dust storms.

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) reminded AHEG members of the CPF's role to provide scientific and technical advice to UNFF, suggesting this role become a key component of the Strategic Plan.

The World Bank highlighted the importance of considering the impacts of other sectors on forestry, including agriculture and mining. The GEF highlighted that its goals and targets are in line with the four GOFs.

The Science and Technological Community called for taking into consideration the challenges identified by UNFF11 when devising the Strategic Plan, including a lack of resources and the lack of cooperation among stakeholders.

Communications Strategy: Switzerland expressed concern about the organization of work's reference to a communications strategy as part of the Strategic Plan. She suggested that the Plan is already a communications tool, so a communications strategy is not needed *per se*, but rather a good document to communicate. The EU supported the suggestion, saying communication of both the Plan and the 4POW should simply build on existing communication networks.

China, supported by India and the US, urged formulating a Plan first, then worrying about a communications strategy. He suggested that the Plan should be viewed as a public document, whereas any communication strategy should be an internal document.

The Science and Technological Community said any communications strategy should: start with a comprehensive analysis of stakeholders; use existing communication networks; and give Major Groups a central role in raising awareness about the UN Forest Instrument.

Children and Youth called for being involved in devising the Strategic Plan's communications strategy.

Quadrennial Programme of Work 2017-2020: The EU suggested defining strategic goals first before deciding on the 4POW. The US agreed, saying the 4POW could provide supplemental details to the Strategic Plan.

The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) stressed the need for the 4POW to take into consideration the interlinkages between UNFF sessions, the CPF, and G3FNet. He called for strong coordination between the Strategic Plan, the 4POW and the CPF work plan.

FAO underlined the need for aligning the 4POW with the FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and the SDGs reporting processes.

Canada said the 4POW should identify ways in which the AHEG members can work together intersessionally, including potential structures and relevant modalities.

IUFRO noted that the 4POW could include details on the science-policy interface to allow the scientific community to effectively feed in the needed information.

China proposed the 4POW: further improve the IAF following the UNFF11 recommendations; complete the UNFF transformation; improve CPF working mechanisms; establish the connection between the IAF and the SDGs; identify the themes of upcoming UNFF sessions; and identify the resources needed for, and the role of, the IAF components.

Indonesia said the SDGs could be among the "urgent elements" of the 4POW, which could be related to CPF efforts to streamline and coordinate reporting under UNFF. He suggested the CPF consider preparing input for the SDGs implementation process.

The EU said the 4POW should contain a clear list of key actions and identify the actors responsible for them. He underscored that the 4POW should be aligned with the thematic follow-up of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, through ECOSOC.

Germany said that it is "not of a set mind" on the 4POW, but suggested it should feature: work on improving and strengthening the CPF; determining any deliverables from Major Groups; operationalizing the G3FNet; and reacting to the Paris Agreement by defining how to build coherence on the role of forests in the climate context and in the SDGs' implementation.

Priority Actions: Delegates considered: whether priority actions should be drawn solely from the UN Forest Instrument and other existing forest-related targets, or also include newly negotiated actions; and whether priority actions would be best placed in the Strategic Plan or the 4POW.

On the most appropriate placing for the priority actions, the EU, US, Canada, Finland, India, Sweden and Croatia supported outlining priority actions in the 4POWs, while keeping the Strategic Plan concise without too much detail. Switzerland and Japan urged for the inclusion of priority actions in the Strategic Plan as well as the 4POWs, with Japan opining we need to "revitalize UNFF" from a "talk shop" into a more substantive coordinating body.

On the inclusion of new priority actions beyond those already decided in the UN Forest Instrument, UNFF and other forest-related processes, Finland and India cautioned against adding too many new actions. The Philippines highlighted the importance of capturing regional concerns, and Sweden and Ukraine urged for priority actions to give flexibility for national and regional actions.

On the content of priority actions, the Philippines urged consideration of, *inter alia*, water, indigenous peoples, and women and children, while the US requested the inclusion of transparency and governance issues. Finland called for the inclusion of, *inter alia*, forest governance, the role of Major Groups, and private sector financing. Chile proposed the inclusion of protected areas, participation of local and indigenous communities in forest conservation, and capacity building for achieving SFM. India highlighted the critical nature of resource mobilization on SFM.

Germany suggested using the Tokyo matrix as the basis for discussions. He pointed out goals 5 and 6 of the Tokyo matrix, on coherence and governance frameworks, and highlighted the importance of other elements such as strengthening the CPF's operations and interlinkages among targets.

China presented two options: finishing the Strategic Plan at tier 2 (targets), and then identifying the priority actions in the 4POW; or keeping the current proposal of three tiers (which includes priority actions) and only highlight specific activities in the 4POW.

The Republic of Korea noted that the Strategic Plan should not be too specific but only conceptual. He added it should include the SDGs and the GEF, as the world wants to see the role of forests in achieving the SDGs.

The GEF explained that the CPF is already undertaking measures to strengthen its operations and will come up with a CPF work plan, which could provide potential for alignment with the Strategic Plan.

ITTO stressed the need for including actions that support: the creation of enabling environments for financing; and improved access to financing.

Finland, supported by Germany, invited experts to carefully consider what will make the Strategic Plan "strategic." She noted that the SDGs provide UNFF with the opportunity to become more visible in the new international playing field, and thus the Strategic Plan should highlight cross-cutting issues with the 2030 Agenda, including gender equality, poverty eradication, partnerships, and participation, in particular indigenous peoples and civil society.

The World Bank called for including the areas of action in the Strategic Plan, which should be an effective communication tool with the political community.

Switzerland proposed clustering the targets of the Strategic Plan. She expressed support for China's proposal to include general actions in the Strategic Plan and relevant activities in the 4POW. She suggested the Strategic Plan address the role of forests in fighting climate change.

Brazil expressed support for having a conceptual Strategic Plan that could identify the existing forest-related international goals, targets and indicators, and present them in a clear and concise way, to provide an overall picture.

Ukraine suggested the Co-Chairs: draft the Strategic Plan and the 4POW; then organize online consultations; and then further discuss them with the AHEG experts.

The EU proposed two additional priority action areas: creating an enabling environment for private sector investment and engagement, including smallholder farmers; and facilitating the engagement of Major Groups at the national and global levels.

New Zealand suggested aspects that would make the Strategic Plan "strategic": ambition, vision, engagement, and addressing existing gaps. She proposed the title "UNFF Strategic Plan on Forests," with a time frame.

Iran said more SDGs could be reflected in the Strategic Plan, such as SDG 1 on poverty eradication or SDG 17 on MOI.

ELEMENTS OF THE "FRAMEWORK FOR REVIEWING IMPLEMENTATION" OF THE IAF STRATEGIC PLAN: Co-Chair Hoogeveen asked independent consultant Caswell to open this topic by summarizing the relevant section of the background paper. Caswell said the paper highlighted that the cycle for the UN Forest Instrument national reporting should take into account, and perhaps be synchronized with, the five-year data collection process and publication schedule of future FRA reports (FRA 2020, 2025 and 2030). Regarding reporting on progress in implementing UNFF resolutions and decisions, she said that while the baseline could be set at any time, it might be useful to set it at 2015, when the UNFF11 resolutions and Ministerial Declaration were adopted. As for reviews of the Strategic Plan, she said there were two options: review at the end of each 4POW in 2020, 2024 and 2029, or review as part of the mid-term and final reviews of the effectiveness of the IAF in 2024 and 2030.

Resource Needs for Implementation of the IAF Strategic Plan and the 4POW: Brazil said MAR should be done on a voluntary basis, taking into account the availability of resources. He noted the burden faced by developing countries reporting to various organizations on issues associated with forests. He suggested, supported by Argentina, that the Strategic Plan include a notation of the MOI for each goal and target. Co-Chair

Hoogeveen suggested a separate column, alongside each goal and target, indicating resources. The US noted this idea had been discussed in Tokyo, and pointed out that the UNFF11 resolution requests setting out resource needs in each 4POW.

Priorities for the Global Financing Facilitation Network: Co-Chair Hoogeveen asked independent consultant Caswell to open this topic by summarizing the relevant section of the background paper. Caswell said the background paper suggested five priorities for the G3FNet: increase the capacity of and assist countries, on request, to access existing and emerging forest-related funds, including the GEF and the GCF and other financing opportunities, to implement SFM; increase the capacity of and assist countries, on request, to design forest financing and investment plans and strategies to mobilize resources for SFM; identify ways to ensure better coordination across existing and emerging forest financing instruments and mechanisms; advise countries, on request, on the framework of policies, incentive measures and regulations needed to create enabling environments to attract investment in SFM by the private sector, local and indigenous communities and other forest owners and managers; and serve as a clearinghouse on existing, new and emerging financing opportunities and as a tool for sharing lessons learned and best practices from successful projects.

The EU said the G3FNet has a "paramount' role to play in facilitating the mobilization of resources for SFM, and the Strategic Plan should define clear priorities by focusing on capacity building for strategic forest finance planning and for effective resource mobilization at the national level in countries with special needs and circumstances. He called for the G3FNet to enhance coordination among the various MOI aspects of the 2030 Agenda, the Rio Conventions and other relevant processes. He suggested that in the second term of the Strategic Plan, an organization-led initiative or country-led initiative (CLI) should be carried out to identify major challenges and opportunities for accessing major financial sources.

Farmers stressed that when the G3FNet works on identifying private sector resource requirements, it should define "private sector" to include small- and medium-scale forest and farm producers. He supported the EU idea of a CLI to look into major challenges and opportunities for access to major financial sources, but urged that it be convened as soon as possible, rather than wait for the second term of the Strategic Plan, so as to inform the first 4POW.

Chile said resources should be identified that are directly related to the Strategic Plan, especially for developing countries seeking to put it into action. Supported by Ukraine, she stressed capacity building as a top priority for the G3FNet. Switzerland cautioned that while capacity building help is surely needed, UNFF is primarily a policy forum.

China, supported by the US and Germany, stressed that the G3FNet is not a donor agency or funding mechanism, but rather a facilitative process. Referencing the UNFF11 resolution, he suggested the G3FNet focus on: assisting Member States in designing and applying projects from existing and emerging financial sources; assisting Member States in developing national forest financing strategies; enhancing Member States' capacity in raising and using finance; and collecting and sharing forest financing information, including through establishment of a forest financing database.

Germany suggested that helping developing countries prepare project proposals goes beyond what could be considered facilitation. He urged considering what specific target we want to achieve, such as no barrier to forest financing by 2024, and then determining how G3FNet can best help achieve it. South Africa, for the Group of 77 and China, said G3FNet should catalyze and mobilize funds. He suggested formulating an indicator regarding any G3FNet priorities that might be adopted, such as ensuring access to resources for Major Groups.

UNFF Director Sobral Filho reminded AHEG members that ECOSOC resolution 2015/33 says that one of the core functions of the Forum is to "mobilize, catalyze and facilitate access to financial, technical and scientific resources." He also noted that the resolution calls for a report in 2018 containing recommendations on ways to further increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the facilitative process. He said UNFF does not develop projects for funding, but rather provides assistance, and if there are limits Member States wish to set on such assistance, they should be very clear about it in the recommendations to UNFF12.

Suriname recalled that what the facilitative process set out to achieve was to identify existing financial mechanisms and help developing countries access them. He suggested that to meet this goal G3FNet can work on a few projects that demonstrate the way to gain access, and could do studies that show how to deliver resources to countries with special needs, such as small island developing states. He also suggested G3FNet can best be thought of as a "matchmaker" pairing projects with funding sources.

Iran requested the Secretariat provide a mapping of the current forest funding mechanisms.

FAO announced that G3FNet is going to be one of the key aspects to be discussed during the CPF retreat in June 2016.

Explaining that in order for entities to get financing from the GCF they need to be accredited to the GCF, which entails a lot of requirements, ITTO called for G3FNet to assist developing countries in fulfilling these requirements.

The GEF recalled UNFF11 concluded that the funding exists but it is not being fully accessed or utilized by countries. Noting that G3FNet has started working with the GEF, he called for countries to also step forward by providing better coordination mechanisms at the national level.

MAR on the Implementation of the UN Forest Instrument and the IAF Strategic Plan: UNFF Director Sobral Filho noted that the ECOSOC resolution calls for consulting Member States and others on the cycle and formatting of MAR as part of the Strategic Plan. Switzerland noted that the CPF already is looking at harmonized reporting. She suggested it would be difficult to develop a new type of reporting on forests without first knowing the status of CPF efforts.

Many experts urged making use of existing reporting processes and reducing reporting burdens, with the EU noting the value of FAO, FRA, CBD, ITTO, UNFCCC, REDD+, FOREST EUROPE and other regional reporting processes.

The GEF noted the opportunity for the Strategic Plan and first 4POW to align with the GEF-7 four-year cycle starting in 2018. FAO offered to support the Secretariat in streamlining reporting requirements with existing processes in FAO and other CPF member organizations.

The Science and Technological Community called for greater inclusion of Major Groups in national reporting to facilitate a more accurate picture of what is happening on the ground.

The Republic of Korea emphasized the need to communicate the importance of forests to all stakeholders in order to develop tools to fulfill the Strategic Plan. Japan called for better use of UNFF national reporting, and Saint Lucia commended FAO's FRA as a useful method of communicating MAR data.

Ukraine underlined the voluntary nature of national reporting and Saint Lucia and Tuvalu highlighted the importance of financial and technological assistance to achieve MAR. Tuvalu noted the need to provide capacity-building support to Major Groups so they can assist national reporting efforts.

IUFRO noted it was leading the CPF Policy Learning Initiative, examining how global initiatives translate into policies at the national level, which IUFRO could share.

Germany said the review of the Strategic Plan should be a future element of the IAF review framework. The UN Forest Instrument deserves extra thought at this session, he added, noting that not much has happened on it since its adoption in 2007.

Japan said reporting is not an objective but a tool. He proposed adding another "R" to MAR, for "Review" (of the reporting).

Contribution to Follow-up, Review and Implementation of the Forest-Related SDGs and Targets of the 2030 Agenda, under HLPF: Sweden noted SDG follow-up discussions are ongoing, and there will be a clearer picture by AHEG2. Indonesia expressed hope that UNFF be more proactively linked to the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) process.

The EU suggested strengthening the implementation at the national level by capitalizing on synergies, like aligning the UNFF voluntary national reviews with the UNFCCC Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs).

UNFF Director Sobral Filho explained that the Secretariat does not have the power to influence decision-making in the SDGs follow-up process. The Secretariat noted that it had highlighted to ECOSOC the role of functional commissions for thematic reviews within the HLPF, UNFF being one of them.

Sweden expressed support for EU's proposal on following the example of the UNFCCC INDCs, to enable a more bottom-up approach.

China said the Strategic Plan provides a good opportunity to establish the link between UNFF and the SDGs. He added that MAR should contribute to this by focusing not only on the implementation of the UN Forest Instrument, but also on monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Indonesia stressed that the SDGs provide the opportunity for raising UNFF's profile in the international arena. He requested more information on the role of the ECOSOC functional commissions in the SDGs' implementation and review, given that the Strategic Plan is going to incorporate many of the SDGs' targets.

The UNFF Secretariat noted the need to await the outcomes of the HLPF and current negotiations on the SDGs' follow-up and review process, taking place under UNGA, before assessing UNFF's substantive contributions to the SDGs' follow-up process.

Suriname underlined that the UNFCCC and its INDCs focused on forests and climate change. He explained that there are many more other aspects to forests, including social and economic ones. He stressed the need for coherent reporting and emphasized the importance of UNFF's regional dimension.

FAO underscored that forest data will contribute to the review of the SDG targets, 13 of which CPF members have taken the lead on.

Japan, supported by Iran, invited UNFF to think how to best contribute to the HLPF thematic reviews.

Germany highlighted the role of UNFF's ongoing policy and technical reviews in contributing to the follow-up process.

Finland underlined the need to take into consideration not only the SDGs, but rather all the elements of the 2030 Agenda, including the Declaration and the MOI. The inclusion of stakeholders is essential for implementation, she added.

Roles of UNFF, its Member States, UNFF Secretariat, CPF, G3FNet, Regional and Subregional Organizations, Major Groups and Other Stakeholders: The EU supported, *inter alia*, clearly defined CPF roles and priorities, and clear guidance on how regional processes will feed into global discussions.

Finland suggested the establishment of a peer review process to compare national experiences, gather regional messages, and transmit such knowledge to UNFF discussions.

Iran highlighted the need for the CPF to prepare its work plan in line with the Strategic Plan. FAO welcomed a Strategic Plan that provides strong guidance for CPF members.

On participation of Major Groups, Sweden lamented the unsatisfactory level of Major Group participation in previous UNFF sessions, and UNFF Director Sobral Filho acknowledged the need to improve Major Group participation, while lamenting the slow pace of ECOSOC accreditation for Major Group representatives. Many participants encouraged the Bureau and the Secretariat to explore creative methods to engage with all stakeholders, and Sweden proposed that "good examples" be gathered from other processes, including the Lima-Paris Action Agenda under the UNFCCC.

FAO said Major Group participation should be based on the additional expertise and knowledge they are representing, and the GEF noted their initiative-driven participation where Major Groups are invited to cooperate on specific topics.

The Major Group Partnership on Forests emphasized the need to enhance the capacity of Major Groups to engage internationally and to use international frameworks to "think global, act local." Children and Youth urged concrete timelines on how UNFF plans to gather the views of stakeholders not present at UNFF sessions.

Indonesia opined that Major Group participation is dependent on the relevance of UNFF discussions on national policy and action, noting that "implementation is the cure."

TABLE OF CONTENTS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN: Co-Chair Hoogeveen asked independent consultant Caswell to open this topic by summarizing the proposals from the background paper and the Tokyo expert panel. Caswell displayed a slide with the competing proposals, explaining that they were similar, but with the notable difference that the consultants' proposal decided to have separate sections for the review framework and for the implementation framework, whereas the expert panel proposal combined these sections.

Most AHEG members expressed general preference for the table of contents in the consultants' proposal, which had six sections in the following order: IAF mission and vision statements; introduction/scene setter; the "strategic approach" (aligned with the five IAF objectives and incorporating existing forest-related goals/objectives/targets/actions); the implementation framework; the review framework; and annexes, as needed.

However, Japan, supported by ITTO and Germany, pointed out that in the UNFF context the implementation and review frameworks are interlinked, so perhaps should be dealt with in a single section.

The EU suggested that a preface could be added containing an introductory note from the UN Secretary-General. Iran proposed a preamble on lessons learned, existing gaps, and challenges.

The Russian Federation proposed a six-chapter alternative structure: an introduction; a chapter delineating the vision, mission and strategic direction; a chapter on the role of forests in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; a chapter on maximizing the potential of key actions and players for ensuring SFM; a chapter on how various bodies and institutions should coordinate; and a chapter on the vision of "success."

Introduction: Ukraine, supported by China, Zambia and South Africa, called for putting the introduction first, before the mission and vision section. Saint Lucia suggested that the introduction could discuss guiding principles of the Strategic Plan.

Mission and Vision: China urged that the vision statement precede the mission statement.

Strategic Approach: Ghana suggested that this section contain specific actions on: forest degradation; afforestation; reforestation; plantations; governance, including policy and legislative reforms; strengthening the role of non-state actors, particularly those involved in forest management; and including forests in national accounts. Chile and India stressed the need to address natural/native forests and plantations. Brazil suggested identifying "strong strategic headlines" based on the GOFs and SDGs/targets and set out what is to be achieved for each "headline." Many experts making interventions stressed referencing the GOFs and SDGs in this section.

Implementation Framework: The EU suggested adding a paragraph on overarching principles for implementing the Strategic Plan, such as human rights, global partnership, empowerment of women and girls, poverty eradication, and the rights of indigenous peoples. Ukraine agreed with the idea of including overarching principles for implementation.

IUFRO suggested distinguishing between thematic goals and objectives and operational goals.

India called for guidance on the role of regional and subregional networks in implementing the Strategic Plan.

Chile, Iran, India, Zambia, South Africa and China suggested including MOI in this section, or as a new, separate section.

Review Framework: Iran proposed including guidance on the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan, perhaps in 2025.

Annexes: Chile suggested having an annex on the SDGs and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Tuvalu suggested putting targets and any actions that may be defined for the Strategic Plan in an annex, which could be adjusted and amended more readily as needed over its 13-year time frame. Ukraine underscored the need for annexes containing brief descriptions of international commitments on forests, as well as regional organizations and processes that work in support of the Strategic Plan.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES: On Wednesday morning Co-Chair Hoogeveen briefed AHEG members on the next steps in the process: the Co-Chairs will "fully involve" all countries and stakeholders in developing a proposal for the Strategic Plan based on the AHEG1inputs, the Tokyo matrix, and the consultants' paper; the Co-Chairs will provide AHEG members with "zero drafts" of the Strategic Plan and 4POW in June 2016; the AHEG members will then be given one and a half or two months to submit their written comments; based on those comments, the Co-Chairs will provide a revised "zero draft" at the end of August or early September; and the revised "zero draft" will constitute the basis for AHEG2 discussions.

Regarding AHEG2, Hoogeveen said: it should be organized in the first or second week of October 2016: the duration of the meeting will probably be one week, which will be dedicated to elaborations and reflections of the Co-Chairs' proposal; and the venue is still to be decided.

UNFF Director Sobral Filho announced that the back-to-back UNFF Working Group and Special Session, which must debate and endorse AHEG proposals before passing them on to UNFF12, is scheduled to take place from 16-20 January 2017 at UN Headquarters.

Finland, the Netherlands and China announced that they will contribute financially to supporting the participation of countries and stakeholders in AHEG2, with China specifying that it will increase its contribution by US$100,000.

CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY OF AHEG1: On Wednesday, Co-Chair Hoogeveen introduced the Co-Chairs' summary for discussion, stressing that it is not a negotiated text and the review is only to note factual changes or an element of the meeting's discussion not captured by the summary, which the Co-Chairs will take into consideration before finalizing the document and posting it on the UNFF webpage.

The summary contains sections on: general points; title; mission and vision; communication strategy; goals and targets; the 4POW for 2017-2020; actions; framework for reviewing implementation; contribution to the follow-up, review and implementation of forest-related SDGs and targets of the 2030

Agenda under the HLPF; priorities for G3FNet; resource needs; the roles of UNFF, its Member States, the UNFF Secretariat, CPF, G3FNet, regional and subregional organizations, Major Groups and other stakeholders; table of contents of the Strategic Plan; and follow-up activities.

The US, supported by Brazil and India, suggested including a general statement in the summary about AHEG member interventions emphasizing that all aspects of the Strategic Plan are voluntary and non-legally binding.

On "general points," the EU noted that the section omitted the suggestion to include the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Regarding the "title" section, Brazil noted that it had proposed referencing the GOFs.

Under "mission and vision," China suggested covering proposals for vision statements before addressing mission statement proposals.

Under "goals and targets," the EU noted that two goals it had suggested were not reflected, one on enabling environments for the private sector, the other on facilitating engagement of Major Groups. Co-Chair Hoogeveen asked the EU to provide specific text to the Secretariat.

Regarding cross-cutting issues that the Strategic Plan should include, Saint Lucia observed that this could be an open-ended list. Saint Lucia observed that while the list of cross-cutting issues could be an open-ended list, he called for it to be agreed by all AHEG members, and not left open for further discussion or interpretation. Finland requested adding as cross-cutting issues: human rights, climate change, and indigenous "peoples," not only communities. The Russian Federation underlined that only the participation of "relevant" stakeholders should be considered a cross-cutting issue, and opposed Finland's suggestion on indigenous "peoples," cautioning against "cherry-picking."

Under the summary section on the 4POW, Ukraine called for emphasizing the role of activities at the regional and subregional levels. On the actions that the 4POW should include, the EU proposed adding one on strengthening the role of Major Groups.

On cross-cutting issues the 4POW should include, Finland requested adding: partnership; participation; and gender equality and women's empowerment.

Under resource needs, Finland called for adding reference to domestic resources mobilization. On MOI actions to be included in the Strategic Plan and the 4POW, Brazil urged specifying resources for each of the goals and targets included in both the Strategic Plan and the 4POW.

Under review and implementation, the Russian Federation opposed including the suggestion that one model the voluntary reviews could follow would be that of the UNFCCC INDCs.

Under proposed G3FNet priorities, Ukraine said it should not contribute to enhancing the capacity of Member States to "use" financing but rather to attract private sector financing.

Under the section on roles of various stakeholders, Germany said the CPF should engage with stakeholders in a case-based manner. FAO, for the CPF, noted that rather than CPF members "taking the lead on implementation" in specific areas, they only "support" the implementation. On making use as much as possible of existing regional organizations and processes, India called for explicitly referencing the FAO regional forestry commissions.

On "follow-up activities," the US stressed the need to mention that the Co-Chairs will collaborate with the UNFF12 Bureau in identifying the building blocks of the Strategic Plan and the 4POW.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Co-Chair Hoogeveen introduced the report of the session and, with a minor editorial amendment, AHEG1 adopted the report.

In closing statements, UNFF Director Sobral Filho said the AHEG had exceeded expectations and provided substantial progress. Co-Chairs Hoogeveen and Dehghani thanked participants for their constructive engagement and energy throughout AHEG1, and expressed hope that they bring the same to AHEG2.

The meeting was gaveled to a close at 5:48 pm on Wednesday, 27 April.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF AHEG1

Many participants arrived at the first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental *Ad Hoc* Expert Group (AHEG1) with the hope of paving the way for a new era for UNFF. UNFF11 had tasked the expert group with constructing a new vision for the freshly renamed UN Forest Instrument, in the form of proposals for a Strategic Plan to guide the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) through to 2030, and a Quadrennial Programme of Work (4POW) to provide clear orders for the 2017-2020 period. Just days after the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was signed by 175 countries in the same building, AHEG members were reminded that UNFF has a chance to capitalize on the renewed enthusiasm for global approaches after the successful conclusion—since UNFF11—of the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) on Financing for Development. AHEG members were invited to think ambitiously about the role that UNFF could—and should—play in the fragmented jigsaw puzzle that is global forest policy, and how UNFF and the IAF can link up with, and influence, forest-related aspects of evolving development policies and finance priorities.

This brief analysis assesses AHEG1's progress in fulfilling its mandate to lay the groundwork for a new Strategic Plan and 4POW and whether delegates answered the call to think ambitiously to lay the foundation for a more coordinated and coherent global forest policy landscape.

TOWARDS COORDINATION AND COHERENCE

UNFF has long seen its niche as playing a coordinating role for global forest policy, encouraging the disparate actors and processes handling aspects of forest policy to work together, fostering interlinkages, and promoting synergies. Both the Strategic Plan and 4POW now under construction provide major opportunities to achieve this: they have the potential to improve coherence and cohesion, reduce policy fragmentation, and attract the attention of all major global players on forests. Indeed,

AHEG members have suggested the name "UN Strategic Plan on Forests" rather than what many had initially expected would be the "UNFF Strategic Plan on Forests." Many veterans of forest policy processes who have long lamented the lack of coherence in the IAF welcomed this proposed title as a "bold" signal to all forest-related institutions; a Strategic Plan with the full weight of the UN system behind it, rather than limiting itself to the components of the IAF.

AHEG members buckled down to the task of ensuring the Strategic Plan and 4POW acknowledge and encompass forest-related goals, targets and actions agreed in other international processes, including the 2030 Agenda, the Convention on Biological Diversity's Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Paris Agreement, and the GEF Sustainable Forest Management targets. Their task was made easier by careful groundwork coordinated by the UNFF Secretariat, including a comprehensive background paper prepared by consultants and a summary of the discussions of an expert panel convened in Tokyo in March 2016. During the AHEG's discussions, it became clear many experts saw the need to consider forests in as many SDGs and targets as possible, and highlight the role of forests in achieving the SDGs in order to: capitalize on the SDGs' momentum and popularity; attract private financial resources gravitating to SDG implementation; and raise UNFF's profile in the process. However, some questioned whether a coherent UN Strategic Plan on Forests will prioritize other goals and targets as ends in themselves, or whether they will remain the means to achieve the UN Forest Instrument's four Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs).

Regardless, the coherent and ambitious Strategic Plan that experts began to construct could bring opportunities that have long been called for by UNFF veterans: the need for the Forum to more proactively engage with other sectors significantly impacting forestry, including agriculture, mining, energy, and disaster risk reduction. The new format of alternating annual UNFF sessions between technical and policy issues together with a Strategic Plan that effectively encompasses the SDGs could provide just the vehicle to more effectively engage with these sectors.

AHEG1 discussions considered the appropriate tier at which coordination and coherence should be achieved: will the SDGs, for instance, be incorporated at the level of Strategic Plan goals, targets, or priority actions? Many participants expressed support for adding new cross-cutting issues—such as governance, enforcement, cross-sectoral coordination and public participation— to the four GOFs and the five IAF objectives to create the Plan's overarching goals.

It was also generally acknowledged that monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR) of both the Strategic Plan and the 4POW should align with existing MAR processes elsewhere. While many experts agreed on the need to minimize reporting burdens, some cautioned that synchronizing MAR may prove easier said than done. For instance, while the FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment provides a predictable, known five-year cycle and format that can be taken advantage of, the MAR timeframes for the SDGs are the subject of ongoing discussions and are not yet known.

TOWARDS FRAGMENTATION

Despite the existence of numerous forest-related goals, targets and actions already adopted across various international bodies, it remains evident that the UN Forest Instrument's four GOFs are unique. While other UN processes view forests through such lenses as carbon, biodiversity and water, UNFF, by definition and nature, is unique in its recognition of the "multifunctionality" of forests. This strength was recognized throughout the meeting, with many delegates cautioning against letting the four GOFs be overshadowed or replaced by more "fashionable" targets and actions. It was notable, for instance, how little the AHEG considered the UNFCCC's forest-related goals, perhaps indicative of the limitations of framing forests only through a carbon lens.

A potential cause for fragmentation that remains outside the power of any Strategic Plan and 4POW is the issue of intra-government communication and coordination. A number of participants were heard lamenting the lack of coordination and exchange in their own capitals, easily a significant barrier for policy coherence at subnational, national, regional and global levels. Such missing concertation is felt to be particularly present for forests, as they intersect with so many other national priorities, sectors and institutions.

MOI has long been one of UNFF's unresolved issues, disagreement over which threatens to remain a subtle force for policy fragmentation. Satisfaction was expressed nevertheless, over a number of promising recent developments, including: the establishment by UNFF11 of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (G3FNet) to help facilitate access to existing forest-related funds; and the recent increased interaction with UNFF processes by both the GEF and the Green Climate Fund (GCF). It is yet to be seen how much these shifts will improve MOI and accessibility of financing for SFM.

The meeting's agenda highlighted one further aspect that may continue to foster fragmentation across forest governance, but AHEG1 only just began to touch upon whether the Strategic Plan and the 4POWs will successfully manage to reduce fragmentation on the level of MAR. As experts highlighted the number of existing forest-related reporting processes—including FAO, FRA, CBD, ITTO, UNFCCC, REDD+, FOREST EUROPE and other regional processes—the potential size and complexity of the challenge of reducing MAR fragmentation only started to dawn on experts.

TOWARDS AHEG2

As is often the case with the first session of an *ad hoc* expert group, AHEG1 was essentially a stock-taking and brainstorming exercise that seemed, on the surface, harmonious, straightforward and constructive. Much detail was left to be decided at AHEG2 in October 2016, where experts will be working with an actual text—the "zero draft" of the Strategic Plan and 4POW promised by the Co-Chairs—and tensions will undoubtedly emerge as AHEG members struggle with the difficult task of translating this week's aspirations into more concrete action plans and programmes. The experts also will have to address aspects of their mandate touched on only lightly during their first meeting, such as replacing the UN Forest Instrument's existing

MDG language with appropriate references to the SDGs; how alignment with the SDGs' MAR process will work in practice; and MOI.

While AHEG1 has laid a solid foundation for an ambitious Strategic Plan and 4POW that may speak to the broader global forestry community, only AHEG2, and the recommendations it prepares for the negotiations at the UNFF Working Group and Special Session in January 2017, will reveal whether the Strategic Plan will effectively encourage a more coordinated, coherent global forest policy landscape, or whether it will leave current policy fragmentation undisturbed.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

International Workshop on Strengthening Collaboration on Criteria and Indicators (C&I) to Promote and Demonstrate SFM: Organized by Natural Resources Canada, in cooperation with FAO, this expert workshop will seek to strengthen collaboration on C&I, with the goal of mobilizing the full potential for this tool to promote, implement and demonstrate improved SFM in policy and practice. **dates:** 1-3 May 2016 **location:** Ottawa, Canada **contact:** Ewald Rametsteiner, FAO **email:** ewald.rametsteiner@fao.org **www:** http://www.fao.org/forestry/ci/91695/en/

Forest Carbon Partnership Facility PC21: The 21st Meeting of the Participants Committee (PC) of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) is expected to review country submissions and decide on grant resource allocation. The PC is made up of 14 REDD+ countries and 14 financial contributors, and includes observers representing indigenous peoples, civil society, international organizations and the private sector. **dates:** 3-5 May 2016 **location:** Washington D.C., US **contact:** FCPF Secretariat **www:** https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/pc21-may-3-5-2016-washington-dc

17th International Symposium on Legal Aspects of European Forest Sustainable Development: The IUFRO International Symposium 2016 will be organized as a cross-border meeting hosted jointly by the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague together with the Technical University in Zvolen. The Symposium aims to: create the opportunity for specialists from different countries to get acquainted and involved with the new legal situation in European forests; provide a forum to exchange experiences in formulation, implementation and administration of the new EU forest and forest-related laws; and make possible a comparison between the new EU and the legislation in the field in countries in transition. **dates:** 18-20 May 2016 **location:** Prague, Czech Republic **contact:** Rastislav Šulek **email:** rastislav.sulek@tuzvo.sk **www:** http://www.iufro.org/science/divisions/division-9/90000/90600/activities/

44th Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies: The 44th sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 44) and Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 44) as well as the first session of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA 1) will convene. **dates:** 16-26 May 2016 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228 815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** http://www.unfccc.int

Second Meeting of the UN Environment Assembly: The UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) will convene for the second time in 2016. The UNEA represents the highest level of governance of international environmental affairs in the UN system. **dates:** 23-27 May 2016 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies **phone:** +254-20-7623431 **email:** unep.sgb@unep.org **www:** http://web.unep.org/unea/

European Forum on Urban Forestry: This Forum will address issues related to urban forests and resilient cities, health and well-being, and governance and management. A meeting of the FAO Silva Mediterranean Working Group on Urban and Peri-urban Forestry will be held in conjunction with the Forum, on 31 May 2016. **dates:** 31 May - 4 June 2016 **location:** Ljubljana, Slovenia **contact:** Slovenian Forestry Institute **www:** http://efuf2016.gozdis.si/

50th Meeting of the GEF Council: The GEF Council meets twice a year to approve new projects with global environmental benefits in the GEF's focal areas, including SFM, and in the GEF's integrated approach programmes. **dates:** 6-9 June 2016 **location:** Washington D.C., US **contact:** GEF Secretariat **phone:** +1-202-473-0508 **fax:** +1-202-522-3240 **email:** secretariat@thegef.org **www:** https://www.thegef.org/

First Meeting of UN-REDD Programme Executive Board: The new main body of oversight, operational guidance and decision-making for the UN-REDD Programme will consider the proposed multi-year work plan in support of the UN-REDD Programme 2016-2020 Strategic Framework, as well as options for strengthening coordination and complementarity with other global initiatives supporting REDD+ and forest countries. **dates:** 28-29 June 2016 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** UN-REDD Programme **www:** http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2390&catid=98&Itemid=749

HLPF 2016: The fourth meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, convening under the auspices of ECOSOC, will take place from 11-15 July 2016, followed by a three-day ministerial meeting of the Forum on 18-20 July 2016. The theme of the 2016 session will be "Ensuring that no one is left behind." **dates:** 11-20 July 2016 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **www:** https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf

23rd Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO 23): The 23rd session of the FAO's Committee on Forestry (COFO) will bring together heads of forest services and other senior government officials to identify emerging policy and technical issues, seek solutions and advise FAO and others on appropriate actions. COFO is the highest FAO forestry statutory body and meets every two years. **dates:** 18-22 July 2016 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** Peter Csoka, FAO **email:** peter.csoka@fao.org **www:** http://www.fao.org/forestry/57758/en/

UNFF AHEG2: The second meeting of the AHEG is expected to develop proposals on the IAF Strategic Plan for 2017-2030 and the 4POW for the period 2017-2020. **dates:** October 2016 (TBC) **location:** TBD **contact:** UNFF Secretariat **phone:** +1-212-963-3401 **fax:** +1-917-367-3186 **email:** unff@un.org **www:** http://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/aheg/index.html

51st Meeting of the GEF Council: The GEF Council meets twice a year to approve new projects with global environmental benefits in the GEF's focal areas, including SFM, and in the GEF's integrated approach programmes. **dates:** 24-27 October 2016 **location:** Washington D.C., US **contact:** GEF Secretariat **phone:** +1-202-473-0508 **fax:** +1-202-522-3240 **email:** secretariat@thegef.org **www:** http://www.thegef.org/

52nd Session of the International Tropical Timber Council and Associated Sessions of the Committees: The 52nd session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) and Associated Sessions of the Committees (Finance and Administration; Economic Information and Market Intelligence; Forest Industry; and Reforestation and Forest Management) will address project and governance issues. The ITTC is the governing body of the ITTO, which provides a framework for tropical timber producer and consumer countries to discuss and develop policies on issues relating to international trade in, and utilization of, tropical timber and the sustainable management of its resource base. **dates:** 7-12 November 2016 **location:** Yokohama, Japan **contact:** Steven Johnson, ITTO Officer-in-Charge **phone:** +81-45-223-1110 **fax:**: +81-45-223-1111 **email:** itto@itto.int **www:** http://www.itto.int/workshop_detail/id=4621

CBD COP13, Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety COP/MOP8, and Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing COP/MOP2: The 13th COP to the CBD, the 8th COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the 2nd COP serving as the MOP to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing will take place concurrently. **dates:** 4-17 December 2016 **location:** Cancun, Mexico **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** http://www.cbd.int/meetings

UNFF Working Group and Special Session: The back-to-back meetings of UNFF's Working Group and Special Session are due to negotiate and endorse the Strategic Plan for 2017-2030 and the 4POW for 2017-2020, based on recommendations submitted by AHEG. **dates:** 16-20 January 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNFF Secretariat **phone:** +1-212-963-3401 **fax:** +1-917-367-3186 **email:** unff@un.org **www:** http://www.un.org/esa/forests/

UNFF12: The twelfth session of the UN Forum on Forests is expected to take place in mid-2017, at a place and time yet to be determined. **dates:** May 2017 (TBC) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York (TBC) **contact:** UNFF Secretariat **phone:** +1-212-963-3401 **fax:** +1-917-367-3186 **email:** unff@un.org **www:** http://www.un.org/esa/forests/session.html

For additional meetings, see http://nr.iisd.org/

GLOSSARY

4POW	Quadrennial Programme of Work
AHEG	*Ad Hoc* Expert Group
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FRA	Global Forest Resources Assessment
G3FNet	Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOFs	Global Objectives on Forests
HLPF	High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IAF	International Arrangement on Forests
INDCs	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUFRO	International Union of Forest Research Organizations
MAR	Monitoring, assessment and reporting
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOI	Means of implementation
REDD+	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation of existing forest carbon stocks, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable forest management
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	UN Forum on Forests
UNGA	UN General Assembly