

UNFF12 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 2 MAY 2017

UNFF12 resumed on Tuesday, 2 May 2017, at UN Headquarters in New York. In the morning, delegates continued their discussions on the implementation of the UNSPF, undertaking a technical discussion and exchanging experiences during a panel on the contribution of forests to the achievement of SDG1 (No poverty).

In the afternoon, technical discussions continued with a panel discussion on the contribution of forests to the achievement of SDG5 (Gender equality).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

TECHNICAL DISCUSSION AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES: Panel discussion on the contribution of forests to the achievement of SDG1: Wu Zhimin, UNFF12 Vice-Chair, introduced the panel discussion on the contribution of forests to the achievement of SDG1. Charles Barber, World Resources Institute (WRI), moderated the panel.

Uma Lele, independent scholar, in a keynote presentation, discussed the forest sector's role in developing pathways out of poverty. She noted that the forest sector accounts for 25% of the income generated by rural communities living adjacent to forests. She reported that World Bank projections of zero poverty by 2030—for all regions except Africa—implies a need to expand strategies for poverty alleviation beyond food production systems, including forests. She noted, however, that poverty alleviation through the use of forestry goods and services can be impeded by, *inter alia*: distance of forests from markets; unstable forest land tenure; and inadequate rights for forest-dependent communities.

Gerhard Dieterle, Executive Director, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), outlined five pathways out of poverty: productivity; rights; investment; markets; and ecosystems. He said that to ensure these, integrated approaches, innovative mechanisms and champions for the cause are needed. He highlighted the importance of engaging communities, stating “we need to listen to local people,” as forests are a complex “continuum in the life of rural people.” He also emphasized the need to: work across sectors; find innovative ways to bring finances to forestry, including using productive forests; and educate ministers of finance on forest-related benefits, which would join sectors and lead to transparency.

Godwin Kowero, Africa Forest Forum (AFF), outlined research demonstrating how forests can contribute to health, clean water, food, shelter, employment and energy, but pointed out that research rarely shows how such goods and services can lift people out of poverty permanently. He noted that a vibrant forest sector

contributes to the growth of local markets, and added that there is a need to strengthen policies addressing the nexus between land-based activities and poverty eradication.

Frances Seymour, Center for Global Development, presented on “Forests: a pathway out of poverty or roadblock to immiseration?” She argued that: turning forests into reliable income streams at scale has proven challenging; the loss of forest services and products presents “very real pathways into poverty” and makes households worse-off; deforestation and climate change constitute a viscous cycle and damaging feedback system, which exacerbates poverty; and policies in industrialized countries have an important role to play, including by driving forest-carbon markets.

During discussions, CHILE noted the need for: public-private partnerships; strengthening of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in forest sectors; and the promotion of livelihoods of forest-dependent people through access to funding and markets. CHINA shared his country's experience in forest-based income generating projects supported through direct funding, loans, subsidies and technical assistance.

The EU emphasized the need to strengthen dialogue between forestry, agriculture, fisheries and other sectors in order to alleviate poverty. She stressed the need to address inequalities and ensure access to sufficient resources, technology transfer and called for new models that allow communities to work together.

MEXICO emphasized the importance of South-South cooperation and urged for multi-sector involvement in REDD+ in order to promote rural development. FARMERS AND SMALL FOREST LANDOWNERS stated that recognizing the ability to protect and expand forests while at the same time increasing revenue from timber is the biggest challenge in forestry. RUSSIAN FEDERATION emphasized the holistic link between the SDGs and the UNSPF.

CANADA supported the use of forest resources and products, noting they meet societal needs beyond SDG15 (Life on land). INBAR promoted the use of bamboo and rattan as sources of income and ecosystems services.

FINLAND underscored the multifunctional use of forests when managed sustainably and fairly, including through empowering women, indigenous peoples and youth in development planning. INDONESIA stated that a pro-people forest policy will alleviate poverty if it is combined with capacity building and supported by multi-stakeholder collaboration.

MALAYSIA urged Member States and the CPF to emphasize capacity building and traditional knowledge in SFM. CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD) highlighted that biodiversity, ecosystem services and ecotourism

provide income to rural poor and play an essential role in the 2030 Agenda. ECUADOR emphasized that SFM improves rural communities' quality of life.

Moderator Barber invited final remarks from panelists, and Lele reiterated that increased productivity can also be a way to conserve forests. Dieterle highlighted that climate disruption, poverty and population growth are an "almost perfect storm." Kowero added that "we must learn from the many communities that have successfully lifted themselves out of poverty."

Seymour asserted that people clear forests because they can earn more from other forms of land use, saying that ultimately "we need to change that calculus by, for instance, improving international finance for REDD+."

Panel discussion on the contribution of forests to the achievement of SDG5: This panel was chaired by Baudelaire Ndong Ella (Gabon) and moderated by Seemin Qayum, UN Women.

Isilda Nhantumbo, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), presented a keynote on the empowerment of women and girls in the forest sector. She noted that in order to reduce inequality in the forest sector, there is a need to develop women's business skills. Mechanisms that increase access to resources for SMEs, she argued, limit women's involvement particularly where collateral, such as land, is required. She also noted an existing disparity in employment and pay for the same jobs in the forest sector. A gender transformative agenda for forests, she summarized, requires: education of women and girls at all levels; empowerment in the public and private sectors; and gender-friendly financing instruments.

Panel moderator Qayum acknowledged that though gains had been made towards gender equality, insecure tenure rights and limited access to forest resources, decision making and credit, mean women are still disadvantaged.

Marilyn Headley, Forestry Department, Jamaica, recounted a case study on gender balance at the Forestry Department in Jamaica, which moved from zero professional female staff in the early 1990s to 40% in 2017. She explained that this was achieved through sensitization, technical skills training, and the opening of additional positions.

Cecile Ndjebet, President, African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF) highlighted the important role women play in forests, stating their engagement in the sector is critical to combating climate change and achieving SFM. She urged stakeholders to involve women in decision-making, involve men in training and promote equitable access to resources.

Latha Swamy, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), outlined their work on advocacy, capacity building and knowledge development and sharing. She highlighted the establishment of: the Women's Development Fund (WDF), in cooperation with Finland, in 2009; and the Gender Climate Tracker, in 2016, to help hold governments accountable to women's participation in national climate delegations. She called for a paradigm shift that challenges the persistent social, economic and cultural barriers women face in all areas of life.

Moderator Qayum opened the floor for comments. CANADA underscored gender equality as crucial for effective official development assistance (ODA). AUSTRALIA noted the existence of a new mentorship network in Australia for women in forest and timber industries. Nhantumbo, Ndjebet and Headley all affirmed the need to ensure young and graduating women are accurately informed about careers in the forestry sector.

COLOMBIA shared her country's ongoing post-conflict experience where women are crucial to building a peaceful, democratic and sustainable society, and asked panelists to share any similar experiences. Nhantumbo noted that after many years of civil unrest, Mozambican legislation on family and land now allows for women to access land and participate in decision-making regarding land allocation. Ndjebet said REFACOF's advocacy work with women and local communities is also a strategy to avoid and manage conflict, and can allow for peaceful dialogue among potentially conflicting stakeholders.

URUGUAY said women occupy 50% of forest sector leadership positions in his country.

PERU drew attention to the Climate Change Gender Action Plans as a good basis for UNFF to approach gender mainstreaming in the forest sector. The EU urged for recognition of indigenous women's highly specialized knowledge of trees and forest products for diverse uses, adding that gender should also be mainstreamed within the scope of the UNSPF outreach strategy. SWEDEN said enhancing socio-economic benefits from forests requires gender equality. He noted that in his country, both women and men have equal rights in the forest sector, enjoying the same opportunities to own and use forests, and run forest companies. FINLAND said men and boys should be engaged in gender-mainstreaming endeavors and noted that, since women are not a homogenous group, a "one-size-fits-all" approach would not work.

SAINT LUCIA voiced his support of the initiative and queried how progress for women can best be captured in national reports.

Panelists discussed their organizations' support for gender equality in forestry through data collection and analysis, and community enterprise initiatives. They also pointed to the need for gender-friendly financing and women's access to education.

The MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE (Forest Europe) noted various initiatives within Europe that aim to overcome gender barriers in forestry, including providing role models and improving recruitment.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH urged UNFF Members to partner with youth organizations, and to provide role models for girls through a stronger interface between forestry professionals and local communities. The AFRICAN GROUP recognized the contribution of women in community forest management. NEW ZEALAND discussed a national initiative that supports female role models and professional mentors in the forestry sector.

Concluding remarks from the panel acknowledged the need for female role models, decision-making opportunities for women, and equal land access.

IN THE CORRIDORS

UNFF12's second day saw the start of the technical discussions on the implementation of the UNSPF—one of the key aspects of the new UNFF format. Two in-depth panels took place assessing forests' role in poverty alleviation and gender equality. These panels were received with genuine interest and appreciation, with a number of delegates lauding the extensive knowledge and expertise of the panelists involved.

Many appreciated the more relaxed nature of interventions. A change, as one delegate noted, from the "highly charged negotiation mode" that has been a key feature of past sessions. And while many welcomed the constructive engagement of delegates in these discussions, some longstanding delegates expressed concern, wondering whether the "discipline" to stick to technical discussions could be sustained or whether they would be "slipping back into negotiation mode."