

UNFF13 Highlights: Thursday, 10 May 2018

UNFF13 resumed on Thursday, 10 May 2018, at UN Headquarters in New York. In the morning, delegates discussed the revised draft communication and outreach strategy for the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF), the revised guidelines for operation of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), and the UNFF Trust Fund. In the afternoon, delegates discussed the contribution by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), regional and sub-regional organizations and processes and Major Groups and other stakeholders to the implementation of the UNSPF. They then examined the initial draft of the omnibus resolution and offered comments and suggested amendments.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan

Development of the UNSPF Communication and Outreach Strategy: UNFF13 Vice-Chair Maureen Whelan solicited delegates' comments on the revised version of the draft communication and outreach strategy. The US, supported by CANADA, asked to delete a paragraph on key determinants for successful communication, and suggested that the omnibus resolution call for a report on implementation of the strategy at UNFF14. The EU suggested adding a new paragraph on Secretariat monitoring of the strategy's implementation, and adding decision-makers as target audiences. CANADA said the revised draft did not fully reflect comments made about objectives, target audiences and focus on the Global Forests Goals. The AFRICAN GROUP asked to include national political and scientific bodies among target audiences.

General Statements on Implementation of the UNSPF: PAKISTAN stressed the importance of urban forestry, which can bring down ambient temperatures by 8-10°C, and of the UNFF working cross-sectorally with related conventions such as Ramsar and the Water Convention.

ZAMBIA spoke on its "Plant a Million Trees" initiative to improve food security and reduce climate change impacts. He called for initiatives focusing on low forest cover countries, small island developing states, and landlocked countries.

EL SALVADOR reported reforestation on and forest restoration since 2016 for implementing the Bonn Challenge. THAILAND highlighted its establishment of a UNSPF Committee. LESOTHO noted that sustainable forest management (SFM) is required for forests to perform their global ecosystem functions. BRAZIL said it managed to reduce deforestation by more than 80% over the past 20 years while increasing agricultural productivity by more than 250%, and noted about half of the country is occupied by protected areas. FOREST EUROPE said forests in Europe have expanded, covering 33% of Europe's total land. PANAMA cited its timber tracing programme and its initiative to restore 1 million hectares of forest over 20 years.

Means of Implementation (MOI)

Vice-Chair Whelan solicited delegates' comments on the revised guidelines for operation of the GFFFN. UKRAINE, supported by the US, asked for revisions regarding the provisions on follow-up advice and clearinghouse function. The US suggested amendments on taking into account equitable geographic distribution under "procedures," and, with the EU and NEW ZEALAND, preferred not to specify a need for "sufficient and predictable" resources or "to enhance resources for effective Network operations."

The EU called for:

- including UNSPF implementation in the statement of purpose;
- broadening a reference to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to include the principles of national ownership and accountability;
- a provision ensuring that any further guidance and procedures involving the GFFFN will be decided by UNFF;
- text calling for the Secretariat to develop a clear terms of reference template for external consultants that may be hired by GFFFN; and
- deletion of a reference to national and subnational organizations under "partnerships."

Forum's Trust Fund

The Secretariat introduced its Note on the Trust Fund (E/CN.18/2018/7), saying China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and the US had contributed funds totaling US\$ 1,173,830, with some in-kind contributions. She reported 2017 expenditures totaled US\$ 891,139, 47% for travel to UNFF meetings. For 2018 she predicted a budget of US\$ 1,056,000.

Responding to a query from the US, UNFF Director Sobral said the 2017 figure included extra costs from holding two UNFF meetings in 2017, which is not foreseen for 2018. He also acknowledged contributions from Finland, Switzerland and the Netherlands in 2016, which were used to finalize the UNSPF in 2017. The AFRICAN GROUP, supported by EL SALVADOR, cautioned that while resources decline, challenges remain, including for travel expenses for developing countries, and requested a reversal of the decline.

Contribution by CPF, Regional and Sub-regional Organizations and Processes and Major Groups and Stakeholders to Implementation of the UNSPF

The Secretariat presented its Note on this item (E/CN.18/2018/3). UNFF13 Vice-Chair Tomas Krejzar introduced the panel.

Eva Müller, UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), presented the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) Work Plan 2017-2020, identifying planned activities and outlining recurrent activities, joint initiatives and activities to strengthen CPF pursuant to ECOSOC Resolution 2015/33. She highlighted initiatives on, *inter alia*:

- sustainable wood for a sustainable world;
- green finance; and

- pathway for designing a mechanism to incentivize deforestation-free landscapes and value chains for green growth.

Dampha Almami, African Union Commission, reported on the African expert meeting in November 2017, which focused on regional cooperation. He noted that recommendations stressed:

- links between regional, subregional and national reports;
- the contributions of forests to all SDGs;
- use of high-level ambassadors on forests at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF);
- regional and subregional partners' participation in UNFF meetings; and
- delineation of UNFF duties in relation to other forest-related bodies.

Cecile Ndjebet, Women Major Group, reported on a Major Group Expert Meeting on Major Groups and Other Relevant Stakeholders' Contribution to the Implementation of the UNSPF held in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2017. Recommendations were agreed on: promoting gender awareness; engaging local groups in SFM; advocacy for establishing secure tenure; mutual accountability; finalizing an Major Group work plan and mobilizing funding for Major Group actions; and enhancing Major Group preparation before UNFF meetings.

Stephen Dehn, Children and Youth Major Group, reported on a meeting of this Group in February 2018, which finalized a work plan to guide youth in realistic, sustainable activities to achieve forest goals. Core activities include, *inter alia*: education programmes at all levels; a Young Innovators Initiative; enhancing forest education; social media campaigns; and youth participation in regional and international policy dialogues.

In the ensuing discussion, the EU urged the CPF to collaborate on the priority areas identified by Major Groups. INDONESIA requested that the activity on green finance includes green accounting. The US said the CPF has a key role in the UNFF communication and outreach strategy. NORWAY, with IRAN, emphasized the need to include gender equality, urging its elaboration in the CPF work plan. CONGO called on the CPF to consider more work on newly discovered peat bogs of the Congo Basin. GERMANY urged CPF to address forest education. GHANA said the role of youth in SFM should be promoted.

The UN REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (UNECE) reported on the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work of the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and its four foci: data, monitoring, reporting and assessment; policy dialogue and advice; communication and outreach; and capacity building.

The INTERNATIONAL UNION OF FOREST RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS (IUFRO) reported on its work with CPF partners to support the UNSPF and SDGs as they relate to forests, highlighting its leading role in the Global Forest Information Service, Global Forest Expert Panels, and the Policy Learning Initiative.

The MAJOR GROUPS called for official recognition of the Major Group Partnership on Forests as a coordinating body for Major Groups, which would help mobilize funding for Major Group initiatives on forests.

The GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY explained the CPF initiative on green finance was sparked by the February 2018 CPF Conference "Working Across Sectors," and it is still in its early stages.

ALGERIA noted the lack of a mandate from the governing bodies of many CPF participating organizations to cooperate with UNFF. UKRAINE inquired whether UNFF and CPF would be coordinating their inputs to HLPF 2018.

Omnibus Resolution

At the start of the Thursday morning session, the GROUP OF 77/CHINA (G-77/China), supported by EL SALVADOR and THAILAND, outlined several elements it wished to have reflected in the omnibus resolution, including:

- recommending that the UNGA maintain the independent status of UNFF, with a strengthened Secretariat;
- stressing the importance of the communication and outreach strategy;
- emphasizing the need for a strengthened and scaled-up GFFFN;
- welcoming China's offer to host a GFFFN office; and
- calling for increasing contributions to the Trust Fund.

In the afternoon session, reviewing the draft of the resolution, the G-77/CHINA suggested adding a paragraph on the importance of the communications and outreach strategy for forests "and life on earth." On the MOI section, he called for strengthening the references to the GFFFN and the Trust Fund. In light of the UN DESA reform, he repeated calls for adding references to strengthening the UNFF Secretariat and maintaining its independence.

The AFRICAN GROUP requested retention of a paragraph on the success criteria of the communications and outreach strategy.

SWITZERLAND called for attaching at the end of the omnibus resolution a text related to the UN DESA reform that a group of countries had sent to the UNFF Secretariat. MEXICO proposed adding multiple references to "relevant stakeholders" in the section on measurement, assessment and reporting.

UKRAINE called for adding "enhancing capacity building" in a paragraph that requests the Secretariat, in consultation with interested Members of the Forum and members of the CPF, to initiate the development of the Network's online clearinghouse mechanism referred to in the guidelines.

CHINA stressed that the GFFFN office to be established in China will work in accordance with the UN rules of procedure, adding that the budget for it will be negotiated with UN DESA. The US suggested deleting language on the necessity of sufficient financial, technical and human resources for the effective functioning of the GFFFN.

NEW ZEALAND, supported by AUSTRALIA, proposed adding language that encourages the CPF members and other relevant bodies to utilize the core set of indicators. AUSTRALIA requested adding a request to the Secretariat to compile all the communicated VNCs in a centralized, public repository.

The Secretariat said the comments would be taken into account and a new draft of the resolution circulated by email that evening.

In the Corridors

Delegates at UNFF13 on Thursday confronted a packed agenda, juggling several document revisions and new issues, transitioning smoothly from revised guidelines for the GFFFN, revised communication and outreach strategy, and the Forum's Trust Fund to the draft omnibus resolution. Implementation of the UNSPF nevertheless took center stage in the afternoon, as the UNFF considered contributions from the CPF, Major Groups and other stakeholders. Taking note of activities and projects highlighted by these groups, UNFF was sensitized on the need to ensure that policy discussions do not lose sight of the plight of forest-dependent communities. One delegate noted that, "major groups and stakeholders are the practitioners on the ground that can translate our policies to practice." Another delegate, reiterating the importance of reaching all marginalized groups and providing a place for their views, remarked "forests provide a large canopy for all groups – and UNFF provides the niche."

Spurred on by promises of finishing early on Friday if they accomplished much on Thursday, at the end of the afternoon the attention focused on consideration of the draft omnibus resolution. Delegates sought assurance that all their comments would be reflected, so as to avoid reopening negotiations on it on Friday. Some delegates, recalling the closing of UNFF12 at 1:01pm, were heard making social plans for Friday afternoon.

ENB Summary and Analysis: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of UNFF13 will be available on Monday, 14 May 2018 at <http://enb.iisd.org/forestry/unff/13/>