



HIGHLIGHTS FROM IFF-2 MONDAY, 31 AUGUST 1998

Delegates at IFF-2 met in Plenary to conduct background discussion on programme element III (international arrangements and mechanisms to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests).

PLENARY

Co-Chair Asadi introduced the Plenary discussion of programme element III. He noted that the IFF's work will form the basis for a possible CSD decision on negotiating a new forest instrument. He asked for background discussion on the content of possible elements to be compiled into a Co-Chairs' summary for substantive discussion at IFF-3. Jag Maini (IFF Secretariat) introduced the Secretariat's Note on international arrangements and mechanisms (E/CN.17/IFF/1998/9).

Regarding international arrangements and mechanisms, CANADA underscored the pressing need for an international legally-binding convention for all forests and all forest values, as well as the need for immediate implementation of the IPF action proposals. He stated that voluntary instruments are insufficient to respond to the challenge of achieving SFM and highlighted the fragmentation of existing institutions and instruments dealing with forests. COSTA RICA and GABON said existing instruments do not adequately address the problems confronting the world's forests and supported the initiation of negotiations on a legally-binding instrument (LBI). RUSSIA said progress in implementing existing instruments is hampered by the absence of a LBI on forests. He underscored the importance of international evaluation of present forest management systems guided by a set of clear and transparent norms agreed by the international community. ARGENTINA stressed the urgency of beginning negotiations on a LBI.

TURKEY supported work toward building consensus on the possible elements of a LBI. CHINA supported the establishment of an international mechanism or arrangement but stressed the need to include finance, technology transfer, capacity building and standards of measurement as elements for discussion. NORWAY supported the need to establish a cohesive and comprehensive instrument on SFM. He emphasized that a recommendation to begin negotiating a LBI must be based on a broad consensus and developed in accordance with existing instruments.

JAPAN emphasized the need to reach consensus on an international arrangement or mechanism, such as an international LBI. The EU said that while forest issues are already discussed in

various fora, clear political leadership and a holistic approach are not guaranteed but must be developed. He expressed hope for building a consensus on possible elements for and beginning negotiations on an international mechanism, such as a LBI. SWITZERLAND supported the adoption of a LBI that addresses SFM in a holistic, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral way, but only if it contains clear and substantial commitments that go beyond general and declamatory principles. She said discussions of a LBI must not detract from those on the other important categories of the IFF work programme. In order to reach consensus, SWITZERLAND stressed: identifying substantial elements and then analyzing whether they are covered under existing instruments; analyzing advantages and disadvantages of all existing options; and determining links with existing conventions to avoid duplication. MALAYSIA said it is not averse to a LBI.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA said a holistic arrangement is needed but queried the cost of convention negotiations, as did NEW ZEALAND. CUBA questioned the rush to build consensus on a LBI given current constraints on financial mechanisms and the need to clarify many issues. CAMEROON stressed the need for coordination, integration and synergy among the various existing mechanisms. He questioned how regional specificities would be addressed in a potential international convention and stressed that any international arrangement not accompanied by a financial mechanism would be unsuccessful.

NEW ZEALAND remained unconvinced of the need for a LBI. He questioned how one would address real causes of deforestation such as poverty, energy needs and agricultural development. AUSTRALIA also remained unconvinced of the need for a convention but supported a rigorous process to consider the range of future options for an international arrangement. ECUADOR noted that effectiveness depends on political will and if conditions are not right for an effective LBI, the remedy may be worse than the disease.

BRAZIL and CAMEROON said it is premature to begin negotiations on an international LBI. BRAZIL stated that it does not object to the eventual negotiation of an LBI but stressed the need for greater experience and understanding of the progress and shortcomings in implementation of existing instruments. He said the establishment of a negotiating process is not a necessary result of the exercise being undertaken by the IFF and precludes other options such as the continuation of the intergovernmental policy

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dialogue. The US noted that its position on the need for an international convention on forests is well known. She said it is premature to determine what an international arrangement might be.

CUBA noted that important aspects of the existing conventions remain uncertain, with little possibility for implementation by developing countries. The GLOBAL FOREST POLICY PROJECT (GFPP) noted that existing instruments are inadequate for protecting forests and while he did not favor a legal instrument, he called for high-level mechanisms for problem-solving, enhanced coordination, broader participation and consensus building. COLOMBIA, ECUADOR and GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL called for analysis of the shortcomings of existing arrangements before working on a new instrument.

Regarding the two options presented in the document for a framework for possible elements of international arrangements and mechanisms, the G-77/CHINA preferred Option 1 ("management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and institutions and policy instruments") over Option 2 ("economic, social and environmental functions and values of forests and institutions and policy instruments"). In principle, MALAYSIA supported the first option, but suggested the following alternative categories for the proposed elements that such a framework would contain: forest resource security; NFPs; forest management; forest protection; soil and water conservation; forest production; forest development; forest assessment; and evaluation and monitoring. He said existing legally-binding agreements and C&I must be taken into account in identifying the set of elements. TURKEY said the Forest Principles and IPF action proposals represent a useful framework for identifying possible elements of a LBI and proposed that regional and sub-regional initiatives also be considered in this regard. He proposed that deforestation and forest degradation, airborne pollutants, information sharing and public awareness be added to the list of possible substantive elements. RUSSIA said Option 1 provides correct direction for future deliberations.

SWITZERLAND supported Option 2 as it is more consistent with the ecosystem approach and allows for consideration of the work already begun in the framework of the different initiatives on C&I for SFM. NORWAY preferred Option 2 as a framework but stated that neither option is comprehensive. He pointed out that social functions and values receive less emphasis in Option 1, whereas Option 2 does not incorporate valuation of multiple benefits and C&I. GABON preferred Option 2 with the addition of management. ECUADOR said both options were insufficient, stressing trans-sectoral criteria on forest functions and benefits. ARGENTINA called for a synthesis of the two options. The GFPP called for a new framework of elements grouped according to whether they actually solve critical forest problems.

COSTA RICA said the international community should move beyond rhetoric to real consideration of elements for a new instrument. JAPAN stressed the need for full examination of existing forest-related instruments and clarification of their functions when discussing possible elements. AUSTRALIA stressed the need for clear international consensus on elements and called for consideration of the framework provided by various regional C&I initiatives, including matters related to, *inter alia*, biodiversity, productive capacity and ecosystem health. To the list of possible elements, he proposed including forest health and deforestation/degradation under the conservation heading and fire under the management heading, and including participation under management rather than under the category of institutions and policy instruments. CHILE proposed adding measurement of countries' level of forest development and forest cover as an element.

The US requested that the annex outlining substantive elements in international legally-binding agreements be expanded to include substantive elements of key non-legally-binding arrangements and that the annex listing selected existing arrangements and mechanisms be expanded to include non-governmental initiatives, including private sector initiatives. She called for greater detail on the variety of legally-versus non-legally binding international arrangements and stressed that the effectiveness of agreements does not depend on whether or not they are legally-binding but on the exercise of political will.

COSTA RICA described the initiative it has undertaken with the government of Canada to identify possible elements and work toward consensus on an international LBI on all types of forests. He stressed that it is an open, fully participatory three-stage initiative, which will include: a technical experts' meeting on legal instruments; a series of regional meetings; and a final meeting in Canada to consolidate results for submission to the IFF. The results of the first meeting will be submitted to IFF-3. CANADA also highlighted the initiative, noting that it responds to the demand from countries to examine the elements of existing and possible future LBIs. He underlined that the initiative will be neutral, transparent, participatory and representative.

The G-77/CHINA, the EU, MALAYSIA, NORWAY, GABON, ARGENTINA, SPAIN, CAMEROON, RUSSIA, SWITZERLAND, ECUADOR and SENEGAL supported the Canada/Costa Rica initiative. CUBA welcomed all initiatives to shed light on the issues, calling for equitable participation of all countries. CHILE and the GFPP supported analysis of all the issues potentially involved in a LBI through the initiative. AUSTRALIA supported an intersessional discussion but stressed that all ideas, not only that of a LBI, should be on the table. NEW ZEALAND said tunnel vision will not produce results and supported a discussion with balanced insight. GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL expressed skepticism about the objectivity of the initiative.

BRAZIL emphasized the important cultural, spiritual and economic roles forests play in the lives of the many people living in forests and stated that forests are under the jurisdiction of national States. The INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL noted the lack of attention given to indigenous peoples in all IFF-2 documents and called for reports on the practical implications of application of the IPF proposals for indigenous peoples.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While some felt that Monday's Plenary was an exercise in repetition of long-held positions on an international convention on forests, others perceived slight shifts in attitude. At the end of the day, many delegates expressed optimism about proposed intersessional initiatives that may offer opportunities to pursue further discussion on a broad range of options outside of the politicized IFF venue. Some observers expressed concern that such initiatives might seek to advance agendas for which international consensus does not yet exist, but numerous participants are buoyed by the prospect that the initiatives will provide new fodder for discussion at IFF-3, regardless of the outcome of IFF-2.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUPS: WG1 will meet in Salle XXV at 10:30 am to discuss programme element I.a (promoting and facilitating implementation). WG2 will meet in Salle XXI at 10:30 am to discuss II.c (transfer of environmentally sound technologies) and, time permitting, II.b (trade and environment).