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IFF-4 HIGHLIGHTS

THURSDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2000

On the ninth day of IFF-4, Working Group 1 convened in the afternoon to finalize text. The contact group on finance convened briefly and the contact group on international mechanisms and arrangements (Category III) met throughout the day and late into the evening.

WORKING GROUP 1

MONITORING PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION: On an action proposal encouraging countries to prepare national information on the management, conservation, and sustainable development of forests, delegates agreed to lift brackets from text on availability of financial resources and the text was adopted.

PROMOTING AND FACILITATING IMPLEMENTATION: On an action proposal addressing provision by the international donor community of resources to mobilize finance, technical assistance and ESTs, delegates agreed to replace "new and additional resources" with "increased financial resources." The US suggested reference to the international donor community including international organizations and international financial institutions. The text was adopted with the US proposal.

UNDERLYING CAUSES OF DEFORESTATION: Regarding a conclusion identifying underlying causes of deforestation, the EU, supported by CANADA and the G77/CHINA, proposed deleting the reference to "corruption." AUSTRALIA proposed replacing "issues of governance" with "lack of good governance." The text with both proposals was adopted.

CONTACT GROUPS

FINANCE: To a conclusion regarding special consideration for developing countries, specifying least developed countries and LFCCs, a regional group suggested new text, but consensus was not reached on this and a related action proposal. Delegates agreed to a conclusion which proposes an international financial mechanism, but recognizes that reservations were also voiced.

Chair Oistad (Norway) suggested deleting an action proposal on the need for a study integrating issues such as international trade and valuation of forest goods and services, since deliberations are

underway in other groups. Many delegations opposed, stating that text in other groups remains unresolved. Discussion on an action proposal on making full use of existing mechanisms was postponed pending progress in the Category III contact group. On two related paragraphs regarding innovative use of and increased revenues from forest products and services, delegates could not agree on whether these should include "forest-related biological resources" (language agreed to in TFRK), or "those related to biological diversity." Discussion will continue informally.

INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND MECHANISMS: The group had before it a Chair's revised text based on the previous day's discussion. Noting the lack of progress regarding a LBI, one regional group invited LBI proponents to make concrete proposals on finance, EST transfer and trade, stating such proposals would allow them to further consider the issue of a LBI and allow progress. LBI proponents responded that agreement on a future convention would allow for negotiations on finance, EST transfer and trade. One delegate suggested that a LBI would allow for establishing a new voluntary fund, and another said a proposed UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) alone would not guarantee new funds. One developed country informed others of her country's President's proposal for a financial package of US\$150 million for tropical forest protection as evidence that a LBI is not the only avenue for making funds available.

Several LBI proponents reiterated that there is no consensus on only continuing the forest dialogue on a permanent basis. Another country responded that consensus is evident in the absence of explicit objections to an action-oriented dialogue under a UN body. Developing countries cautioned against an "all or nothing" approach.

Some countries called for bracketing any reference to the proposed UNFF. Regarding the objective, reference to establishing a legal framework remains bracketed. Under the function on monitoring progress, developing countries supported a reference to "voluntary" reporting by countries. One developed country opposed reference to "voluntary," stating it would prejudice the outcome of a LBI. "Voluntary" remains bracketed.

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Regarding enhanced cooperation among international and regional organizations, institutions and conventions on forest related issues, delegates debated whether to include reference to coordination among secretariats. This issue remains unresolved.

Regarding the proposed function of strengthening political commitment, two countries proposed to insert "and legal." Others objected and the phrase remains bracketed.

On the proposed UNFF, many countries said its role is not clear. One country suggested it could "give guidance to ITFF and monitor progress." While one regional group suggested referring to "the objectives and functions identified above," another suggested omitting any specific functions within the paragraph. No decision was made. In light of uncertainty about the purpose of the body, delegates agreed on "an intergovernmental body" without qualifications. Regarding a reference to "major groups" as beneficiaries of the proposed UNFF, Chair Insanally clarified that the phrase "major groups as defined in Agenda 21" will be standardized throughout the text.

On the proposed UN Partnership on Forests, one developed country underscored avoiding wording that would prejudge the proposed partnership. He preferred stating such a partnership "could" instead of "should" build on an informal group "such as" the ITFF. He said reference to the FAO would be inappropriate, while others requested retaining reference to it. Some countries supported replacing text stating the ITFF will submit coordinated inputs and progress reports to the UNFF with "such a partnership would submit coordinated inputs and progress reports to the UNFF, operate in a transparent and open manner, and take periodic reviews."

There was general support to replace text stating that the proposed partnership "would translate guidance from the recommendations of the UNFF into coordinated action" with "would receive guidance from the UNFF and facilitate coordinated action."

On working modalities, one developed country bracketed reference to the UNFF's working modalities. Regarding timing of meetings, one developed country preferred holding meetings every two years, and suggested language reflecting that this would allow time for expert meetings, country-sponsored initiatives and other intersessional activities. Developing countries underscored annual meetings. This issue remains unresolved.

Regarding considering mechanisms for finance and technology transfer, a regional group suggested replacing "mechanisms" with "strategies." Developing countries opposed this change, with some proposing "considering mechanisms and strategies." Some developed countries suggested "mechanisms and/or strategies," but developing countries opposed. No consensus was reached.

Delegates debated, but did not decide on whether the proposed secretariat should be "compact," "high-level" or "comprised of highly qualified professionals."

On financial support, one regional group and another developed country said both administrative and operational activities should be funded, *inter alia*, by the UN budget. One developed country stated it supports only voluntary contributions to the secretariat. A developing country had difficulties with "reallocation of resources" as it may entail diverting funds from other programmes. This remains unresolved.

Regarding a proposed review of the arrangement, one country proposed inserting "including giving consideration to commencing an INC for a LBI." Several countries opposed the proposal, saying that it would compromise the preference of the "majority of the countries" for a LBI. One country said that it would not accept a "mere" institutionalization of the IFF, while another said this would be a reasonable compromise. One country offered, and others opposed, lifting brackets from references to a UNFF in return for lifting brackets from references to a LBI. Developing countries proposed adding language on developing a stronger arrangement for providing new and additional resources for forest funding, as well as for technology transfer and trade, taking into account existing instruments, processes and regional agreements. A developed country suggested replacing the proposal on giving consideration to the commencement of an INC with "reviewing the need for a LBI" and suggested a review period of 10 years. Another developed country lamented that discussion on a LBI is becoming "taboo." Chair Insanally said he would convene small group consultations and that the contact group would reconvene later in the evening.

After informal consultations, the contact group reconvened at 10:50 pm. Chair Insanally described the consultations had been "promising," but said no agreement had been reached. He said he would come forward with new text at the morning session.

NGO Statements: One NGO called for: unfiltered input to policy dialogue from indigenous peoples; a permanent forum under ECOSOC; action and resources upfront to fully implement IPF/IFF proposals for action at the community level; and focus on implementing existing commitments. She underscored a LBI could undermine the CBD. Another NGO stressed participation of all major groups in any future arrangement and supported an arrangement under ECOSOC. She urged the proposed UNFF be exclusively mandated to promote implementation of existing agreements and commitments, and opposed a LBI.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Tensions within the Category III discussions appear to be straining the good will and diplomacy of the meeting. A delegate expressed concern about the "vehemence" of another's intervention. Some suggest that this tension will remain, while some countries continue their winner-take-all attitude and others take a minimalist approach.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Delegates are expected to convene in a closing Plenary at 4:00 pm at a location to be announced.

WORKING GROUPS: The Working Groups will meet to finalize their work following the contact group on Category III. Locations to be announced.

CONTACT GROUPS: The contact group on Category III will reconvene at 10:00 am in Conference Room 2 to consider the revised Chair's proposal.

The ENB summary of IFF-4 will be available on Monday, 14 February, on the IISD website: www.iisd.ca/forestry/iff4.