



FIRST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS: 11-22 JUNE 2001

The first session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) will convene today at UN Headquarters in New York. Items on the agenda for UNFF-1 include: adoption of the multi-year programme of work (MYPOW); development of a Plan of Action (PoA) for the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) proposals for action; initiation of the UNFF's work with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF); and the date, venue and provisional agenda for the UNFF's second substantive session.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNFF

The possibility of developing international forest policy and a mechanism to coordinate such policy was discussed during preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, but delegates eventually agreed only to adopt the "Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests," also known as the "Forest Principles," and Chapter 11 of Agenda 21, "Combating Deforestation."

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON FORESTS: In 1995, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), at its third session, established the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) to continue the intergovernmental forest policy dialogue. During its two-year mandate, the IPF developed some 150 negotiated proposals for action on issues relating to sustainable forest management (SFM). However, delegates could not agree on a few major issues, including financial assistance and trade-related matters, or whether to begin negotiations on a global forest convention. The fifth session of the CSD, in April 1997, and the 19th Special Session of the UN General Assembly, in June 1997, endorsed the IPF's outcome and recommended a continuation of the intergovernmental policy dialogue on

forests. Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the IFF to continue this work under the auspices of the CSD.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON FORESTS: The IFF met four times between October 1997 and February 2000, with its deliberations resulting in approximately 120 proposals for action on a range of topics, including: promoting, facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the IPF proposals for action; financial resources; trade and environment; transfer of environmentally sound technologies; issues needing further clarification; and forest-related work of international and regional organizations and under existing instruments. At its fourth and final session in February 2000, the IFF concluded its deliberations and issued its final report, which included a recommendation for an international arrangement on forests. Delegates agreed to recommend the establishment of the UNFF and to invite the relevant international organizations, institutions, and instruments and UN organizations to participate in a CPF. In April 2000, delegates at CSD-8 endorsed the IFF's conclusions and proposals for action and invited the ECOSOC President to initiate informal consultations on options for placing the UNFF within the intergovernmental machinery of the UN system.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNFF: On 18 October 2000, ECOSOC adopted resolution E/2000/35, outlining an international arrangement on forests and establishing the UNFF as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC.

The ECOSOC resolution states that the main objective of the international arrangement on forests is to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end. Its purpose is to: promote the implementation of internationally agreed actions on forests at the national, regional and global levels; provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global framework for policy implementation, coordination and development; and carry out principal functions, based on the Rio Declaration, the Forest Principles, Chapter 11

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Rado Dimitrov <rado@iisd.org>, Laura Ivers <laurai@iisd.org>, Leila Mead <leila@iisd.org> and Kira Schmidt <kiraschmidt@earthisland.org>. The Digital Editor is Franz Dejon <franz@iisd.org>. The Editor is Pamela S. Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org> and the Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The Operations Manager is Marcela Rojo <marcela@iisd.org> and the On-Line Assistant is Diego Noguera <diego@iisd.org>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Canada (through CIDA), the United States (through USAID), the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape (SAEFL), the United Kingdom (through the Department for International Development - DFID, and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office), the European Commission (DG-ENV), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Government of Germany (through German Federal Ministry of Environment - BMU, and the German Federal Ministry of Development Cooperation - BMZ). General Support for the *Bulletin* during 2001 is provided by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austria, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment of Norway, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment of Finland, the Government of Australia, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan Ministry of Environment (through the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies - IGES.) The *Bulletin* can be contacted by e-mail at <enb@iisd.org> and at tel: +1-212-644-0204; fax: +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted by e-mail at <info@iisd.ca> and at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada. The opinions expressed in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications only and only with appropriate academic citation. For permission to use this material in commercial publications, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists and can be found on the Linkages WWW server at <http://www.iisd.ca>. Free subscriptions available at <http://iisd.ca/enb/email.asp>. The satellite image was taken above New York ©2001 The Living Earth, Inc. For information on the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, or to arrange for reporting from your conference or workshop send e-mail to <kimo@iisd.org>.



of Agenda 21, and the outcomes of the IPF and the IFF, in a manner consistent with and complementary to existing international legally-binding instruments relevant to forests.

The resolution sets out six principal functions for the international arrangement on forests to meet its objective:

*(a) facilitate and promote the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action as well as other actions that may be agreed upon; catalyze, mobilize and generate financial resources; and mobilize and channel technical and scientific resources;

*(b) provide a forum for continued policy development and dialogue to foster a common understanding of SFM and to address forest issues and emerging areas of priority concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner;

*(c) enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues among relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments;

*(d) foster international cooperation, including North-South and public-private partnerships, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation at the national, regional and global levels;

*(e) monitor and assess progress at the national, regional and global levels through reporting by governments, and regional and international organizations, institutions and instruments, and on this basis consider future actions needed; and

*(f) strengthen political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests through: ministerial engagement; liaising with the governing bodies of international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments; and promoting action-oriented dialogue and policy formulation related to forests.

To carry out these functions, the resolution establishes the UNFF as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC and also establishes the CPF to support its work and enhance cooperation and coordination. Other provisions include that the UNFF will: consider, within five years, the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests, with a view to making a recommendation to ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly; and take steps to devise approaches toward appropriate financial and technology transfer support to enable implementation of SFM as recommended by the IPF and IFF.

The resolution also states that the UNFF will operate under the rules and procedures of ECOSOC and that it should, *inter alia*: be open to all States and operate in a transparent and participatory manner; build upon the transparent and participatory practices established by the CSD, IPF and IFF; and ensure the opportunity to receive and consider inputs from representatives of major groups, in particular through the organization of multi-stakeholder dialogues.

The resolution states that the UNFF will meet on an annual basis for up to two weeks and have a high-level ministerial segment for two to three days, as required. It indicates that the UNFF may convene *ad hoc* expert groups for scientific and technical advice. It also requires the first substantive meeting of the UNFF to adopt a MYPOW and develop a PoA for implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

UNFF ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION AND INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK:

The UNFF organizational session and the informal consultations on the MYPOW took place from 12-16 February 2001,

in New York. At the organizational session, delegates agreed that the UNFF Secretariat will be located in New York. They also agreed that the first and fifth substantive sessions of the UNFF will be held in New York, with the three intervening sessions to be held in Geneva and San José. This arrangement also includes a provision clarifying that if any ministerial segment is held during the intervening period, it will take place in San José, with the two other meetings in Geneva. Delegates addressed progress towards the establishment of the CPF, and also agreed to the duration of the Bureau members' terms and elected the following Bureau members: Chair, Amb. Mubarak Hussein Rahmtalla (Sudan); Vice-Chairs, Amb. Slamet Hidayat (Indonesia), Alexey Kornienko (Russian Federation) and Gustavo Suarez de Freitas (Peru); and Rapporteur, Knut Øistad (Norway).

The purpose of the informal consultations was to exchange views on the MYPOW in order to facilitate the UNFF Secretariat's preparation of a Secretary-General's document on the MYPOW for consideration at UNFF-1. During the informal consultations, delegates exchanged views on the programme elements of the MYPOW relating to: facilitation and promotion of implementation; monitoring, assessment and reporting; enhancing cooperation and policy and programme coordination; fostering international and cross-sectoral cooperation; fostering a common understanding of SFM and addressing forest policy issues and emerging areas; and strengthening political commitment. The informal consultations also addressed the review of the international arrangement on forests to be undertaken in five years.

INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS

INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE COLLABORATIVE

PARTNERSHIP ON FORESTS: The inaugural meeting of the CPF met from 4-5 April 2001, in Rome, to formally establish the CPF. At present, the CPF membership is comprised of the eight members of the Interagency Task Force on Forests (ITFF), but will be expanded to include a total of about a dozen international forest-related organizations, institutions and instruments. The Secretariats of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Global Environment Facility have been invited to join the CPF. The mission of the CPF is to support the work of the UNFF in promoting the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and in strengthening of political commitment to this end. A CPF Network will be established to facilitate interaction and communication with a wide range of other international and regional organizations, including NGOs, the private sector and other major groups. The CPF will develop its work plan following the conclusion of UNFF-1.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

OPENING PLENARY: The opening Plenary session for UNFF-1 will begin at 11:00 am in Conference Room 1. Nitin Deai, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, JoAnne Disano, Director, Division for Sustainable Development, Amb. Mubarak Ramthalla, Chair of the UNFF, and Hosny El-Lakany, CPF Chair, are expected to address the Plenary. Following these opening remarks, delegates will adopt the agenda of the meeting and address other organizational matters.