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SECOND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS: 4-15 MARCH 2002

The second session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-2) will convene today at UN headquarters in New York. Delegates at UNFF-2 will address progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and the UNFF Plan of Action related to the following elements: combating deforestation and forest degradation; forest conservation and protection of unique types of forests and fragile ecosystems; rehabilitation and conservation strategies for countries with low forest cover; rehabilitation and restoration of degraded lands and the promotion of natural and planted forests; and concepts, terminology and definitions. UNFF-2 will also address means of implementation, including finance, transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs), and capacity building for sustainable forest management (SFM) in the context of these elements. The following "common items" will also be considered: multi-stakeholder dialogue; enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination; emerging issues relevant to country implementation; intersessional work; monitoring, assessment and reporting; promoting public participation; national forest programmes; trade; and enabling environments.

A high-level segment will take place on Thursday and Friday, 13-14 March. On the first day, ministers will engage in a policy dialogue with heads of member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). The ministerial dialogue on the second day will focus on endorsing the Plan of Action as a contribution to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and on national commitments to country goals and strategies for implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action. A multi-stakeholder dialogue will be held on Wednesday, 6 March.

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 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. CSD-5, 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 Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (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 implementation of the IPF proposals for action; financial resources; trade and environment; transfer of ESTs; 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 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 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

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- 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 Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) and develop a Plan of Action for implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

UNFF ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION AND INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE MYPOW: 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 would 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. Delegates addressed progress towards the establishment of the CPF, and also agreed to the duration of the Bureau members' terms.

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 MYPOW programme elements 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.

UNFF-1: UNFF-1 took place from 11-23 June 2001, at UN headquarters in New York. Delegates discussed and adopted decisions on the UNFF's MYPOW, a Plan of Action for the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, and the initiation of the UNFF's work with the CPF. They also recommended the establishment of three *ad hoc* expert groups to carry out interessional work to inform and provide technical advice to the UNFF, on: approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting; finance and transfer of ESTs; and consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests. UNFF-1 further adopted a statement on the programme budget implications of the MYPOW, and nominated Knut Øistad (Norway) to act as Chair and Ositaadinma Anaedu (Nigeria), Patricia Chaves (Costa Rica), and Alexey Kornienko (Russian Federation) to serve on the Bureau for UNFF-2.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT MEETING ON MONITORING, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING ON PROGRESS TOWARD SFM: This expert meeting took place from 5-8 November 2001 in Yokohama, Japan. The meeting, hosted by the Japanese Government, provided a forum for exchanging views on monitoring, assessment and reporting within the UNFF context, with the aim of contributing to UNFF deliberations. Discussions focused on how countries could report on their progress toward SFM as well as progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

WORKSHOP ON FORESTS AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: This workshop, hosted by the Government of Ghana, with financial support from the Government of the Netherlands, was held in Accra, Ghana, from 28-30 January 2002. The objectives of the workshop were to share experiences and facilitate synergies between the elements for an expanded work programme on forest biological diversity within the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UNFF's MYPOW and Plan of Action, and to consider ways and means for integrating conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity into various national policies beyond the conservation and forest sectors.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT MEETING ON FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION: The International Expert Meeting on Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) took place from 27-28 February 2002, in Heredia, Costa Rica. The meeting was hosted by the Governments of Costa Rica and the UK, in collaboration with IUCN, WWF-International, and other organizations. The objectives of the meeting were to: increase understanding of FLR among forest experts and decision makers through an exchange of experiences and lessons learned; initiate a process for working with partners to refine and implement FLR concepts; and generate political commitment to and interest in pursuing FLR in specific countries and/or regions and/or through the appropriate intergovernmental processes.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE AD HOC EXPERT GROUPS: On Friday, 1 March, informal consultations took place at UN headquarters in New York to discuss the terms of reference of the three *ad hoc* expert groups to be endorsed by UNFF-2. The consultations were based on a non-paper produced by the Secretariat, which laid out draft terms of reference for the three groups, as well as their specific titles, composition, scheduling and reporting to the UNFF.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

OPENING PLENARY: The opening Plenary will begin at 10:00 am in the General Assembly Hall. Delegates will hear opening remarks, elect the meeting's officers, adopt the agenda and organization of work, and commence discussion on means of implementation.