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UNFF-2 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 4 MARCH 2002

The second session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-2) commenced on Monday with opening statements by Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, UNFF-2 Chair Knut Øistad (Norway), ECOSOC President Ivan Šimonović, Hosni El-Lakany, Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), and Jag Maini, Head of the UNFF Secretariat. Delegates met in Plenary to address organizational matters and hear country statements in the morning, and in a Working Group to discuss the draft terms of reference for the three *ad hoc* expert groups in the afternoon.

OPENING PLENARY

OPENING STATEMENTS: Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, opened UNFF-2, recalling the election of Ositaadinma Anaedu (Nigeria), Patricia Chaves (Costa Rica), Alexey Kornienko (Russian Federation), and Knut Øistad (Norway) to serve on the Bureau for UNFF-2. Delegates supported his presentation of Knut Øistad for election as Chair of UNFF-2.

Chair Øistad noted that UNFF-2 would assess implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and would include a ministerial segment, a ministerial dialogue with the CPF, and a multi-stakeholder dialogue. He emphasized the importance of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in reviewing progress in implementation of Agenda 21, highlighting progress with regard to forests. He stressed the meeting's mandate to establish three expert groups, on monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR), finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs), and parameters for a legal framework, and noted informal consultations on this issue on Friday, 1 March. He highlighted the diverse goods and services from forests and their importance for human livelihoods, expressed hope that the UNFF's work would contribute to a more peaceful world, and said the UNFF should be judged by action on the ground.

Nitin Desai noted the meeting's elements as important inputs into the WSSD process. He emphasized the long-term and cross-cutting nature of forest issues; stressed the need to consider forests in the broader context of sustainable development; and said that connecting the forest agenda with the emerging anti-poverty agenda would be crucial in this regard. He underscored the importance of the upcoming International Conference on Financing for Development in Mexico, and said that the problems related to financing of forests are indicative

of general problems of financing sustainable development. Desai thanked Jag Maini for his service on forest issues and highlighted his invaluable contribution to the success of the forest process.

ECOSOC President Ivan Šimonović highlighted the relationship between ECOSOC and the UNFF and areas of cooperation between them, and urged discussing ways to integrate the UNFF's outcomes into ECOSOC's work.

Hosni El-Lakany, Chair of the CPF, urged governments to send a clear message to the CPF. He introduced the CPF's document entitled "Framework to Support the Work of the UNFF," which summarizes the CPF's goals, highlights key current and planned activities of CPF member organizations, and describes initiatives and mechanisms to facilitate cooperation and coordination among CPF members. He said the real challenges lie in prioritizing activities within allocated resources, intervening strategically and producing concrete results.

Jag Maini, Head of the UNFF Secretariat, discussed preparations for the ministerial segment, noting that an interactive dialogue between ministers and heads of CPF member organizations would take place on 13 March. He highlighted critical areas for discussion: positioning forests on the international political agenda; finance; cross-sectoral policy harmonization; and protection of forests. He highlighted the submission of a ministerial message to the WSSD.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates elected Hossein Moeini (Iran) to represent the Asia Group on the Bureau and Patricia Chaves (Costa Rica) to serve as Rapporteur, and adopted the provisional agenda (E/CN.18/2002/1) and organization of work.

COUNTRY STATEMENTS: Venezuela, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, highlighted, *inter alia*, the importance of forests in promoting human well-being in developing countries and the need for transparency in trade and for unimpeded market access for developing country forest products. He recommended that the expert groups remain independent and include developing country experts. Spain, on behalf of the EU, stressed the need for implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action at the national level. He urged UNFF-2 to: adopt technical details for the expert groups and a provisional implementation questionnaire to improve reporting information for UNFF-3; address illegal logging and related trade issues; send a positive message to the WSSD; and signal the sixth Conference of Parties (COP-6) of the CBD to prepare a revised work programme on forest biological diversity that will, *inter alia*, foster implementation of the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action.

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CANADA recommended that the UNFF concentrate on implementation of existing proposals for action rather than develop new ones. Regarding preparation for evaluating the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, he encouraged the UNFF to adopt a "results-based culture" and suggested the development of a "strategic results framework" that could be used as a basis for the evaluation. BRAZIL stressed the importance of the *ad hoc* expert group on finance and transfer of ESTs for implementing SFM on a permanent basis. JAPAN noted that good governance and appropriate law enforcement are fundamental for SFM, and urged the international community to address illegal logging. Nauru, for the PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM GROUP, noted that Pacific Islands have insufficient resources and capacity to fulfill all their UNFF commitments, and urged the international community to recognize the region's potential and ecological vulnerabilities when developing criteria for development assistance. The NETHERLANDS highlighted the results of the January 2002 Workshop on Forests and Biological Diversity, including its recommendations for improving collaboration between the CBD and the UNFF.

INDONESIA stressed the importance of addressing trade, and cautioned against the use of terms lacking consensus from the IPF/IFF process. He highlighted financial constraints to the implementation of national forest programmes in developing countries and their lack of ESTs and capacity, and called for enhanced donor support for implementation of SFM in addition to current activities. On MAR, he underlined the need for streamlined national reporting to reduce the burden on developing countries. AUSTRALIA highlighted the complementary roles of the UNFF and the CBD in advancing SFM and forest conservation activities, and stressed the need for collaborative action to better integrate forest biodiversity considerations into national development programmes. He emphasized that the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests should be clearly linked to country progress in implementing the proposals for action, and called for a balanced and realistic set of measures to gauge its effectiveness.

CHINA called for practical actions in the areas of finance and transfer of ESTs to support implementation of the proposals for action in developing countries. He emphasized that the expert groups should be intergovernmental in nature and that all countries should participate. NEW ZEALAND stressed the importance of this meeting in reflecting political commitment to the UNFF process. He announced an intersessional meeting in New Zealand on the role of planted forests in SFM in March 2003. SOUTH AFRICA stressed the importance of work on illegal logging and trade, and called on UNFF-2 to focus on preparations of its ministerial message to WSSD, which should include specific commitments and address topical problems.

WORKING GROUP

INTERSESSIONAL WORK: *AD HOC* EXPERT GROUPS:

Patricia Chaves (Costa Rica) chaired a Working Group discussion on the draft terms of reference of the UNFF *ad hoc* expert groups. On the scope and work programme for the expert group on MAR, delegates expressed differing views regarding the third component on MAR: "review of the effectiveness." The G-77/CHINA supported this wording. The EU, supported by CANADA and SWITZERLAND, preferred that this component be referred to as "review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests." BRAZIL requested that the issue of "effectiveness" be addressed by the expert group on parameters of a mandate for a legal framework, and NEW ZEALAND agreed, unless "effectiveness" referred only to MAR. The US, supported by CANADA, preferred the original language, but suggested that "effectiveness" be bracketed pending later discussions on the term, which should specifically address its scope. Delegates agreed to bracket "review of the effectiveness."

Regarding the tasks of the MAR expert group, the G-77/CHINA proposed new language stating that the group would "provide an assessment of the existing mechanisms for MAR in relevant international organizations with a view to identifying weaknesses and duplication in reporting." SWITZERLAND and CANADA supported the G-77/China's text. The US, with AUSTRALIA, proposed amending the G-77/China's proposed text to call for an assessment of the existing "requirements for reporting" in relevant international organizations. Regarding the task of proposing modalities for UNFF to monitor and assess progress based on voluntary reporting, the G-77/CHINA proposed that it be split into two parts: "voluntary reporting by countries on implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action," and "reporting by relevant organizations." NEW ZEALAND proposed, and NORWAY amended, new language regarding voluntary reporting by countries and reporting by organizations, regions and processes. This issue was left for future discussion.

Regarding ongoing work on criteria and indicators, delegates agreed that the expert group should consider work undertaken at national, regional and international levels. On proposing an outline for voluntary reporting to the UNFF, the US suggested, and many opposed, that reporting should be aimed at UNFF sessions, not the UNFF itself. Regarding collaboration with the expert group on finance and transfer of ESTs, the US expressed concern that this would include shared meetings, and proposed deleting the text. The G-77/CHINA preferred that it be retained and clarified, and further proposed that the expert group on MAR also ensure availability of financial sources in this context. The US, JAPAN and others opposed broadening the tasks of the MAR expert group to include provision of finance, and SOUTH AFRICA proposed limiting the language to recommendations on capacity building for MAR. LATVIA suggested, and others supported, leaving this issue open until the tasks of the expert group on finance are decided. The G-77/CHINA proposed two new paragraphs: one recommending guidance to the UNFF's work on forest-related concepts, terminology and definitions; and another on establishing criteria for monitoring and assessing the international community's support in assisting developing countries in their efforts to implement the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

On composition and participation, Jag Maini noted that funding for expert groups comes from the regular UN budget, and amended language to reflect that regional groups identify rather than nominate experts. He added text stating that the UNFF authorizes the Bureau and the UNFF Secretariat to review credentials and approve nominees.

Noting that much work remains on the expert groups' terms of reference, Chair Chaves said she would consult the Bureau to determine how work would proceed on this issue.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the first day of UNFF-2 drew to a close, delegates were expressing concern that the slow pace of discussions on the terms of reference for the three expert groups may be indicative of the two weeks to come. Noting that the meeting's inclusion of a ministerial segment, a ministerial dialogue with the CPF and a multi-stakeholder dialogue, as well as the inability to hold evening sessions, would leave few days for negotiations on the substantive agenda items, delegates expressed hope that the meeting would find its stride soon and begin moving at a speedier pace. Some were more skeptical, reflecting on the precedent of UNFF-1, and worried that UNFF-2 may have difficulties in successfully completing its work.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP: UNFF-2 delegates will convene in a Working Group at 10:00 am and 3:00 pm in the General Assembly Hall to discuss preparations for the high-level ministerial segment. Discussions will be based on an information paper outlining possible elements for UNFF-2's ministerial message to the WSSD.