



## THIRD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS: 26 MAY – 6 JUNE 2003

The third session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-3) begins today at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Over 500 representatives of governments, UN agencies, international organizations, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and business and industry, are expected to attend this two-week gathering.

During the first week, the Plenary will address a variety of issues, including the UNFF's intersessional work and *ad hoc* expert groups, as well as enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination, and the economic aspects of forests. A multi-stakeholder dialogue will also take place, providing an opportunity for civil society to engage in discussions with governments and intergovernmental agencies on forest management issues. Two working groups will also convene during the two-week meeting. Working Group I will consider proposals for maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs, and the format for reporting implementation, while Working Group II is expected to devote its energies to negotiating proposals on forest health and productivity, and enhanced cooperation among other international organizations. Informal consultations may also be held during UNFF-3's second week to address any issues not taken up by the working groups.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNFF

In October 2000, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC), in resolution E/2000/35, established the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) as a subsidiary body with the main objective of promoting the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The UNFF succeeded a five-year period (1995-2000) of forest policy dialogue facilitated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). To achieve its main objective, principal functions were identified for the UNFF, namely to: facilitate implementation of forest-related agreements and foster a common understanding on sustainable forest management (SFM); provide for continued policy development and dialogue among governments, international organizations, and major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, as well as to address forest issues and emerging areas of concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner; enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues; foster international cooperation and monitor, assess and report on progress of the above functions and objectives; and strengthen political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

The IPF/IFF processes produced a body of more than 270 proposals for action towards SFM, known collectively as the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. These proposals are the basis for the UNFF Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) and Plan of Action, various themes of which are discussed at annual UNFF sessions. Country- and organization-led initiatives also contribute to the development of UNFF themes. By 2005, the UNFF will consider recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests. It will also take steps to devise approaches towards appropriate financial and technology transfer support to enable implementation of SFM.

**UNFF ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION:** The UNFF organizational session and informal consultations on the MYPOW took place from 12-16 February 2001, in New York, USA. Delegates agreed that the UNFF Secretariat would be located in New York, and addressed progress towards the establishment of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and the duration of Bureau members' terms.

**UNFF-1:** The first session of the UNFF (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 UNFF's work with the CPF. They also recommended the establishment of three *ad hoc* expert groups to provide technical advice to the UNFF on: monitoring, assessment and reporting approaches and mechanisms; finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies; and consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests.

**UNFF-2:** UNFF-2 took place from 4-15 March 2002, at UN headquarters in New York. Delegates adopted a Ministerial Declaration and Message to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and eight decisions on: 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; concepts, terminology and definitions; specific criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests; proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for 2002-2005; and other matters.

### INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** The WSSD met from 26 August – 4 September 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The WSSD adopted two main documents: the Johannesburg Declaration and the Plan of Implementation. The Johannesburg Declaration expresses a commitment to sustainable development and emphasizes the need for implementation, while the Plan of Implementation is designed as a framework for action to implement the commitments originally agreed at the

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1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The Plan addresses forestry issues in some detail, recognizing forests' role in eradicating poverty, and supporting the UNFF and the CPF as key intergovernmental mechanisms for achieving SFM. The Plan also supports accelerating implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and intensifying efforts on reporting to the UNFF in order to contribute to an assessment of progress in 2005.

**FAO EXPERT CONSULTATION ON TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT – IMPACTS AND INTERACTION:** This meeting took place at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 3-5 February 2003, and sought to provide a forum for debate on how current developments in trade policies and market development affect the sustainability of forest management, and how SFM is changing trade patterns and market share. Participants examined a range of relevant issues, including global trends in the trade of forest products and services, public policies and initiatives, trade agreements and restrictions, and governance issues.

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF CRITERIA AND INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT: THE WAY FORWARD (CICI-2003):** This conference was held from 3-7 February 2003, in Guatemala City, Guatemala, as a follow up to recommendations made during the Expert Consultation on Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for SFM, which was held in November 2000. Discussions at CICI-2003 focused on four thematic areas: strengthening the elaboration and application of C&I for SFM; promoting political commitment for the use of C&I as tools for SFM; strengthening institutional capacity and stakeholder partnerships for implementing C&I and facilitating the exchange of information among all stakeholders; and contributing to the work of the UNFF and to the international initiatives on C&I related to sustainable development.

**SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE FAO COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY:** This meeting convened in Rome, Italy, from 10-14 March 2003. Discussions focused on major forestry policy issues, such as the role of the Regional Forestry Commissions in implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action, and the use of national forest programmes (NFPs) as a mechanism to implement the key outcomes of the World Food Summit and WSSD. Participants also discussed various forest-related FAO decisions and programmes, as well as the FAO medium-term planning process, particularly as it relates to forests, poverty and food security, forests and water, forests and climate change, forest governance, and forests and biological diversity.

**UNFF COUNTRY-LED INITIATIVE ON LESSONS LEARNED IN MONITORING, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING ON IMPLEMENTATION OF IPF/IFF PROPOSALS FOR ACTION:** This meeting was held in Viterbo, Italy, from 17-20 March 2003. Participants discussed questions relating to: monitoring and implementation; stakeholder collaboration to improve country capacity to monitor, assess and report; and assessment of countries' relations with the UNFF. Their conclusions and recommendations will be taken up during UNFF-3.

**UNFF INTERSESSIONAL EXPERT MEETING ON PLANTED FORESTS:** This meeting, which considered the role of planted forests in SFM, took place in New Zealand from 24-30 March 2003. Participants sought to build on the outcomes of a previous expert consultation held in Santiago, Chile in 1999. Discussions took place on a number of relevant questions, including what a global target for planted forests might be, and what role individual countries could play in encouraging SFM in planted forests. The report of the meeting will be taken up during UNFF-3.

**FOURTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE (MCPFE-4):** Also called the "Vienna Living Forest Summit," this conference was held in Vienna, Austria, from 28-30 April 2003. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss and take decisions on the future of the protection and sustainable management of forests in Europe. Conference participants adopted the Vienna Living Forest Summit Declaration "European Forests - Common Benefits, Shared Responsibilities," and five resolutions on: strengthening synergies for SFM in Europe through cross-sectoral cooperation and NFPs; enhancing the economic viability of SFM in Europe; preserving and enhancing the social and cultural dimensions of SFM in Europe; conserving and enhancing forest biological diversity in Europe; and climate change and SFM in Europe.

**THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER COUNCIL (ITTC-34):** The latest session of the ITTC took place from 12-17 May 2003, in Panama City, Panama. The Council adopted eleven decisions on a variety of issues, including: the management of the administrative budget; C&I for SFM; negotiations for a successor agreement to the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994 (ITTA, 1994); and the expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical timber. Delegates also approved nine projects and eight pre-projects. The Committees on Economic Information and Market Intelligence, Reforestation and Forest Management, Forest Industry, and Finance and Administration convened during the session, and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) Annual Market Discussion on World Trade and Business Developments also took place.

**FIRST MEETING OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE (PREPCOM I) FOR THE NEGOTIATION OF THE SUCCESSOR AGREEMENT TO THE ITTA, 1994:** This meeting was held in Panama City, Panama, from 20-21 May 2003. Delegates engaged in preliminary discussions on the scope of, and issues pertaining to, a successor agreement to the ITTA, 1994. The proposals made during the session will be consolidated and presented to the second session of the PrepCom (PrepCom II) in November. There was general consensus that: the Successor Agreement should remain a commodity agreement; ITTA, 1994 should be the basis for the negotiations; and relevant new and emerging issues need to be included in the new agreement.

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RURAL LIVELIHOODS, FORESTS AND BIODIVERSITY:** This conference, held from 19-23 May 2003, in Bonn, Germany, provided an opportunity to survey current knowledge and identify policy lessons and a future research strategy. Delegates considered several key issues, including how forest resources might be used to alleviate rural poverty, and how strategies for forest-based poverty alleviation could be made compatible with the maintenance of biodiversity and other functions of forestry.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**OPENING PLENARY:** UNFF-3 will convene at 10:00 am in Conference Room XVIII with opening statements from several key speakers. Delegates are then expected to hear general statements before taking up the agenda item on intersessional work, which includes further discussion on the *ad hoc* expert groups. In the afternoon, Plenary will resume from 3:00-6:00 pm to hear further general statements, as well as a presentation on national trends.

**SIDE EVENTS:** A number of side events are scheduled to take place from 1:00-3:00 pm throughout UNFF-3. Check the daily programme for further details.