[Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF)](#)

This forum met for its first time in New York (1-3 October), with the participation of an important number of NGOs and indigenous peoples organizations. The IFF is the continuation of the process of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), which presented its conclusions to the CSD in April 1997. The IFF discussed the terms of reference of its future work and grouped it under the following categories (see full text at the end of this bulletin):

CATEGORY I: Promoting and facilitating the implementation of IPF's proposals for action, and reviewing, monitoring and reporting on progress in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests

CATEGORY II: Considering matters left pending and other issues arising from the programme elements of the IPF process

a) Consider matters left pending on the need for financial resources.

b) Consider matters left pending on trade and environment.

c) Consider matters left pending on transfer of environmentally sound technologies to support sustainable forest management

d) Consider other issues arising from the programme elements of the IPF process needing further clarification.

e) Consider forest-related work of international and regional organisations.

CATEGORY III: International arrangements and mechanisms to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

NGOs present at the meeting were able to attend the sessions, to make a number of statements and to lobby government delegates. There was consensus on the positive role of NGOs and indigenous peoples' organizations in the IFF and the need to maintain an open and participatory process. The Forum also agreed on the usefulness of holding interessional meetings on specific issues and that these could be organized jointly by governments and NGOs. Intersessionals will have an informal nature and will inform the IFF.

A group of about 15 NGOs/indigenous groups presented a statement at a formal session offering to organize an intersessional workshop on underlying causes of deforestation, inviting governments and UN agencies to participate. Such workshop would include presentations by governments and indigenous organizations/NGOs. We also proposed that the organizers of this workshop prepare a synthesis report of the results, focussed on solution-oriented approaches, and that this report form a basis of a review by the IFF on the progress being made in implementing IPF proposals for action on underlying causes of deforestation.

The Costa Rican delegation fully supported the proposal for an NGO-organized event, and formally offered to host this workshop in Costa Rica. Several other governments and UN agencies expressed their interest in supporting and participating in this workshop, including providing some level of financial support.

A group of NGOs, governments (UK, Finland, Australia, Netherlands and Costa Rica) and intergovernmental agencies (UNEP and CIFOR) held an informal meeting to discuss ways to move forward.

NGO participants, who agreed to serve on a steering committee of regional representatives, included: Marcus Colchester (Forest Peoples Program - UK), Felipe Gonzales (Fundacion Ambio - Costa Rica), Andre Laletin (Friends of Siberian Forests - Russia), Lambert Okrah (Green Earth Organization - Ghana), Rosario Ortiz (Fundacion Ecotropica - Colombia), Claudia D'Andrea (IUCN), Sheldon Cohen (BIONET) and Joji Carino (International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests).

NGOs/indigenous organizations designated Sheldon Cohen (bionet@igc.org) to serve as the main NGO liaison point for this initiative, to facilitate communications and coordination.

Finally, it is important to note that a number of NGOs met in the UK in September and agreed on a number of recommendations ("Joint NGO conclusions of the meeting on the follow up of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests") which could form the basis for a strategy for the next meetings of the IFF. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy, can request it from us.