
Report of the open-ended ad hoc intergovernmental forum on forests on its first session

Advance unedited text

(New York, 1-3 October 1997)

1. The Forum considered suggestions regarding its future activities as contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.17/IFF/1997/2).

2. The Forum stressed the need for a focussed and balanced approach to its work in relation to its mandate as contained in the "Programme for further implementation of Agenda 21" adopted by the 19th special session of the GA, and as reconfirmed in the decision of ECOSOC at its substantive session in 1997 (E/1997/65). It emphasised the need to build on the positive results achieved in the IPF and that the focus should be on implementation of the proposals for action and those issues on which international consensus is yet to be achieved. In light of these considerations the Forum decided that the work of its forthcoming sessions should be conducted along the following interlinked categories, which should receive balanced intergovernmental attention:

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

a) Promote and facilitate implementation. Consider the launching of programmes by countries, United Nations agencies and other international organizations, and major groups to implement all proposals for action developed by IPF; consider appropriate mechanisms for the mobilization of financial resources, institutional and human resources and capacity-building, with particular attention to the role of women ;

b) Monitor progress in implementation. Consider mechanisms, process and format for reviewing, monitoring and reporting on progress; and assess progress in implementation, inter-alia, by countries, United Nations agencies and other international organizations, and major groups, including the private sector, and indigenous people, forest dwellers, forest owners and local communities.

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. Consider urgently the following options for action as contained in paragraph 68 of the final report of IPF:

(1) To urge the establishment of such a fund;

(2) To pursue action to enhance funding in other ways, inter alia, to invite UNDP and the Bretton Woods institutions, together with other relevant international organizations, to explore innovative ways to both use existing financial mechanisms more effectively and generate new and additional public and private financial resources at the domestic and international levels in order to support activities for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests;

b) Consider matters left pending on trade and environment. Analyse the mutually supportive roles that international trade and sustainable forest management perform and in that context issues related to non-discriminatory international trade in forest products from all types of forests including the role that tariff and non-tariff barriers may perform in relation to sustainable forest management, certification issues where relevant, improved market access, taking into account the needs of developing countries, in particular those of the least developed countries. Consider the question of the relationship between obligations under international agreements and national measures, including actions imposed by subnational jurisdictions, recognizing that those matters are also considered in fora whose primary competence is to address trade issues; the relative competitiveness of wood versus substitutes, its valuation, and market transparency and the related issue of illegal trade in wood and non-wood forest products.

c) Consider matters left pending on transfer of environmentally sound technologies to support sustainable forest management. Examine the promoting, facilitating and financing, as well as the appropriate mechanisms, for access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies and corresponding know-how to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed, taking into account chapter 34 of Agenda 21 and paragraph 11 of the Forest Principles. In this context consider technologies and technical knowledge including extension services for local sustainable forest management; and enhanced technology development, transfer, application, for improved utilization of wood and non-wood forest products and services, with a special attention to wood as an energy source and the role of women.

d) Consider other issues arising from the programme elements of the IPF process needing further clarification. Consider, inter-alia, analysis of underlying causes, in particular international causes, including transboundary economic forces of deforestation and forest degradation, taking into account a historical perspective and the pressures exerted on forest by other sectors notably agriculture in the quest for food security; traditional forest related knowledge (TFRK), consistent with, inter alia, the terms of reference of the Convention on Biological Diversity; assessment of valuation of forest goods and services; assessment, monitoring and rehabilitation of forest cover in environmentally critical areas; forest conservation, including conservation in protected areas; identification and definition of global and regional research priorities, taking into account national priorities; the use and application of the range of economic instruments, including tax policies and land tenure arrangements as a means of promoting sustainable forest management; and future supply and demand of wood and non-wood forest products and services.

e) Consider forest-related work of international and regional organisations. Further examine the forest related work being carried out by international and regional organisations, and under existing instruments in order to identify gaps and overlaps.

CATEGORY III

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

Identify elements, build a global consensus and engage in further action. "The Forum should also identify the possible elements of and work towards consensus on international arrangements and mechanisms, for example, a legally binding instrument on all types of forests. The Forum will report on its work to the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999. Based on that report, and depending on the decision taken by the Commission at its eighth session, the Forum will engage in further action on establishing an intergovernmental negotiation process on new arrangements and mechanisms or a legally binding instrument on all types of forests."

Number, Dates and Venue of Future Meetings

3. The Forum recommended that ECOSOC decide to divide the Forum's work into three substantive sessions, that its sessions should be held up to two weeks, and that it establish in-session working groups, no more than two to be scheduled to meet simultaneously and divide the work among them. The following scheduling is recommended:

Dates Venue
Substantive
sessions

IFF Second session June/August 1998 Geneva*/New York
IFF Third session Feb/March 1999 Geneva
IFF Fourth session Feb/March 2000 To be determined

* Taking into account the offer of the Government of Switzerland
and subject to further technical clarification.

4. The following work schedule is recommended on the
understanding that all categories are open for discussion until
the Forum's fourth session.

Category	2nd session	3rd session	4th session
/programme element			
-----		Preparation of	Preparation of
IFF progress report		IFF report	
report to CSD		to CSD	
(7th session)		(8th session)	

CATEGORY I

I.a.
Promote and Substantive Information Consideration
facilitate discussion /Update for report
implementation to CSD
Preparation (8th session)
of draft
conclusions
and proposals
for action

I.b.
Monitor Background Substantive Consideration
progress in discussion discussion for report
implementation to CSD
Preparation (8th session)
of draft
conclusions
and proposals
for action

CATEGORY II 2nd session 3rd session 4th session
Consider matters on:

II.a.
the need for Background Substantive Consideration
financial discussion discussion for report
resources to CSD
Preparation of (8th session)
draft conclusions
and proposals
for action

II.b.
trade and Substantive Information/ Consideration
environment discussion Up date for report
to CSD
Preparation of (8th session)
draft conclusions
and proposals
for action

II.c
transfer of Substantive Information/ Consideration
technology discussion Up date for report
to CSD
Preparation (8th session)
of draft
conclusions
and proposals
for action

II.d
issues Background Substantive Consideration

needing discussion discussion for report
further to CSD
clarification Preparation (8th session)
of draft
conclusions
and proposals
for action

II.e
Forest-related Substantive Preparation of Information/
work of discussion draft conclusions update
organisations and proposals
for action Consideration
for report
to CSD
(8th session)

CATEGORY III. 2nd session 3rd session 4th session

Identify Background Substantive Consideration
elements, discussion discussion for report
build a to CSD
global Preparation (8th session)
consensus and of draft
engage in conclusions
further action and proposals
for action

5. Following the guidance as regards modalities of work given by the ECOSOC in its decision establishing the IPF (E/1995/72) "intergovernmental organizations as well as the full range of non-governmental organizations and other groups would participate as observers in the".. Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, ..."on an open-ended and fully participatory basis".., in accordance with the rules of procedure and practises of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

6. The Intergovernmental Forum on Forests will draw inter-alia on the resources and technical expertise of the informal, high-level Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests and other relevant organizations within and outside the United Nations system, as well as secretariats of relevant conventions, with appropriate contributions from non-governmental organizations. The Intergovernmental Forum on Forests also encouraged inputs from major groups in all the activities in its programme of work.

7. Considering the complexities of the topics included in its mandate and in view of the fruitful contributions made by a large number of government- sponsored initiatives in support of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) process, the IFF welcomed any proposals that may be made by Governments to organize expert meetings or to conduct studies in support of the Forum's work and welcomed in particular regional approaches. The Forum suggested that all countries and organizations, planning or proposing to organize meetings or expert consultations relevant to the

work of the Forum should be guided by the following principles:

- a. They should be informal in nature
- b. They should strive to be in full conformity with the tasks assigned to the Forum
- c. They should be of an open-ended, transparent, and participatory nature
- d. They should strive for a balanced representation from countries, reflecting a range of interests and views of all interested parties, with a particular attention paid to the participation of women experts.
- e. They should ensure that the timing and topic under consideration harmonise as far as possible with the schedule of work of the Forum.
- f. The organizers, in the course of their preparation, should consult with the Co-Chairmen, the Bureau and the Secretariat of the Forum, as appropriate.
- g. They should be invited to prepare a report to be presented to the IFF.

8. The Forum welcomed the offers made by the governments of Austria and Indonesia, and by Costa Rica to host intersessional meetings in support of the deliberations of the IFF.

9. The results of such activities will provide valuable expert input to the work of the Forum. However, any decisions on policy recommendations, to be presented for consideration of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eight session, will rest with the Forum itself.

Secretariat and Financial Support to the IFF

10. Bearing in mind the fact that the Forum's Secretariat is supported by voluntary extra-budgetary contributions, the Forum appealed to Governments and international organisations to consider supporting its work through voluntary contributions. The Forum welcomed the pledges made and intentions voiced by some Governments during its first session, to provide financial support to the IFF process.

(1) This document has been posted online by the United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD). Reproduction and dissemination of the document - in electronic and/or printed format - is encouraged, provided acknowledgement is made of the role of the United Nations in making it available.

(2) The Global Forest Policy Project would like to thank the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) for making available the following report of the first session of the IFF. We are pleased to provide it for further distribution.