Primer on Underlying Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation

1. 90 % of the poorest people are dependent on the forests for their livelihood[i]. Indigenous peoples have lived there for centuries while other local communities have migrated more recently. Forests are to all of them a livelihood insurance. People who have traditionally been living in the forests, though financially poor, have often been essential in maintaining the forests. The 200 million indigenous peoples (4 %percent of the world's population) living in the forest have special claims to territories that, in many cases, harbour exceptionally high levels of biodiversity. Their claim rests on their long occupation of a particular place; their cultural, spiritual, and economic ties to the area; and their ability, in most cases, to manage it sustainably. The co-occurrence of cultural diversity and biodiversity can be quantified by comparing the distribution of language richness and species richness. Preserving indigenous territorial rights thus protects biodiversity and the local culture. There are also suggestions that indigenous peoples may through various traditional management practices contribute to the fostering of biodiversity[ii].

2. Migration of landless people into the forest might be planned or spontaneous. Where these people have been given the opportunity of secured land tenure and sustainable livelihood in the region they came from, they would not need to invade the forests or get involved in illegal activities, such as wildlife poaching and trade, forest encroachment. Lack of and weak property land and user rights both within and outside forests areas are underlying causes behind deforestation and degradation of forests. Research has shown that land tenure security and deforestation are inversely correlated[iii]. Equal access to land and other resources is a necessary condition for saving the remaining world forests.

5. A substantial part of logging is illegal[iv]. A major portion of the harvest, transport and processing of timber in both developing and developed countries does not comply with existing laws[v]. Commercial logging is by far the greatest threat to the world's old growth forests affecting 70 % of those forests[vi]. Loggers often break the law to reduce their tax burden, gain access to additional timber, avoid costly environmental and social regulations and buy the support of public officials. These forest crimes have many victims. Each year governments lose billions of dollars in tax revenue, the spread of corruption undermines the belief of government and the democratic process, many logging camps have sub-standard living conditions, and poor logging practices cause extensive environmental destruction and reduce long-term timber and forest production.

6. Large-scale tree plantations are a threat to communities and forests people the world over. Often large-scale tree plantations replace forests and are thus a direct cause of deforestation and loss of forest biological diversity. Such plantations typically monocultures of trees are bred for rapid growth, uniformity of management and high yield of fiber. Generally, they lead to loss of biodiversity on the lands they occupy because of their uniform structure and the use of non-native species in monoculture. Large scale tree plantations are therefore not *'best described as a class of secondary forests, where often the major objective is wood production'* (AHTEG summary report, page 3).

7. Biotechnology may inadvertently become another driver for inappropriate plantation development and concomitant loss of forests. Poorly regulated and controlled commercialisation of biotechnology in the forest sector poses new risks compared with agriculture. The long timeframe and typically remote locations of plantations mean that

8. At the recent UNFCCC COP 6 Bis in Bonn, the Parties have agreed that forests could be used as carbon sinks for CO2 emissions, both in developed and developing countries. The potential impact of afforestation, forest management, and reforestation on forest biological diversity, indigenous peoples and local communities, and other ecosystems has been largely described. Marketing forests for their CO2 value might lead to further privatisation of forests and lands.

9. As noted by the AHTEG summary the increased interest for forest certification is an encouraging development that should be fostered globally as rapid as possible (page 13, AHTEG summary report). Nonetheless, it is essential that forest certification schemes are voluntary and credible. Credible forest certification and labelling schemes that provide reliable information to consumers need to meet a set of criteria developed by various governments, environmental NGOs and forestry industry. At the moment there are four large certification and labelling schemes operational, or planning to launch their label imminently. It is of concern that of these four schemes, only one (the Forest Stewardship Council) meets the minimum requirements (See Annex) for a credible certification scheme.

10. The current mode of valuing forests for their timber value only should be shifted towards a mode that would value forests for their biodiversity and numerous ecological and social services, some of which may not be even quantifiable in terms of money.

11. The on-going debate on forest definitions has made it difficult to report on the actual status of the global forests, as different countries may use different definitions. The FAO definition of forests is misleading as it does not make any distinction between the quality of the forests (primary, secondary forests, plantation, young forests, older forests). With regard to forests biological diversity, such a definition is not suitable and a forest ecosystem definition should be applied to take qualitative aspects into account. Under the CBD framework, it is inconsistent to call for the implementation of the ecosystem approach and yet not distinguish between forests and tree plantations, two fundamentally different "ecosystems". It could even be argued that the current definition is an incentive to unsustainable practices as the removal of a non natural forests and its replacement with a larger area of monoculture even-aged plantation counts as an increase in 'forest' area, while in fact a high conservation value forest has been replaced by a tree crop.

12. Too often, at national level, forest biological diversity and forestry issues are considered as separate matters and are dealt with by institutions that have limited interaction. Biological diversity issues are usually attributed to research institutions while forestry issues are under the responsibility of field operating and policy making agencies. This situation has led to the implementation of forestry activities and programmes detrimental to forest biodiversity. In the ecosystem approach, forestry is included in forest biological diversity and a more integrated approach should be adopted at local and national levels. COP 5 has already called for the integration of national forest programmes within national biodiversity strategies

13. Despite their commitments at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, fewer than half the world's countries have adopted sustainable development strategies, and even fewer are implementing them[vii]. In order to address this issue, the WB, OECD and other institutions have endorsed a set of development goals. One of these reads as: "Implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2005 so as to reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015"[viii]. It is therefore essential to ensure that national biodiversity strategies feed into the national sustainable development strategies to be implemented by 2005, as advocated by the WB and the OECD

communities of commonly export orientated activities such as logging and mining,[x] infrastructure development (road, hydro-power) and agricultural projects. International trade in commodities trade has been either a predominant factor driving deforestation or a marginal one. Trade agreements and Structural Adjustments Programmes , specifically in the forest, mining, and agriculture sector need to screened for their environmental and social effects on forests, forest peoples, and local communities.

ANNEX

List of Major CBD decisions on forests

- Definition of sustainable forest management and the importance of using an ecosystem approach for sustainable forest management (COP2),
- Several submissions/statements to the IPF as an attempt to get some recognition of the role of the legally-binding CBD should have in forest policy (COP 2and3),
- Identification of 8 research and technological priorities, including "analysing measures for mitigating the underlying causes of biodiversity loss (COP 3),
- Establishment of a research oriented 3-year rolling programme on forest biodiversity (COP 4),
- Statement to the UNFCCC to ensure that biodiversity considerations are duly integrated in the considerations under the Climate Convention, particularly the impact on biodiversity of afforestation, reforestation, and carbon sequestration activities under the Kyoto Protocol (COP 4and5),
- Establishment of AHTEG to reinforce the focus on forest biological diversity and review the available information on the status and trends of, and major threats to, forest biological diversity and to identify options, priority actions, timeframes and relevant actors for the conservation and sustainable use of FBD (COP 5),
- Call for the integration of national forest programmes with national biodiversity strategies, to restore forests, and make forest protected areas networks more effective (COP 5),
- Definition of 12 guiding principles and 5 operational guidelines for applying the ecosystem approach (COP 5),
- Call for a review of the impact of climate change on forest biological diversity (COP 5),
- Adoption of a programme of work on article 8(j) and related provisions (COP 5),
- Decision to expand the term and focus of the work programme for forests conservation and sustainable use from research to practical action at COP 6 (COP 5),
- Participation of indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders in the implementation of the expanded work programme (COP 5),

ANNEX

Criteria for credible forest certification schemes

1. objective, comprehensive and performance-based standards, with clear environmental and social thresholds;
2. equal and balanced participation of all stakeholders;
3. labelling and credible chain of custody system;
4. independent, third-party assessments; adequate control mechanisms and stakeholder consultation;
5. full transparency to all concerned parties and the public;
6. certification at forest management level;
7. cost effectiveness and voluntary nature;
8. commitment from the forest owner/manager to improve forest management;
9. applicability to all forest sizes and tenure systems;
10. an effective and transparent complaints mechanisms;
11. repeatability and consistency;
12. a transparent and high quality accreditation procedure.

Developed by Fern on basis of governmental processes, notably the IPF Proposals for Action and the International Forest Industry Round Table in its report on Mutual recognition

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[i] DRAFT WB Forest Strategy

[ii] WWF and Terralingua (2001). Indigenous and traditional peoples of the world + ecoregion conservation. WWF I, Gland

[iii] CIFOR. The underlying causes of forest decline. Arnoldo Contreras-Hermosilla. June 2000. Occassional paper 30.

[iv] Illegal activities associated with the timber trade have been defined by the Royal Institute XXX FULL TITLE as illegal logging, timber smuggling, misclassification, transfer pricing, illegal processing, grand corruption, petty corruption.

[v] In Arnoldo Contreras 'Forest Law Enforcement: an Overview', CIFOR, 2001

[vi] Bryant, Nielsen & Tangley; The last of the frontier forests; Bryant ;WRI 1997

[vii] In A Better World for All, Progress towards the International Development Goals, OECD, WB, IMF, UN, July 2000

[viii] Id.

[ix] Baraclough, Krishna, & Ghimire (2000). Agricultural Expansion and Tropical Deforestation. Earthscan, London.

[x] These include: Forest (2001) Sold down the River; Forest Peoples Programme (2000) Undermining the forest; World Rainforest Movement (1999) High Stakes.