

THE TOP TEN PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

NGO/IPO document disseminated at UNFF 1

New York, June 2001

After several years of work, the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) agreed in 1997 on a number of Proposals for Action to address the forest crisis. The Proposals are still there, but Action is clearly lacking. A new body --the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests-- was established with a mandate to implement those proposals, but its work began and ended with few achievements to show. The work is now continuing at the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and nothing much appears to have changed. Within such context, NGO and IPO representatives attending the body's first meeting in June 2001 insisted on the need to implement existing commitments and listed 10 IPF proposals for action which could best begin to address the forest crisis and should therefore be implemented. What follows is the full text of the NGO/IPO document circulated at UNFF 1:

Forests perform crucial environmental functions and their conservation is key to planetary environmental stability. Forests are in crisis and this is an undisputed reality.

The first and obvious step to address this problem, is to identify the main underlying and direct causes driving it.

On top of the list of causes, is the lack of recognition of traditional territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities. Land tenure regimes must recognize these rights to set the basis for a sustainable and just use of forests.

The main actors for solving this crisis are the forest and forest dependent peoples themselves, who hold knowledge crucial to conservation and sustainable use of forests. Governments, international organizations and NGOs must work together with those peoples, supporting their efforts and creating the right socioeconomic and political environment for them to continue their lifestyles, as determined by them, and therefore ensuring forest protection.

The above implies putting in place mechanisms and processes for effective and egalitarian participation and benefit sharing.

Wood is only a minimal part of forests. Forest values cannot be adequately expressed in monetary terms. For that reason, valuation methods must take into account the cultural, spiritual and social benefits of forests and the result of such holistic valuation should form the basis for political decision making.

All forests need to be protected, but some types of forests in fragile ecosystems require special attention to avoid their degradation. This is evident in areas exposed to desertification and drought.

However, any effort towards forest conservation and sustainable use, may be undermined by the current globalization trends, where trade has become one of the major threats to this end. Potential impacts of trade on the integrity of forests and on the rights of forest peoples, must be urgently identified and adequately addressed.

To implement many of the solutions to the current forest crisis it is crucial to assign sufficient financial resources. North - South collaboration in making these resources available is imperative.

Most of the above are reflected in the following Proposals for Action produced by the IPF. What is now needed is to implement them with no further delay.

Relevant IPF Proposals for Action:

- 1) Encouraged countries, in accordance with their national sovereignty, specific country conditions and national legislation, to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate national forest programmes, which include a wide range of approaches for sustainable forest management, taking into consideration the following: consistency with national, subnational or local policies and strategies, and - as appropriate - international agreements; partnership and participatory mechanisms to involve interested parties; recognition and respect for customary and traditional rights of, inter alia, indigenous people and local communities; secure land tenure arrangements; holistic, intersectoral and iterative approaches; ecosystem approaches that integrate the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of biological resources; and adequate provision and valuation of forest goods and services (IPF Proposal 17-a).
- 2) Encouraged countries to establish sound national coordination mechanisms or strategies among all interested parties, based on consensus-building principles, to promote the implementation of national forest programmes (IPF Proposal 17-h).
- 3) To formulate and implement national strategies, through an open and participatory process, for addressing the underlying causes of deforestation, and, if appropriate, to define policy goals for national forest cover as inputs to the implementation of national forest programmes (IPF Proposal 29-a).
- 4) To formulate policies aiming at securing land tenure for local communities and indigenous people, including policies, as appropriate, aimed at the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of forests (IPF Proposal 29-c)
- 5) To provide timely, reliable and accurate information on the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, where needed, as well as on the multiple roles of forests, as a foundation for public understanding and decision-making (IPF Proposal 30-a).
- 6) Urged countries, in implementing their forest programmes, to take measures to rehabilitate and protect TFRK (Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge), taking into account that an essential condition for the effective protection

7) Requested the relevant United Nations organizations, international financial institutions, other international organizations and the donor community to work with developing countries, on the basis of national forest programmes, to identify their needs for sustainable forest management, estimate the resources required to finance such needs and identify the resources available to them for such purposes, including ODA (IPF Proposal 67-c).

8) Encouraged countries to begin a consultation process with all interested parties at the national, subnational and local levels to identify the full range of benefits that a given society derives from forests, taking the ecosystem approach fully into consideration (IPF Proposal 89-h).

9) Encouraged countries, in collaboration with international organizations, to make use of available methodologies to provide improved estimates of the value of all forest goods and services and allow for more informed decision-making about the implications of alternative proposals for forest programmes and land-use plans, taking into account that the wide range of benefits provided by forests are not adequately covered by present valuation methodology, and that economic valuation cannot become a substitute for the process of political decision, which includes consideration of wide-ranging environmental, socio-economic, ethical, cultural and religious concerns (IPF Proposal 104-a).

10) Urged countries and relevant international organizations to study the environmental, social and economic impacts of trade-related measures affecting forest products and services (IPF Proposal 128-a).