

NGO opening statement to multistakeholder dialogue, UNFF 2

TOPIC: “Review of Progress in the Implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action”

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I wish to make a general statement to the multistakeholder segment dealing with procedural issues regarding this dialogue as well as the topic of implementation.

Process issues:

At the outset, I wish to inform the participants that as far as NGOs are concerned there has been a great deal of uncertainty due to a lack of information about the organisation and modalities for this multistakeholder segment. Until today, some NGOs present at this session were not sure if the dialogue would even go ahead. NGOs maintain that, to be effective, multistakeholder dialogues like this one should have a long lead time for useful preparation, which must involve an inclusive partnership between the different parties to plan and execute all phases of the dialogue. All these points were made together with a series of specific proposals by a group of forest-related NGOs in correspondence with the UNFF Bureau last year. However, several of these key NGO proposals for multistakeholder dialogue were not acceptable to the Bureau.

In view of these difficulties, many of us here decided that we could not justify the investment of sufficient time and energy to prepare background papers and an opening statement on the substantive agenda issues for this dialogue. The NGOs participating today will therefore present the majority of their comments and views from the floor. Having said this, we want to stress that we believe that the concept of multistakeholder dialogues is a useful one with significant potential. We sincerely hope that adequate preparations will enable the dialogue at UNFF 3 to meet that potential far more effectively.

As regards immediate issues being discussed at this session, the UNFF must ensure an inclusive and balanced composition for its expert groups, including major groups. In addition, CPF must also ensure that it establishes transparent and multi-level CPF Network that involves major groups and civil society at *both* the international and national levels.

Regarding implementation, NGOs and indigenous peoples have made a number of significant contributions to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals:

- In 1999, NGOs in collaboration with some governments and UN agencies were the first to succeed in implementing one specific proposal for action: a global workshop on the *Underlying Causes of deforestation* (IPF.IB28c). This intersessional workshop discussed over 40 case studies, which identified 23 underlying causes of deforestation.
- The NGO-led Underlying Causes Initiative is now in its second phase. This phase will be dedicated to the organisation of national workshops to identify measures to combat the underlying causes identified by the 1999 intersessional.

- In 2000, NGOs undertook an independent assessment of implementation of the IPF PfA in 17 countries. The final assessment report, titled *keeping the Promise*, generated specific recommendations for improving implementation.

Mr. Chairman, NGOs have made and continue to make significant efforts to ensure that the new international arrangement on forests becomes an effective framework for promoting implementation. We maintain that to be effective, the UNFF must be innovative and avoid the production of further proposals for action and instead concentrate on facilitating the implementation of the existing IPF/IFF proposals. To achieve this, the UNFF must produce concrete outcomes that foster partnerships and initiatives that aim to solve implementation problems and replicate successes.

Mr Chairman, we recognise that this is a challenge for all of us that requires us to create new types of products from each session of the UNFF. For example, as many NGOs have suggested, such UNFF activities and outcomes could include:

- the exchange of country experiences to identify examples of successful implementation of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action and a collaborative needs assessment to identify obstacles to effective implementation and opportunities for innovative solutions;
- the creation of a formal database of successes and challenges, which is readily accessible to all those parties who would benefit from learning from it, including potential donors and partners that may wish to contribute to solutions;
- commitments by governments, intergovernmental agencies, CPF members and major groups to establish partnerships in order to eliminate constraints to implementation and to replicate model successes in a particular locality, country or region;
- a credible monitoring, assessment and reporting mechanism involving input from all interested major groups at the country level regarding progress in implementation of the proposals for action;
- agreements by CPF members, governments and other UNFF participants to streamline and/or reform their policies, programmes and institutions to facilitate the management, conservation and sustainable use of all types of forests;
- announcements of regional and other action-orientated initiatives to address critical forest areas and issues.

Mr. Chairman, NGOs also highlight the pressing need to ensure that the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals is of high quality and genuinely cross-sectoral. We note that many participants in the UNFF and members of the CPF consider that National Forest Programmes (NFPs) should be the primary vehicle for such co-ordinated implementation. However, we are worried by initial signs that some National Forest Programmes have so far failed to embody a truly cross-sectoral and participatory approach that takes full account of the social, cultural and ecological values of forests and the rights and views of indigenous peoples and other forest dependent communities. We are concerned that poor or rushed application of National Forest Programmes risks impeding effective implementation of the Proposals for Action and runs counter to the principles of sustainable forest management and the goals of the UNFF. We therefore urge the UNFF and CPF to ensure that implementation of National Forest Programmes rectifies these problems.

MSD, UNFF2, 6 March 2002

In short, National Forest Programmes must learn from and correct the mistakes of past forest policies and programmes. The drive for implementation must not repeat the errors of the past.

Mr Chairman, we will bring forward our specific recommendations regarding the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in the coming days. Never the less, we strongly urge all ministers in the high level segment to fully embrace principles of collaboration and partnership with major groups and make firm political commitments to take concrete actions to tackle the continuing global forest crisis.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.