



FERN Briefing Note

Effectiveness of the UNFF

Monitoring and assessing progress through reporting

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Introduction

Is the UNFF effective or not? At UNFF 2 (4-15 March 2002) Governments decided to evaluate the UNFF's effectiveness by developing a set of criteria, related to "*the implementation of the proposals for action*" and a set of criteria related to "*the monitoring and assessing of progress*", among others.

At UNFF 2 it was also agreed that the UNFF secretariat would propose to UNFF 4 a process "*to facilitate the carrying out of the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at UNFF 5*".

Therefore at this UNFF, UNFF 4, it is important to look at the fulfilment, or lack thereof, of government commitments based on the criteria developed by UNFF 2. **This briefing note looks at the results in relation to 'monitoring and assessing progress through monitoring', one of the three objectives of the UNFF.¹**

Monitoring and reporting requirements.

The criteria developed at UNFF 2 related to monitoring and assessing progress through reporting are, among others, the extent to which

1. countries, regions, organizations and processes respond to the call from UNFF and CPF members for voluntary reports, with a focus on implementation of the proposals for action;
2. trends, lessons learned, emerging issues and actions are identified and become apparent through these voluntary reports;
3. major groups have been encouraged to participate in developing voluntary reports.

It should be noted that for UNFF 2 there was no reporting format, which made it difficult to compare the different country submissions. For UNFF 3 and 4 a format was developed, which was used by most countries that did report to the UNFF. For UNFF 5 the secretariat proposes to develop a new format, which finally should include quantifiable benchmarks.

Outcome

For an overview see the table on page 3. All the reports can be found at www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar and www.un.org/esa/forests

¹ The mandate of the UNFF is to promote the management and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end. Its main objectives are to:

- Facilitate the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF) Proposals for Action at national, regional, and international levels
- Provide a forum for continued policy dialogue on forests among governments
- Monitor and assess progress at the national, regional, and global levels through reporting by governments and regional and international organisations

Quantitative outcome. Many forested countries, such as Brazil, Chile, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, France, Ghana, Venezuela and Suriname have never reported to any of the UNFF meetings. Only 8 countries – Austria, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, Mexico, Sweden and the United Kingdom have reported to all UNFF meetings. Of the 191 of the member states of the United Nations², less than 30% (52) has reported to one of the UNFF meetings, and only 4% (8) has reported to all meetings.

Despite the recognition of the importance of civil society participation in the development of these reports as detailed in the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action³, less than 50% of the reports submitted has been developed with consultation of different stakeholder groups.

Qualitative outcome. The reports submitted to the UNFF secretariat vary greatly in quality. For this briefing note we have not looked in great detail into the quality of all reports, but checked if countries have used the format developed by the UNFF secretariat as well as the size of the report. Because of the reporting format developed for UNFF 3 and 4, country reports following the format can be more easily compared. It is clear that reporting countries while describing the same issues, differ in how they address them.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the criteria developed at UNFF 2 for the effectiveness of the UNFF with regard to monitoring and reporting, the UNFF has been a failure. With regard to criteria 1 (reporting requirements): we conclude that the majority of countries has so far not adhered to the reporting requirements. Only 8 countries have reported to all UNFF meetings, and most of these are European countries. With regard to criteria 2 (trends and lessons learned) we conclude that only a few countries have reported on lessons learned and it is therefore impossible to generate conclusions or trends. With regard to criteria 3 (participation of major groups) it is clear that in 50% of the cases there has been no participation.

In short, based on the 3 criteria developed at UNFF 2 to judge the effectiveness of the UNFF, we can conclude it has not been effective. Even if countries would report to UNFF 5, progress cannot be monitored as too few countries have reported to UNFF 2, 3, and 4.

It is difficult to see how the UNFF at such a late stage could increase its effectiveness. The UNFF should as a minimum make sure that it creates effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms that include participation of all sectors of society. Obstacles encountered should be clearly listed in the reports as well as possible solutions. These obstacles and solutions must then form the basis of the policy discussion at the UNFF, with concrete recommendations as outcome. For more concrete recommendations see the joint NGO letter sent to the UNFF secretariat in May 2003⁴, as well as numerous submissions by FERN⁵.

Abbreviations used in the table

- X The country has presented a national report to the UNFF secretariat;
- L The report is large (in size) and of good or reasonable quality;
- N The report is of average size;
- S The report is insignificant (only a couple of pages);
- F The country has used the format presented by UNFF;
- NF The country has not used the format presented by the UNFF.
- * Available on the UNFF website prior to UNFF 4

² www.un.org/esa/forests, 3-5-2004

³ Notably proposal 17f

⁴ Available at <http://www.fern.org/pubs/ngostats/UNFFsign.htm>, 5 May 2003

⁵ Available at www.fern.org under publications and UNFF

Countries	Report to	Report to	Report to	Quality			Civil society involved		
	UNFF 2	UNFF3	UNFF 4	2	3	4	2	3	4
Algeria		X	X			F			No
Australia			X*			F			No
Austria	X	X	X	N	F	F	—	Yes	Yes
Belgium	X			L			—		
Burundi		X			NF			—	
Cambodia	X	X		N	F		—	No	
Canada		X			F			Yes	
China		X			NF			—	
Colombia		X			F			No	
Congo, Democratic Republic			X			F			
Croatia		X	X		F	F		Yes	Yes
Cyprus			X			F			No
Czech Republic		X			F			Yes	
Denmark			X			F			No
El Salvador			X			NF			—
Finland	X	X	X	N	F	F	—	Yes	Yes
Germany	X	X	X	N	F	F	—	Yes	No
Guyana			X			NF			—
Honduras			X			F			Yes
Hungary		X	X		F	F		No	No
India		X			F			Yes	
Indonesia			X			F			Yes
Ireland			X			F			Yes
Italy		X	X		F	F		No	Yes
Iran	X			N			—		
Japan	X	X		L	F		—	---	
Kenya		X			F			No	
Korea, Republic of		X	X		F			No	No
Lebanon		X			F			No	
Lithuania		X	X		F	NF		—	—
Malaysia		X			F			Yes	
Mauritius	X	X		S	F		—	—	
Mexico	X	X	X*	S	F	F	—	Yes	
Netherlands		X			F			—	
Nepal		X			F			Yes	
New Zealand	X	X	X	L	F	F	—	—	Yes
Norway	X	X	X	S	F	F	—	Yes	Yes
Pakistan		X			F			Yes	
Peru			X			F			Yes
Philippines		X			F			—	
Poland		X	X		F	F		No	No
Portugal	X	X		N	F		—	Yes	
Russian Federation			X			F			Yes
Serbia and Montenegro		X	X		F	F		No	No
Spain		X			F			Yes	
Sudan			X			F			Yes
Sweden	X	X	X	S	F	F	—	Yes	No
Switzerland		X	X		F	F		Partly	Partly
Turkey			X			F			Yes
Ukraine		X	X		F	F		No	No
United Kingdom	X	X	X	N	F	F	—	No	Yes
United States		X	X		F	F		No	No
TOTAL	14	37	32				—	15	14