Institutional Framework of the UN ECOSOC: the Case of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

Major Groups Initiative Workshop “Sustainable Forest Management: Designing the Vehicles for Securing the Means of Implementation”

Kathmandu, Nepal
(March 2-6, 2015)
CONTENTS

SCOPE OF THE PAPER

ANALYSIS & ALTERNATIVES FOR THE FUTURE

COUNTRY-LEVEL CONDITIONS TO MAKE IAF EFFECTIVE
Generic name for UN Forests: “International Arrangement on Forests” (IAF)

- Assess functioning of UNFF under ECOSOC
- Draw attention to strengths and weaknesses
- As stakeholders approach May 2015 decisions on future of IAF, propose alternatives for UNFF successor
  - Within ECOSOC
  - Outside it
ANALYSIS: CURRENT SITUATION - IAF UNDER ECOSOC

- IAF (as UNFF) has kept post-Rio forests dialogue momentum; little implementation
- Forum has adopted 4 Goals of Forests and non-legally binding instrument for IAF
- Not focused – too many resolutions & proposed actions, which little acted upon
- Secretariat low in UN hierarchy, few staff, over half budget is voluntary/extrabudgetary
- CPF voluntary, supports mostly dialogue less implementation, not coordinated in countries
ANALYSIS: CURRENT - IAF UNDER ECOSOC II

- Unable to mobilise adeq/sustained funding for SFM implementation
- Distant from regions – very global
- Energy and convening power diminished: ECOSOC location will inevitably focus on dialogue
- Forum narrowly focused among foresters, limited link to other processes/sectors
- Ongoing ECOSOC reform will do little to change challenges
ALTERNATIVES - DESIRED ATTRIBUTES

- Prioritise implementation but keep also dialogue
- Be focused and have strategic plan
- Have partnerships in regions – close to field action
- More accountable CPF successor that does more implementation
- Use CLIs, OLIs, MGIs & RLIs to promote action
- Be less exclusively on forests and foresters
ALTERNATIVES - FOUR OPTIONS

1. Keep under ECOSOC but adapt
2. Keep within UN but move to operational agency-UNDP, FAO, ITTO or new agency
3. Keep policy forum under ECOSOC but move implementation to elsewhere in UN
4. Move outside UN and tailor-make new implementation-focused institution
Keep under ECOSOC but adapt:

- Can Use Special Envoy on Forests to become >charismatic
- Less frequent global meetings & > regional ones
- Can use UN Regional Economic (UN) and FAO Forestry Commissions to support action
- Even lower in hierarchy relative to new HLPF
- ECOSOC will inevitably remain dialogue-focused, including due to IPF-UNFF habits
- Temptation to continue past impasses: glo fund, LBI
+/- OF ALTERNATIVE 2

To UN operational agency – to improve implementation, but all distant from HLPF:

- **UNDP**: + easiest link to funding and to climate change forestry; + country presence; - inactive in CPF.
- **FAO**: + UN leader forestry; + COFO & Reg Forestry Commissions; + country presence; - weak funding.
- **ITTO**: + stakeholder-friendly structures; – only a trade agreement; - only tropics focus; - low country presence; - weak funding.
- **New UN Forestry Agency?**: + can bring new energy; - international hesitation new structures; - funding?.

3/17/2015
+/- OF ALTERNATIVE 3

Keep policy forum under ECOSOC but move implementation to elsewhere in UN:

- Implementation could move to UNDP, FAO or ITTO, whose +/- already given
- Weigh relative capacities of candidate orgs to fundraise and to implement on ground
- Separation betw ECOSOC-based policy forum & action can further fragment forest agenda
- UN generally challenged on core funds & EB fundraising
\textbf{+/- OF ALTERNATIVE 4}

New action-focused institution outside UN:

- + can re-energise process and regain charisma / convening power e.g. if link to \textit{Davos Economic Forum} process
- + links forests better to general socio-economic development
- + Dilutes undue primacy of environment among E/E/S forest functions
- - Fear of the unfamiliar? On exit from UN
- - No country presence/network for action
COUNTRY-LEVEL CONDITIONS TO MAKE IAF EFFECTIVE

Irrespective of chosen alternative:

- **Governments**: prove “political commitment” by higher forestry budgets + investment incentives
- Unify / harmonise institutions for economic, environmental and social roles of forests
- Coordinate, do not just deal bilaterally with each external development partner incl CPF
- Designate effective IAF Focal Points
- **Donors in country**: respect Paris Declaration principles on aid harmony & coordination.

THE END