

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”**

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SCOPE OF THE PAPER

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

+/- OF ALTERNATIVE 1

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?.**

+/- 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**



+/- OF ALTERNATIVE 4

New action-focused institution outside UN:

- **+ can re-energise process and regain charisma / convening power e.g. if link to *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