

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

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

Prepared for the Major Groups Partnership on Forests<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This commissioned paper has been prepared by Mafa E. Chipeta ([emchipeta@gmail.com](mailto:emchipeta@gmail.com); Independent Policy Consultant, P.O. Box 51610, Limbe, Malawi). The views it expresses are entirely his own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Major Groups Partnership on Forests.

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**ACRONYMS**

AFF	African Forestry Forum
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASEAN-ASOF	Association of South East Asian Nations Senior Officials on Forests
BASD	Business Action for Sustainable Development
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CSD	UN Commission for Sustainable Development
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests (of the UNFF)
CLI	Country Led Initiative (of the UNFF)
DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECA	UN Economic Commission for Africa
ESCAP	UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCWA	UN Economic Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GOFs	Goals of Forests (adopted by the UNFF)
IAF	International Arrangement on Forests
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Centre
IFF	Intergovernmental Forum on Forests
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisation
IPF	Intergovernmental Panel on Forests
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organisation
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature (World Conservation Union)
MG	Major Groups (of the post-UNCED processes)
MGI	Major Groups Led Initiative (of the UNFF)
MYPOW	Multi-Year Programme of Work (of the UNFF)
MEAs	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
NLBI	Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (adopted by the UNFF)
OCTA	Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation
OLI	Organisation Led Initiative
RLI	Region Led Initiative (of the UNFF)
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development (the 1992 Rio Summit)
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
UNFFS	United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat
WB	World Bank

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

After two decades of an existence that has focused on policy dialogue, the UN Forests process [now labelled “International Arrangement on Forests” (IAF)] wishes to decide on the way forward at the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in May 2015. Judgement is required on the past in order to decide what would improve matters in future. The effectiveness of the UN forests process should be judged by the degree to which sustainable forest management (SFM) is implemented and increased. The forest process has for long operated under the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) umbrella. As May 2015 approaches, the Major Groups (MGs) see a window of opportunity to influence the reform so that the effectiveness of the whole process is improved.

This document is based on a review of the functions, achievements, shortfalls and challenges of the UN Forests process through UNFF under ECOSOC. A major shortfall is the inability of the process so far to lead to action, despite hundreds of “negotiated proposals for action” it has adopted over the years. With a belief that there could be room for reform to make it all more action-oriented even within the ECOSOC framework, the merits or otherwise of the following institutional alternatives for locating the IAF are profiled for consideration:

- a. keep the IAF forests process under the UN ECOSOC where it is now, with adaptations;
- b. keep the process within the UN but, arguing that policy dialogue has largely run its course, move it to a sectoral organisation such as FAO, ITTO, a UN Fund such as UNDP or a new UN Forest Agency;
- c. keep the policy forum under ECOSOC, administratively supported by DESA but create out of CPF an operational arm hosted in another UN agency or Fund for implementation; and
- d. move the process outside the UN and craft an institutional model tailored to the clamour for implementation of SFM.

A lot is at stake and decisions or choices should not be made lightly: they should follow logic but also pragmatism and realism in the pursuit of sustainable forest management – guided by the search for the greatest good for the greatest number.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

At its 11<sup>th</sup> session in May 2015, the UNFF, a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), will decide on whether to have a successor process and if so, what form this should take following nearly two decades of the dialogue-dominated global forests process that started in order to implement the decisions of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Assuming continuation and with a view to considering how best to continue their long association with the forests process, the major groups, led by the Major Groups Partnership on Forests have commissioned this study to look specifically at arrangements under the ECOSOC. They have also commissioned other case studies to look at a range of models for forest sectoral processes. In line with its mandated scope, the paper focuses on ECOSOC machinery under which the UNFF operates as a subsidiary. It then after outlining the study’s scope, background and methods of information collection, analyses the information collected and offers for discussion suggestions for improvement of the UN Forest process arrangements within ECOSOC, using a blend of ECOSOC and separate implementation unit location, within the UN but outside ECOSOC, and entirely outside the UN.

### III. AIM

The MGs want the international forests process to succeed and they want to play their part in such success. They recognise that the International Arrangement of Forests (IAF), of which the UNFF is only the current format, needs the orchestrated action of all five stakeholder groups (governments, the Secretariat, the CPF, Major Groups and Regional Institutions and processes). The MGs aim to influence the IAF transformation so that it adopts improved models of operation after UNFF11.

### IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study mandate is only on ECOSOC but brief reference is made to useful partnerships: at global level, ECOSOC has already linked to other organisations through the UNFF-affiliated Collaborative Partnership on Forests. For closeness to field action, ECOSOC fortunately controls UN Regional Economic Commissions which it can use to facilitate implementation of agreed IAF actions in addition to relying on other institutions such as the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions.

### V. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

During UNCED, the 1992 Rio Summit, forests featured in many discussions, with the core sectoral elements reflected in Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 "*Combating deforestation*" and the "*Non-Legally Binding Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of all Types of Forests*" (known as the "Forest Principles"). Alongside these, Rio adopted the *Convention on Biological Diversity* and the *Framework Convention on Climate Change*, for both of which forests are vital.

Three years after Rio, ECOSOC in 1995 asked the third session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) to review progress in follow up to the Rio Summit, using the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) as its secretariat. There remained much controversy about forests and a desire to see their improved management. Accordingly, in April 1995 and "*In order to pursue consensus and formulation of coordinated proposals for such action, the Commission [CSD] decides to establish an open-ended ad hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, under its aegis, to work in an open, transparent and participatory manner*".<sup>2</sup> The UN headquarters-based IPF fell under the CSD but had universal membership. By the time IPF completed its work in February 1997,<sup>3</sup> it had developed over 100 negotiated proposals for action on sustainable forest management.

The IPF evolved into the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), which operated from 1997 until 2000 when the UNFF succeeded it. Collectively, the IPF, IFF and UNFF are manifestations of what is currently called the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF). Unlike IPF and IFF, the UNFF is an independent subsidiary body of ECOSOC unique in its universal membership<sup>4</sup>. The UNFF orchestrated the negotiation of the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests [(NLBI) - "the Forest Instrument"] for adoption by the UN General Assembly on 17 December 2007; this instrument is often called the "International Arrangement on Forests" (IAF) which has the four global Goals of Forests (GOFs) listed in [Box 1](#).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/ga/search/> Document E/CN.17/1995/36. The CSD specifically recommended that "*The Commission on Sustainable Development recommends that the Panel should be an open-ended intergovernmental body. The Panel shall be composed of representatives from Governments. . . . Intergovernmental organizations and the full range of non-governmental organizations and other groups would participate as observers in the Panel, on an open-ended and fully participatory basis*".

<sup>3</sup> FAO: UNCED follow-up: an update of the IPF/IFF process. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-w9950e/w9950e08.htm>

<sup>4</sup> This in contrast to IPF/IFF which had the same limited membership of the CSD but was open-ended for participation of all countries.

Although the 2-decade UN Forest process has adopted many negotiated proposals for action and sound policies for SFM, the UNFF and its two predecessors have not significantly helped to increase implementation of SFM on the ground.

**Box 1: The four Global Objectives on Forests**

1. Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation.
2. Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people.
3. Increase significantly the area of sustainably managed forests, including protected forests, and increase the proportion of forest products derived from sustainably managed forests.
4. Reverse the decline in official development assistance for SFM and mobilize significantly increased new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM.

## VI. METHODS OF INFORMATION COLLECTION

To prepare this document, the internet has been primary vehicle for accessing the following core sources of information: reports of the UNFF itself; of ECOSOC and the General Assembly decisions on UNFF proposals and recommendations; and documents on the reform of ECOSOC. Most recently, reviews of past performance and future options for the UNFF have been orchestrated by the UNFF Bureau through exchanges among the members at a workshop in Vienna (October 2013); at two Ad-Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) meetings – in Nairobi (February 2014) and in New York (January 2015); and in October 2014 at a Chinese-sponsored Country-Led Initiative (CLI) in Beijing, China. These processes considered feedback from member governments, from the CPF, and from civil society (including MGs). The report of the Independent Team of Consultants fielded by the UNFF Bureau has been an important source of information: the independent consultants had interviewed a wide and representative range of global stakeholders, studied the country submissions to the secretariat, and attended the workshops and AHEG meetings which preceded submission of the team report in September 2014.

## VII. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### 7.1 THE CURRENT SITUATION - IAF UNDER ECOSOC

The burning excitement at the launch of the IPF appears to have long petered out; more exciting forest concerns have moved to centre stage, especially those about climate change. Within the “forests” community, holistic SFM is no longer to everyone’s taste: contention has emerged about whether forests should stand alone or always be viewed through the landscape lens; others are focusing on forests for carbon management. A high degree of forest agenda fragmentation is the current reality. From its high “charisma” upon launch in 1995, the forest process can no longer easily convene those who should listen and act, including the political class. If the future IAF does not regain its former “magic” it may not achieve practical impact.

The UNFF is the only international body that deals with “all types of forests” and trees outside forests. According to ECOSOC Resolution 2000/35 the IAF has five categories of stakeholder, unified by their shared desire to achieve SFM; they are: (a) ***The Forum***: comprising UN Member States and countries (197 in mid-2014). The Forum is a functional commission of ECOSOC with universal membership (Member States of the UN and its Specialized Agencies); (b) The United Nations headquarters-based ***UNFF Secretariat (UNFFS)***: which is a division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) that administratively supports the Forum and other UNFF stakeholders;(c) ***The Collaborative***

**Partnership on Forests<sup>5</sup> (CPF):** currently with 14 member organizations (including the UNFFS) that by invitation from the Forum voluntarily implement the resolutions of the Forum; (d) **Major Groups:** any of the following: indigenous peoples, NGOs, the scientific and technological community, women, children and youth, workers, business and industry, local governments, farmers and small land owners and trade unions; and (e) **Others:** relevant IGOs and regional organizations and processes.

The UN forests process is based at UN Headquarters because governments valued the UN location as a neutral venue which also offered ECOSOC's convening power and convenience in accessing political decision-makers. At the beginning, given the highly-contentious and political nature of Rio Summit debate on forests, a sectoral venue (such as sector leader FAO) would not have served the purpose. ECOSOC offered a "neutral but high profile" proven in practice since its establishment in 1946; by now it has 54 geographically-representative member governments elected by the General Assembly for overlapping 3-year terms.<sup>6</sup> ECOSOC is the UN's "foreign office" and coordinates all functions on economic, social and environmental issues and the internationally agreed goals related to them. ECOSOC is also the central link with the United Nations specialized agencies and with non-governmental stakeholders.

The CSD, which in 1995 had helped launch the IPF, was abolished in 2013 because, as the UN Secretary General commented in a General Assembly<sup>7</sup> statement: ". . . . . *over time, Member States, United Nations system organizations and major groups came to the conclusion that the Commission (CSD) had progressively lost its lustre and effectiveness, pointing to several shortcomings, including its lack of impact on the implementation of sustainable development policies . . . .*". Earlier, Secretary-General of the UNCED Maurice Strong highlighted the CSD's poor link to financing<sup>8</sup> as an important weakness. The perceived loss of lustre is almost identical to that existing for the UNFF process now, as is the poor link to financing. ECOSOC relies on voluntary funding from rich countries that rarely comes in the required amounts. The UN forests process faces an identical problem.

### 7.1.1 The Forum

The Forum is a formal club of governments, to whose 2-week biennial gatherings non-state stakeholders are invited. In 2000, ECOSOC gave as **Forum functions** to "*promote the implementation of internationally agreed actions on forests, at the national, regional and global levels, and to provide a coherent transparent and participatory global framework for **policy implementation**, coordination and development...through the UNFF process*". Between 2000 and 2013, the UNFF Forum met 10 times. Despite the name "forum", the ECOSOC's key expectations included that it serve as a framework for implementation.

The Forum is New York based but upon invitation also meets in other cities globally. The Ministerial segment of Forum sessions formalises decisions, some of which require ECOSOC and General Assembly adoption. In principle, having an IAF type institution at the UN headquarters with its easy proximity to meetings of so many other development processes sounds like a very powerful platform to advance an agreed forest agenda, and for attaining a high level of political commitment to it. The UNFF has the

<sup>5</sup> In alphabetic order, for full name see acronyms: CBD; CIFOR; FAO; GEF; ITTO; IUFRO; UNCCD; UNFCCC ; UNFF; UNDP; UNEP; World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF); World Bank and World Conservation Union (IUCN).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/>

<sup>7</sup> UN General Assembly (26 February 2013): Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development. Sixty-seventh session, Agenda item 20 (a). Report of the Secretary-General, Document A/67/757.

<sup>8</sup> UN falls victim to its inherent weaknesses. <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/node/30473>. Dec 15, 1992

following among its significant **achievements** for which the Forum as lead stakeholder must be given credit: development and adoption of the Forest Instrument and the GOFs; clarified the definition of SFM; negotiated proposals for action even if not acted upon adequately; clarified reporting protocols and key M&E elements for SFM; and collaboratively identified what the countries will probably never agree upon, viz (a) the global fund; (b) whether or not to have a legally-binding instrument on forests.

As decreed by Resolution 7/1 of the UNFF, recent UNFF Forum work has followed a Multi-Year Programme of Work 2007-2015 (MYPOW). The MYPOW is packed: the agenda of a biennial meeting may have 10 main headings and under them some 9 sub-headings. The session may also receive reports from preparatory inter-sessional processes, five outcomes from meetings of the Bureau and its events, 7 or more outputs from other sources - with interventions on all these by any of the over 190 member states. The MYPOW allows little room to adequately ventilate each session's specific theme, or to take up new and emerging issues: they are largely blocked by about 16 items from the past which MUST appear "at each session", reporting back on some ECOSOC matters, and feedback on inter-session activities sponsored by stakeholders.

Between the Forum's sessions, the UNFF Bureau oversees much activity: there are meetings of the AHEG, where the government representatives to the Forum can meet again but in the status of individual experts no longer taking official positions; there are also in-depth discussion events labelled *Country-led (CLIs)*, *Organisation-led (OLIs)*, *Major Groups-Led (MGIs)* and *Region-led (RLIs) Initiatives*, of which some of 32 have taken place since 2000. In a future IAF which attends more to promoting action, the CLI/OLI/MGI/RLI model could be re-designed to serve as fora for networking on action or even for fundraising to sustain actions on the ground.

The Forum has some observed **shortfalls and challenges**. Only some of them would be very different if the Forum was placed under a different umbrella than the current ECOSOC one. . The following are the weaknesses that are most pronounced in the Forum under its current ECOSOC institutional home:

- a. Inability to focus: During its various manifestations since the IPF till the UNFF, the IAF has discussed everything that can be considered about forests. Having failed to narrow down the agenda (MYPOW), the Forum also seems unable to select, focus and prioritise the work to be undertaken in following-up its decisions;
- b. A culture of adopting resolutions without necessarily implementing them: Despite not having delivered substantially on the 100+ IPF "negotiated proposals for action", in only three 2002-2004 sessions, the Forum 11 more resolutions; from 2000 to 2015, the Forum added a further seven areas of dialogue;
- c. Not being set up for action: The ECOSOC mandate refers to implementation but by habit the Forum has stressed dialogue and adoption of policy resolutions.<sup>9</sup> The closest it has got to action is to conclude "negotiated proposals for action"; and

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<sup>9</sup> To satisfy the desire for action in future even partly, however, the following are among key dimensions that need to be addressed: (a) adjust mandate of Forum and secretariat to clearly highlight facilitation of action alongside forum roles; (b) have CPF successor arrangements to cooperate also in their field programme; (c ) aggressively encourage CPF governing bodies to allocate resources for IAF engagement; (d) persuade member governments including in developing countries to increase their own funding for forests and to coordinate forest-related funds from all sources; (e) persuade aid-recipient member governments negotiate collectively with CPF organisations; and (f) exhort donor governments to respect Paris Declaration norms on coordination of their forestry interventions.

- d. Tendency towards speaking among the already converted: Despite the IPF being located in UN headquarters to take advantage of easy linkage to broader development fora, the forest process has become a “forest only” process, except to the extent that New York diplomats attend.

### 7.1.2 The Secretariat

The Secretariat has clear **functions**: under Resolution 2000/35, the ECOSOC requested that the Secretary General for the UNFF “*establish a compact secretariat . . . under established rules and procedures of the UN and strengthened through staff from secretariats of international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments . . . to service the Forum and support the CPF...*” In a recent update, UN-DESA highlighted four **main roles for the UNFFS**: *support the forest forum and track follow-up to its decisions; engage in substantive CPF activities as a member; be secretariat of CPF; service inter-DESA activities e.g. Rio+20; SDGs, including preparing briefs for them; and at times representing DESA, under which it operates.* Within the UN-DESA, the UNFFS represents one of four divisions, with core UN budget allocated biennially by the “Fifth Committee” and administrative support being extended by the DESA-wide Executive Office. The UNFFS core budget is minimal and can cover secretariat support to the forum but not also to supporting implementation or capacity building in member countries.

UN-DESA reportedly informed the IAF Independent Assessment Team that the following are directly attributable as **achievements of the UNFF Secretariat**: (a) raising the profile of forests in global agendas (*forest chapter of Johannesburg Plan of Action in 2002; forest chapter of Rio + 20; adoption of NLBI and its GoFs; awareness raising through the International Year of Forests and the International Day of Forests*); and (b) promoting cooperation among forest related organizations (*creation of the CPF mechanism*). Other parties add the secretariat contributions to improved understanding to critical elements for forest development (e.g. forest finance, roles of forests in economic development). Yet others mention capacity-building under the UNFF Facilitative Process.

The UNFSS faces **challenges**: headed as it is by a Director that reports through an undersecretary, the UNFFS is not particularly high in the UN hierarchy. For it to gain prominence requires coincidence of two things: (a) that the undersecretary of the day have extraordinary interest in forests (difficult to justify for a division with under 2% of DESA staff); and (b) that a particularly charismatic Director of the UNFFS itself is in place. The following are additional challenges:

- a. The secretariat has limited staffing: out of 426 DESA regular posts in 2002/3, UNFSS had 6, a number that remained unchanged till 2008/9 when it rose to 8. The respective shares in DESA for the two years were 1.4% and 1.8%. The UNFFS also has 8 extrabudgetary /seconded staff, but secondments have fallen from three to one now with level from up to D-1 to a sole P-3 now. Furthermore, as of 2014 the Secretariat had only one forester at P-3 grade; and
- b. The secretariat has only a nominal budget: Among 10 DESA Divisions/Offices, the UNFFS regular budget started at US\$1.56 million in 2002-3 and reached US\$3.35 million in 2014-15; its respective share was 1.5% and 2.4% of the DESA total in the two years.

Given that an adequate Fifth Committee allocation of core UN budget to cover all main functions would be ideal, in fact this has never come close. Instead, as early as 2002/3 the share of extrabudgetary sources was 46%; by 2014-15 it was about 51%; the extrabudgetary share average for the 2002 -15 period was estimated at 51.3%.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Proposed Programme Budgets - A/62/6 ( Sect. 9) 2000 – 2015 under MYPOW I and MYPOW2.

The observed shortfalls and challenges all arise out of the Secretariat's location under the current ECOSOC umbrella; they are worsened by the following factors:

- a. Unrealistic expectations of what the Secretariat can deliver: Judged by what the Forum asks the secretariat to accomplish, a *real challenge is the unrealistic expectations regarding what the secretariat can and should do; and*
- b. Weaknesses inherited from the very nature of parent-body ECOSOC: The UN generally and ECOSOC in particular are by nature mostly facilitators of global agenda and consensus-building through dialogue. They are a neutral forum and have endless patience for it. The UN and ECOSOC in particular and the UNFFS also have no power to enforce implementation of what is agreed. Secretary-General Maurice Strong of the UNCED observed that “. . . ECOSOC has long been considered and indeed correctly, one of the weakest reeds in the UN system. . . I have even said openly that sending it [UNCED] to that department would be like sending it to the dead letter ones”. . . .

With the following 29 subsidiary bodies, ECOSOC is overextended and cannot be expected to focus on sectoral matters like forestry: it has, inter alia, nine ECOSOC Functional Commissions –including the United Nations Forum on Forests, *Regional Commissions, Standing Committees, an Ad hoc body, Governmental expert bodies* (composed of governmental experts), *individuals Expert bodies, etc.* An ECOSOC strength that can potentially benefit a more action-oriented IAF is its four Regional Economic Commissions through which a regionalised IAF can work – for Africa (ECA), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Europe (ECE), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and Western Asia (ESCWA).

### 7.1.3 The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)

The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) was formed by ECOSOC Resolution No 2000/35 inviting the heads of relevant organizations to “*to support the work of the Forum and to enhance cooperation and coordination among participants . . .*”. This invitation also defines the **function** of the CPF, which evolved from a task force of 4 interested organisations at the time of the IPF. It has grown to 14 organisations chaired by FAO, with rotating vice-chairs. The CPF's voluntary nature gives it flexibility and informality but unfortunately also means it lacks a plan that sets out deliverables and a budget for action. Furthermore, its members face no sanctions if they do nothing on any Forum-requested follow-up: it is a coalition of both willing and unwilling partners, active and inactive members.

ECOSOC has from time to time renewed exhortations to governing bodies of CPF members to sustain support to the IAF, such as under ECOSOC resolution 2006/49 – para 24 /25 and ECOSOC resolution 2007/40 paras VI(r,s)]. The CPF has so far focused on supporting the Forum dialogue; *it has been a **think tank** rather than a development consortium*. An only significant exception was the National Forests Programme facility based at FAO, which helped formulate national programmes that could have led to practical action. Most CPF **achievements** relate to doing analytical and think tank work for the Forum. There have been some intangibles such as causing mindset change or improved commitment etc. From its own recent presentations at AHGEG1, the CPF mentions 8 joint initiatives; 8 collaborative activities; over 40 events; dozens of meetings; 10 documents; countless press and other publicity materials. Many of these are of course indicators of effort rather than of outcome or impact.

The CPF faces some **challenges** most of which arise from the lack of understanding among UNFF Member States that the CPF has limited resources, has no statutory mandate to act on its requests, and that CPF organisations already carry heavy mandates for their own governing bodies. The report of the IAF Independent Assessment Team expresses it best, noting that the CPF members “. . . *sometimes feel overwhelmed by demands of Member countries who do not realize that (a) CPF organizations already*

*have a full workload imposed on them by their own Governing Bodies; (b) they have no additional funding and human capacities to take on the additional load of UNFF/IAF-related work; and (c) the timing of demands for UNFF deliverables may not suit their work calendars, given prior or statutory commitments".* The following clarify areas requiring correction in future:

- a. Not having the obligation to act on any request by the IAF Forum: there is need for a more formal relationship than only acting "on invitation". MoUs could be concluded between the IAF and the CPF, backed by strategic plans and workplans which set out clear deliverables;
- b. Work without Scheduling, Predictability and Prioritisation: Recently FAO has presented the CPF's informality as both a blessing (flexibility) and a curse (unpredictability, funding and timing challenges etc). Some formalisation is essential: developing countries in particular cannot afford to rely on casual operational modalities.
- c. Bilateralism in Cooperation with Member States: In the field, each agency has bilateral agreements with member governments and despite Paris Club exhortations to work in a collaborative manner, CPF organisations all conclude separate agreements with both donors and aid-recipient governments and may end up competing or not being synchronised.
- d. Competition among members: in the field, CPF organisations compete because they all get funding from the same sources and target topics that donors most like to finance, such as (at present) REDD, REDD+ and forest illegality.

#### **7.1.4 Major Groups (MGs)**

The "Major Groups" (MGs) category was invented at UNCED; they give **important inputs** on topics related to safeguarding human economic and social welfare. But their participation in the IPF/IFF/UNFF processes has been lopsided, with business and industry and local authorities notably absent. The MGs have focused on policy dialogue and have even sponsored three inter-sessional Major Groups Led Initiatives; MGs could probably be adapted to engagement in action if the UNFF so reformed. The IAF Independent Assessment Team remarked that *"there is a perception in the NGO community that the UNFF's structural design and methods of work prevent it from being proactive, creative or responsive to current challenges"* and *"they also claim that UNFF, compared with other multi-lateral fora (e.g., CBD, ITTO) is seen to be "out-of-step" with the trend towards more inclusive policy processes."*

Given that UN meetings do not welcome individual private entities, MGs are present as associations of various kinds. In the UN Forests process, the current lead MG organisation is the Major Groups Partnership on Forests. If commercial private sector gets active in the UN Forests process, it would most likely come under private sector forestry associations within or outside the Business Action for Sustainable Development (BASD), the International Chamber of Commerce or the World Business Council on Sustainable Development.

The main **shortfall** is unbalanced MG participation in the UN forests process. The commercial private sector argues that the UNFF is too preoccupied with abstract policy discussions and does not effectively address its interest in timber harvesting. In reality, UNFF discussions and decisions pose neither incentive nor threat to the economic interests of commercial private sector entities. In fora where decisions of economic significance or which create economic opportunities, private sector attendance is high as exemplified by several MEAs.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Examples include (a) the chemicals industry engaged in supporting the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer; (b) strong participation by the oil industry in UNFCCC; (c) the oil tanker shipping industry providing support to the IMO ship borne oil pollution conventions and the UNEP regional seas protocols on oil spills; and (d) the pet and aquarium industries closely following and influencing the negotiations of CITES.

### 7.1.5 Regional Institutions and Other Stakeholders

Through ECOSOC Resolution 2006/49, the UNFF members decided to strengthen collaboration with forest-related regional and sub-regional bodies and stakeholders in implementing the Forest Instrument. Apart from the EU, which is a formal group member of the UNFF as it is of the UN organisations, the post-UNCED global forest policy process has not systematically engaged with regional organizations, with the possible exception of Forest Europe. The IAF Independent Assessment Team suggested deliberate partnership between the UN's own Regional Economic Commissions and FAO statutory Regional Forestry Commissions in working with a future IAF. Existing regional bodies such as ASEAN/ASOF (ASEAN Senior Officials on Forests), the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation (OCTA), COMIFAC and the African Forestry Forum (AFF) can attend sessions of these FAO Regional Forestry Commissions and can be engaged with the IAF in this context. The statutory FAO Regional Forestry Commissions could also be engaged for implementation if statutes could be reviewed and their capacity adapted to facilitating action by the countries they serve.

The AFF's success in raising the profile of Africa in the UNFF shows what is possible; it has helped to bring unity to Africa's voice in the process and could conceivably help similarly in promoting commitment of African countries to implementation. The Amazon Cooperation treaty has always been active on matters of sustainable management of that region's rich tropical ecosystem and in defending the right of member countries to sustainably utilise and not just preserve the Amazon forests. Cooperation can also be sought with prominent and attractive non-governmental processes which the regions use for discussing new economic priorities. The most appealing and key forum of the day is **the Davos process** which meets globally but also has regional fora. IAF could seek space for forests on the Davos agenda.

## 7.2 ALTERNATIVES FOR THE FUTURE

### 7.2.1 Attributes to Prioritise in the Future IAF

Regarding the future of the IAF, perhaps the most important message from the IAF Independent Assessment Team is to *"Shift emphasis from a forum that negotiates text and prepares resolutions to an effective arrangement and mechanism that facilitates dialogue and cooperation, contributing to the integration and implementation of SFM within the framework of the post-2015 development agenda, globally, regionally and nationally. Regional dialogue and cooperation in particular can serve as a bridge to action"*. The specific inclusion of bridging to action may be especially significant; what AHEG1 at Nairobi proposed for the CPF can be applied to the IAF process as a whole *"... a renewed ... could play an enhanced role in supporting the practical implementation of all the globally agreed forest targets and objectives, as part of the broader sustainable development agenda" . . . . it should also have a role in keeping forests high on the global agenda"*. Some attributes:

- a. An IAF that clearly mandates dual responsibilities for IAF and all its stakeholders: Forum, Secretariat, CPF successor, Major and other groups to all engage in (a) promotion of policy consensus; and (b) support to implementation of agreed proposals for action;
- b. A selective and focused IAF, guided by a strategic plan: Irrespective of which alternative among architectures is chosen for the future IAF, the process will almost certainly improve its attractiveness if it identifies a few priorities to work on and to gain recognition for; if it can be credited with inducing practical follow-up on the ground; and if the work at the Forum, the secretariat and the support mechanism (CPF successor) are all less scattered. The rigidities of the MYPOW and agendas

that are packed with repeat reviews of already discussed material would need to be abandoned. Instead, the new IAF should have a strategic plan (2015-25 has been mentioned) which has clear GoF-based goals and targets and also principles for prioritisation in the event that plans have to be adjusted;

- c. An IAF with strong partnerships close to the arena of action: If the IAF moves to increase its effectiveness on the ground, key partners will be regional institutions and processes. A 2008 Region-led Initiative<sup>12</sup> co-organised by Australia and Switzerland in Geneva offers considerable thinking to draw upon in pursuing this: it enhanced appreciation by participating governments and other organizations on how regional and sub-regional forest-related mechanisms/organisations and processes could in different and circumstance-specific ways engage with the UNFF's work so as to contribute to enhanced implementation of SFM. Appendix 3 shows some of the partnerships the future IAF could use to address areas of challenge for the IAF to date; these partnerships would apply irrespective of the IAF location alternative chosen (under or outside the ECOSOC frame);
- d. A CPF successor mechanism that can be held to account for agreed-upon priorities among the IAF decisions which should combine policy consensus and action tasks;
- e. Inter-sessional CLIs, OLIs, MGIs and RLIs that are adapted to promoting action: at regional and lower levels at least some of them can help action, including by fundraising for forests; and
- f. A forest process open to interface with non-sectoral dimensions of forests: The practice of dialogue fora being largely attended by only foresters among themselves needs toning down. It is not acceptable that forests, which were referred to 286 times in the UNCED Agenda 21 and in nearly half of its 40 chapters should be locked into a sectoral corner. Indeed, the future IAF could benefit from aggressively using the post-15 global development agenda to show that forests matter beyond their sectoral confines: forests cannot be reduced to only SDGs No 6 and 15, both of which are environment focused. The future IAF should complement the SDG environmental emphasis with attention to industry and trade as well as social roles of forests.

### **7.2.2 Where to locate the IAF? – Options**

With all the above attributes in mind, four future institutional alternatives for locating the IAF could be explored:

- a. to keep the IAF forests process under the UN ECOSOC as now, with adaptations;
- b. to keep the process within the UN but, arguing that policy dialogue has largely run its course, move it to a sectoral organisation such as FAO, ITTO, a UN Fund such as UNDP or a new UN Forest Agency;
- c. keep the policy forum under ECOSOC, administratively supported by DESA but create out of CPF an operational arm hosted in another UN agency or Fund for field implementation; and
- d. move the process outside the UN and craft an institutional model tailored to the clamour for implementation of SFM.

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<sup>12</sup> Report of the Australian – Swiss Region Led Initiative on Regional Input in Support of UNFF. Geneva, Switzerland. 28 – 30 January 2008: see [http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/cli/AUS\\_CH\\_RLI\\_report.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/cli/AUS_CH_RLI_report.pdf).

### **7.2.2.1 Retaining the ECOSOC Base for IAF, with Adjustments**

A prime argument for this is the continuity; a counterargument is that this could be continuity of inaction. There is high likelihood that it would be yet more policy dialogue; yet more resolutions; yet more refinement of SFM definitions and of the Goals of Forests; continuing impasse on the global forest fund and on whether to be or not to be legally-binding. What could be the future institutional architecture, given the ECOSOC reform and the disappearance of the CSD? The following could emerge and with it, some impacts of the UN location for an action-oriented IAF:

- a. **The Forum:** the IAF Independent Assessment Team has offered alternatives for this, giving relative merits and demerits of each; a decision will have to be made on it. Whether called a Forest Assembly or Global Policy Forum, it would serve pretty much like the current Forum with the exception of promotional assistance from a UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Forests. In all the options except one, the forum would meet biennially (as at present); in one option, it would meet every 4 years to allow more intersession regional processes or treaties to operate.

The improvements over the present are a Special Envoy in all options; the prospect of less frequent global meetings in one option (No 4) and insertion of regional ones; the adjustments to the CPF in one option (No 3) to include an implementation and fund-raising committee. The potential problems appear to be: still no clarity on funding – all options except No 3 with at least a committee to deal with funding and implementation; potential fuelling of discord in option 3 where legally-binding and non-legally binding processes streams would attempt to work in parallel. The options selected should aim to minimise problems observed to date and to maximise gains from some building blocks of reform offered by the IAF Independent Assessment Team (Appendix 2).

There are also procedural challenges. Just as at present, the IAF would remain a functional commission of the UN and therefore would retain the challenges currently observed: no direct link to field implementation although Regional Economic Commissions can be an avenue; a secretariat low in the UN Hierarchy and in the UN-DESA administration setup; convoluted reporting and (in the absence of the CSD) no clarity yet about how to access the High-Level political Forum (HLPF). Also as summarised in the box in Appendix 1, the HLPF process is quite complex to sell clear forest messages into, whether directly or in the context of the SDGs.

- b. **The IAF Secretariat:** The future secretariat needs to have two arms, one each for support to policy consensus building and to promoting implementation of agreed proposals for action. The capacity of the secretariat must increase well beyond 8 staff posts and a budget of less than 2% of the DESA total. An action orientation would require staff to man posts for regional facilitation, for the private sector, and for field funding facilitation. It also needs effective networks of competent regional and national focal points.
- c. **The CPF:** if the IAF remains in the ECOSOC umbrella, the CPF would necessarily continue to act “by invitation” since it has specialised agencies and non-UN bodies among its members. The CPF successor may adopt work planning and so have its inputs more predictable and could also choose to pay more collective attention to field action, for which it could also co-operate better. The CPF successor would become more formal, with more set workplans and budgets, and re-adoption of the system of “focal organisation” that leads on specified themes of work. If it grows beyond a certain size, it may have to take on more only as “associates” some for a time-bound deliverables and almost as contractors. Also, the drivers of competition for resources among CPF members (same donors, same topics which donors want to fund) are likely to remain. The IAF Independent

Assessment Team's option 3 if adopted could reduce fragmentation among forest processes by creating a "solidarity committee" of post-Rio forest-related mechanisms to feed into the Forest Assembly as part of the post CPF architecture.

- d. **Regional Networks:** convert the UN Regional Economic Commissions into outposts of UN headquarters with the function of promoting political will for forests in political regional organisations (such as African Union, ASEAN etc), monitoring progress in implementing agreed proposals for action, and facilitating networking among implementing countries.
- e. **Major Groups and Others:** UN procedures for non-governmental participation opened up most at UNCED and this was consolidated at Rio+20. Further change is unlikely to be dramatic, which means location of the IAF under ECOSOC will retain its limits on opportunities for MGs and regional organisations to influence the process. IAF should nevertheless continue sponsoring MG participation and could have a budget line specifically for this in its successive Secretariat Trust Funds. Participation of the business community in the global process is unlikely to be affected by where the IAF is located as long as the process remains "toothless" in threatening business interests or in creating business opportunities (such as field orientation) or otherwise benefiting them. Focus should be on engaging the private sector more at country level where it could find niches for profitable engagement.

IAF could take advantage of demonstrated interest by specific regional organisations and processes to engage more closely for implementation the 36 that have submitted reports to the last three sessions of the UNFF Forum: e.g. the seven that reported to all three sessions since 2006.<sup>13</sup>

### **7.2.2.2 Retaining IAF in the UN, but in a Sectoral Agency or UN Fund**

This possibility would be based on acceptance that the UN Forests process has since 1995 done all the critical policy dialogue that is needed to act upon. One should also accept that the areas of disagreement (the Global Forest Fund; the legally binding vs non-legally binding instrument) will not be solved any quicker by continuing. Furthermore, after 2 decades, time for action is overdue and a global policy dialogue process is not the obvious vehicle for going forward. The argument would then be that there is no particular benefit to retaining location of the IAF in ECOSOC whose main advantage is its convening power for promoting global compromise.

The argument would, however, recognise the advantage offered by the UN as a system due to its presence in all countries and in being more easily welcomed than other institutions by the majority of stakeholders. Given the desire for more attention to action, the Forum could move to a more operations-oriented UN agency, possible options to include being the following:

- a. **UNDP** – a UN Fund which would have the advantage of easiest link to funding. UNDP is also active in supporting climate change initiatives and could bridge funding for IAF SFM with REDD and other windows for climate change. UNDP is present in almost all developing countries where it generally coordinates all UN agencies; UNDP has, however, not been energetic within the CPF and it would have to be ascertained if its energy level for hosting the IAF would be adequate;
- b. **FAO** – the lead UN agency for forestry and all types of forests since the 1940s; task manager for the UN review of post-Rio progress for CSD3 which led to creation of the IPF that has evolved till the UNFF; chair of the CPF since the beginning; with a regional presence, including of Regional Forestry

<sup>13</sup> ACTO, AFF, AFPNet, ASEAN, Forest Europe, the Montreal Process and SPC.

Commissions and a country representatives network; host to COFO, the next highest forum for forests after the IAF. Is not easily linked to funding and past hosting of the National Forest Programme facility closed when no further funding was forthcoming;

- c. **ITTO** - a tropical timber trade agreement that has morphed into a general sustainable forest management organisation but with mandate still limited to tropical forests; membership balances producers with importers – so aligned along trade rather than SFM lines; despite broadening beyond trade and timber industry, still able to attract commercial private sector participation; membership and engagement geographically limited due to tropics focus – but structures could be adapted for universal application and engagement; or
- d. **A new UN Forestry Agency?** - If acceptability of any of the above three proves a challenge (resentment, even possible active rejection of a preferred choice by established organisations) a new organisation altogether could be considered under the UN – a “United Nations Forests Agency” perhaps. The governments could still question what value a new setup, probably with far less forestry expertise would add that could justify not simply moving the IAF to the established UN Specialised Agency FAO with its considerable body of forestry experts. But newness can bring new energy to the process and would carry no baggage. In broad lines, the new agency would have two main thrusts – support to the IAF policy Forum (think tank functions, events logistics, reporting); and support to field implementation (in cooperation with the CPF successor - advisory services for countries to prioritise interventions, publicising investment opportunities, programming and assistance to projects formulation, capacity building, fundraising (partly the Facilitative Process), private sector cooperation and deals brokerage).

The details of what other support units such as for administration etc, need not be elaborated here. Budget lines would be needed for both the forum support and for facilitation of action; also for partnerships – with regions, with major groups, for effective engagement with the commercial private sector at national level.

For various components of the IAF, the following could be considered:

- a. **The Forum:** Although located in a new host institution, IAF Forum should have the same main attributes as presented earlier for an IAF remaining in ECOSOC. It can still be called a Forest Assembly or Global Policy Forum. A UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Forests would still be desirable. The forum would ideally meet not more often than every 4 years to allow intersession action-oriented regional processes and treaties to operate. The **improvements** over the current situation would be as for the option of continued location under ECOSOC; in addition, however, would be *freedom from the very steep hierarchy within ECOSOC*. The forests forum would in this case be very close to the governing board of the host institution, whether the UNDP Board, the FAO Conference, or the ITTO board. Shorter reporting lines and collegial links to be Rio conventions could also be shorter. The **potential problems** could be access to the political class through the HLPF of the UN. Although all UN-affiliated, UNDP is only a Fund and has hierarchical access distance from the core HLPF institutional line; FAO is a specialised agency and is one step removed; ITTO is in theory only a trade agreement (co-sponsored at establishment by UNCTAD and FAO) which might face even steeper access problems;
- b. **The IAF Secretariat:** Moving the secretariat out of UN-DESA would probably improve its strength most in FAO, where the IAF secretariat could draw upon the largest single collection of forestry expertise in any international organisation. This not be the case in UNDP (a pan-development organisation with no special forestry focus) or in ITTO (a timber-trade agreement). FAO and ITTO

would tend as secretariats to keep a narrow sectoral status – a tradition of talking among the already converted; UNDP could break this and facilitate cooperation with fora for cross-cutting themes (trade, finance etc) and other sectoral processes (SDGs, Rio Conventions);

- c. **The CPF:** UNDP, FAO and ITTO are already CPF members – fully familiar with its strengths and weaknesses. All are party to the internal dialogue regarding needed reforms, including proposed adoption of workplans and more prioritised work habits. All three also have field engagements – FAO at one time implemented many UNDP-funded projects. They have worked with each other: the challenge is to have the hosting of the IAF by one a reason to cooperate more rather than to be jealous of each other in the field. UNDP location would probably do best on funding matters for action: it is more easily entrusted with money than other UN bodies. It would therefore have the best chances of accessing or working with all forest related funds and processes that support upfront investments (including GCF, REDD+, FLEGT, PROFOR, GEF, the FAO Forest and Farm Facility, and other multilateral development donors and agencies). Any of the three potential hosts could make good use of the IAF Independent Assessment team option 3 proposal of reducing fragmentation among forest processes by creating a “solidarity committee” of post-Rio agencies to feed into the Forest Assembly as part of the post CPF architecture;
- d. **Major Groups and Others:** UNDP and FAO both combine extensive country presence in the developing world with a pyramidal structure that has global, regional and country offices. Engagement with regional forest-relevant processes would therefore be relatively easy. FAO or UNDP would be easier than ECOSOC in that they already have regional and country structures in use for development and technical assistance operations. The ITTO is a far smaller organisation and has a less extensive country presence. For participation of non-governmental stakeholders in forum activities, rules would probably differ little from the ECOSOC location except in ITTO which can more easily open up to profit and non-profit entities.

### ***7.2.2.3 Retain the Forum under ECOSOC but Establish an Implementation Arm in a Sectoral Agency or UN Fund***

This hybrid solution would combine the continuity in policy-dialogue arrangements (keep the Forum as currently in ECOSOC) with creation of a new body focusing on field implementation hosted in UNDP, FAO or ITTO. A **challenge** would be how to avoid this being a new source of fragmentation in the forests process and instead to ensure seamless coherence between the forum in one institutional location and an implementation unit elsewhere. Some might argue that the lack of reporting lines between the IAF and the CPF led to exactly this and things would not be much worse; better in fact because of a clearer mandate to focus on implementation.

### ***7.2.2.4 Exit from the UN to a Tailor-Made Arrangement***

The proposal would be to craft and launch a brand-new, non UN organisation with a two-thrust format (policy forum + implementation support), so resembling the “United Nations Forests Agency” mooted earlier. But there is little appetite for the creation of new organisations and structures. Already there is some concern at the IAF Independent Assessment Team suggesting creation of a Forests Assembly, Global Policy Forum or equivalent. To choose this option for the future IAF would therefore require demonstration that there are very great disadvantages from adopting option 1 (retain current ECOSOC-based IAF location but reform); option 2 (move IAF to another UN body – a Fund or a Specialised sector agency); or option 3 (make a blend of options 1 and 2). It would take extremely good salesmanship to overcome the inertia – the comfort of being in familiar and stable UN territory.

Perhaps one possible consideration to make this leap desirable would be to create or affiliate with an existing process that has very high charisma, able to inject renewed vigour and enthusiasm into the forest process. At present, the horizon shows only the **Davos Economic Forum** process having this attribute. But it is attractive as a forum and has never been associated with implementation of anything it suggests. One could also link the IAF to periodic (4-year span) **World Forestry Congresses**. But this too would have only the forum rather than implementation role. It has the further quality of being a super venue for foresters to speak to the already converted – fellow foresters. It also has no reporting lines to the global architecture for economic or political management.

In raising these options, one is already suggesting the possibility of creating a completely new organisation, with assurance of resentment, even possible active rejection by all established organisations from the UN itself to FAO and other CPF members. Their arguments are predictable: duplication, spreading already inadequate resources thin among organisations, loss of institutional memory etc.

### 7.3 CREATING COUNTRY-LEVEL CONDITIONS FOR THE IAF TO BE EFFECTIVE IN IMPLEMENTATION

The IAF can be reformed, with the ambition of its policy dialogue leading to action. But for this action to “take” in practice the countries must be ready for it – they must create enabling conditions and arrangements to make it work. Ideally they must have at least some of the money to invest; some core capacity to implement programmes; public commitment and readiness to take on engagements for the long haul. Especially in aid-recipient countries, the conditions must be made more “assistance-ready” including *inter alia*:

- a. Governments should make “political commitment” to forests a reality: including by prioritising forest in budgets more. In addition making policies that allow establishment of funding mechanisms, including offering incentives for private players to find forests investments worthwhile.
- b. They should also arrange for inter-sectoral links on forests development and for the now-separated dimensions of forest interventions (for climate change, for watersheds, for anti-desertification, for biodiversity) to be more unified;
- c. Government procedures to negotiate external co-operation should not remain bilateral between each CPF organisation and government but at least go through a clearing house so all CPF members are aware of what is being agreed with each of them;
- d. Country-based donors should follow the Paris Declaration principles for aid effectiveness by having their assistance harmonised and coordinated, including through the lead donor system; and
- e. Governments should make effective use of their IAF Focal Points in engaging with all the above.

### VIII. CONCLUDING WORDS

The time for action on the UN forests process “negotiated proposals for action” is long overdue. The policy clarity on AFM has largely been achieved by the process and areas of continuing disagreement are known and need not deter action for those who are ready. Provided the countries are willing to move on funding in innovative ways, by prioritisation within their budgets, and by policy change to attract private capital into forestry, practical progress can be made without awaiting perfection in global policy compromise.

The question to face is whether this new need to act can be handled effectively by the IAF under its ECOSOC umbrella, under it but with reforms, by moving it all to elsewhere in the UN system, or going completely outside the UN family in a new organisation.

Possible options have been offered for discussion by the Major Groups community and selection of what option or blend from several options to suggest to the international community when it discusses the future of the post-2015 forest process after UNFF11. Bold choices must be made and timid steps may not suffice: if action has to be taken, fear of funding hurdles cannot stand in the way because solutions have to be found outside the deadlock over the global forest fund. To attract support, the process itself needs to regain vigour and capacity to excite: narrow forestry windows have gained such charisma – forests for climate change, for example. If the same is not done for holistic SFM, then the ambition will be so much harder to fulfil.

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### **Appendix 1: The New ECOSOC – Overview of Functions and Working Methods**

General Assembly resolution 68/1 contains the most far-reaching reform of the Economic and Social Council in over a decade. The ECOSOC role has been enhanced as: (a) A leadership forum for policy dialogue and recommendations; (b) The lead entity to address new and emerging challenges; (c) A forum for the balanced integration of sustainable development; and (d) An accountability platform for universal commitments, monitoring and reporting on progress at all levels. Key elements for this to be achieved are below:

1. **A new High-Level Political Forum:**
2. **An annual theme:**
3. **A new integration segment:**
4. **New reporting processes:**
5. **Increased visibility:** The new ECOSOC will aim to increase its visibility and impact of its work through broader outreach.
6. **More efficient oversight:** Annual reports of the subsidiary bodies will be considered at one of the four new Coordination and Management Meetings (CMMs) to be held throughout the year,
7. **The changing development cooperation landscape:** Development assistance is profoundly changing in the 21st century. Non-state actors, such as civil society, philanthropies, and the private sector are taking an increasing share in international cooperation.
8. **Seeking increased focus on Accountability:**
9. **Greater responsiveness to non-state actors:** the working methods of the high-level political forum on sustainable development carry a long tradition of full participation of major groups and other stakeholders.
10. **A redesigned calendar for the Council:** The high-level segment (HLS) of the Council will, for 2014 and 2015, continue to include an annual ministerial review (AMR), including national voluntary presentations (NVPs), reviewing progress of the MDGs and IADGs by member States. The Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) will continue to be held biennially, including in 2014. Beginning in 2014, ministerial-level meetings of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will be incorporated into the high-level segment.
  - a. The integration segment, a new element of the meeting structure of the Council, will consolidate all the inputs
  - b. The operational activities for development segment will be held immediately following the first regular sessions of the executive boards of the funds and programmes of the United Nations system.
  - c. The humanitarian affairs segment will be held in June,
  - d. New Coordination and Management Meetings (CMM), to be held regularly to perform the oversight functions of the Council embedded in the coordination and general segments. The Council will also interact with the Secretariat of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) during the CMM.

This remains a complex process (see Box).

### Reformed UN ECOSOC process – Complexity Remains

ECOSOC is under reform but indications are that despite this, it will not become a lean and agile body since the large number of committees and commissions listed earlier will remain in place. According to the 20 September 2013 General Assembly resolution [68/1](#) "Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council" replaced the CSD with the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

But the procedural arrangements for any topic to reach this new forum have, if anything, become more complex. The core 2-week HLPF events will continue to have nested meetings, several of which will overlap and so be difficult to cover well at the same time. ECOSOC will also retain separate processes for cross-cutting themes such as finance, sustainable consumption patterns, and trade – all of which are important for forests but will remain too exhausting to attend to fully in addition to the forest process itself. The HLPF has a number of ECOSOC programme cycle elements, from among which the IAF could choose which to interact most with:

- a. High-Level Segment - decision *A/RES/67/290* gives the following elements for the High Level segment:
  - *High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)* - meets (a) briefly every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government, and (b) for eight days every year under the ECOSOC, including a three-day ministerial segment;
  - *Annual Ministerial Review (AMR)*, held annually since 2007, assesses progress in the implementation of the UN development agenda;
  - *Development Cooperation Forum (DCF)*, held on a biannual basis since 2007, reviews trends and progress in development cooperation;
- b. Integration Segment, held annually since 2014, promotes UN and non-UN balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development; and
- c. Partnership Forum, held annually since 2008 and linked to the theme of the AMR, pursues collaboration with the private sector and foundations [*the forests MGs could consider making this one gateway to the HLPF*].

There is also the annual Operational Activities for Development Segment, which provides overall coordination and guidance for United Nations funds and programmes (such as UNDP) on a system-wide basis.

Source: <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/>

## Appendix 2: Use of Future IAF Building Blocks to Improve UN Forest Process Effectiveness

Future IAF Building Block	Possible MG use of Building Block to Influence Forests process	
	How to use for raising effectiveness	Benefits to IAF from using the Building Block
1. UN Secretary-General's <b>Special Envoy on Forests</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider securing from IAF stakeholders the <i>secondment of an MG person with good public relations skills</i> to the immediate office of the Special Envoy to assist the communication efforts of the Envoy.</li> <li>Encourage Envoy to bridge with HLPF.</li> <li>Build bridges between Special Envoy and the forest-based commercial private sector which has failed to engage with the forum process.</li> </ul>	<p>Multiple but coherent outlets for main messages: via Forum; via Special Envoy; via regional fora.</p> <p>Improve political links to the HPLF members</p>
2. Global “ <b>UN Forest Assembly/IAF Global Policy Forum</b> ” – to replace current Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hopefully with less frequent sessions than every 2 years, devise agendas that are less packed with “report-back” and therefore stale items.</li> <li>Promote linkages to HLPF including its high-level segment.</li> <li>Promote linkages also with intersession activities at regional and lower levels so Assembly can discuss practical implementation</li> </ul>	Less repetitiveness of a too frequent global forum
3. Regional <b>Forest Assemblies</b> <sup>14</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seize opportunity to stress regional and lower level.</li> </ul>	Stronger link to field action
4. <b>UN-Forests</b> : a unitary CPF substitute science / policy / implementation interface platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find way to automatically attend post CPF successor meetings but focus on field action elements of its work not yet more policy forum documents.</li> </ul>	Complement influence on the Forum with that on organisations active in the field.

<sup>14</sup> It is assumed that the future IAF will wish to capture the momentum for regionalization that the HLPF itself has adopted, viz: - According to **HPLF Issue Briefs No 2** “*The Regional Dimension in the Post-2015*”, Member States continued to acknowledge the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development. They invited the United Nations Regional Commissions to contribute to the work of the Forum, including through annual regional meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders. In response to 67/290, Regional Consultations/Regional Forums on Sustainable Development (RFSD) have been convened in the regions”.

Future IAF Building Block	Possible MG use of Building Block to Influence Forests process	
	How to use for raising effectiveness	Benefits to IAF from using the Building Block
5. A multi-pronged CPF substitute: the <b>SFM Implementation Partnership</b> , with subcommittees on:	See below:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science/Technical committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on applications to implementation.</li> </ul>	Build on strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-Rio solidarity group (ex-CPF)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be active: use mechanism to (a) minimise adverse impacts of forest agenda fragmentation into many post-Rio UN bodies and non-UN initiatives; (b) use opportunity to break tendency to deal with forests in isolation.</li> </ul>	Broaden – in this way help mainstream forests in whole SDG agenda.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation &amp; Financing Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus attention at regional/operational level not on trust funds for global dialogue.</li> <li>• Promote funding mobilisation for actual investment proposals, including through pledging events.</li> <li>• Try to replicate at regional level</li> <li>• Emphasise focus on willing parties, including brokerage of links between donors and recipients, between private and public investors (BCSD to help?)</li> </ul>	Get close to or engage in action.
6. CoP of sub-set of countries adhering to Legally Binding Instrument on Forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure cross-flow of experiences between the legally-binding and non-legally binding countries</li> </ul>	Gain honest broker profile
7. UN IAF <b>Secretariat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have two thrusts: Reduce focus on <u>facilitating policy dialogue</u> by also having staff capacity concerned with <u>promoting implementation</u> (not directly implementing) including regional desk officers.</li> <li>• Strengthen funding facilitative process and link with the Implementation &amp; Financing Group of the Assembly</li> <li>• Seek seconded officers for commercial private sector engagement and for promoting regional/national action.</li> </ul>	Be seen as more than a talk-shop facilitator

**Appendix 3: Menu of Partnerships for Success for Future IAF Structures**

Main purpose of partnering as linked to main weaknesses observed for the IAF process so far	Global Process or Forum		Regional Process or Forum	
	Core ECOSOC	Key Non-ECOSOC Partners	Core ECOSOC	Key Non-ECOSOC Partners
Ensuring adequate and sustained <b>political will</b> at all appropriate levels but this time translated beyond resolutions into fund-allocation for SFM operations	HLFP  Secretary-General's Special Envoy	World Economic Forum (side-event)	UN Regional Economic Commissions	Regional Political /Economic Organisations e.g. ASEAN
Improving ability to mobilise <b>reliable and adequate funding for SFM</b>	-	World Bank/GEF  Business Council for Sustainable Dev (BCSD)		Regional Development Banks;  Regional BCSD
Establishing better <b>links between the global forests forum process and field action</b>	-	-	UN Regional Economic Commissions	FAO Regional Forestry Commissions & similar CPF fora.
More effectively <b>engaging the commercial private sector</b>		Business Council for Sustainable Dev (forestry elements)		ITTO private sector focal points  Regional BCSD
Mobilising civil society to engage in <b>"in-kind"</b> contribution to practical realisation of SFM		Major Groups Partnership on Forests		Regional chapters of Major Groups Partnership on Forests