

POLICY PAPER PREPARED BY MAJOR GROUPS PARTNERSHIP ON FORESTS FOR UNFF11

(This was prepared based on Major Groups Global Workshop held in Kathmandu, Nepal)

THE NEW UNITED NATIONS BODY FOR FORESTS

Policy Discussions

Major Groups believe that there is a pressing need to raise the profile of forests to the highest level in the global arena and to clearly articulate the importance of forests; to have an effective platform to work with, and ensure that, governments are active, accountable and transparent in their national commitments around sustainable forest management (SFM)

It is contended that the global community should set-up an institution that will bring synergy to address the fragmentation and conflicts between different UN Agencies, Parties and bodies involved in forest-related issues; to bring a holistic approach that mobilizes not just governments, but the MGs that disseminate policies on the ground; to facilitate the implementation of over 270 recommendations that have been identified and agreed upon.; and to ensure the interests and rights of all Major Groups and in particular local communities and Indigenous Peoples.

In discussing the issue, Major Groups noted the following concerns and limitations of the current UNFF process: due, in large part, to the fact that UNFF is hosted within ECOSOC, it has been solely a dialogue-based process without the capacity to take dialogue to implementation; lack of commitment and political will from Member States on SFM, in part due to other perceived priorities such as climate change; minimal success in centralizing discussions and actions on forest issues which are often discussed outside of UNFF on other platforms or at other UN bodies; the absence of specific targets and indicators for the global objective on forests; the limited resources to ensure robust MGs participation despite its Agenda 21 commitments; and a bias towards the economic valuation aspects for forests with minimal consideration of the social, ecological and cultural benefits and challenges of forests.

The above notwithstanding, MGs acknowledged the following benefits of UNFF as an intergovernmental platform that all governments are members of; over 270 recommendations have been developed and agreed upon; it has been a driving point for international forest policy dialogue, and has raised the attention of the international community to forest-related issues through the establishment of both the International Year of Forests (2011) and the International Day of Forests (March 21); through the CPF, it has helped to open cross-institutional dialogues among major international players regarding forests issues and other UN agencies.

In moving forward therefore and in line with the observations made, the following policy recommendations were advanced.



Recommendations

- a) MGs propose a new multi-stakeholder UN Forest Organization, not under ECOSOC, that addresses both policy and implementation, and that will deal with forestry issues in a coordinated and holistic manner at the global, regional, national and local levels.
- b) The issue of forests is included in several of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, goals 6, 15 and 17). The new UN body on forests should be responsible for the high political level dialogue on SDGs on forest related issues, including the review of policies and the establishment of dedicated funds to implement its work on the ground. The new body should also be responsible for coordinating all institutions and mechanisms engaged on forest issues within the UN, and to bring synergies between different agencies and stakeholders.
- c) The new UN body on forests must meet more regularly than bi-annually, and/or must have specific working groups that both keep momentum going on agreed upon issues, and address key emerging issues.
- d) Given that current funding for forests is largely within UN funds tied to the climate sector, the new UN body for forests must have a stronger role in providing input into the use of these funds.
- e) While recognizing that such a change may lead to slower agreements from the Parties, MGs propose that forest recommendations need to be legally binding so that there will be a compulsory mechanism to push governments to adopt, and act upon, recommendations already made by the UNFF as well as future recommendations developed by the new UN body on forests.
- f) MGs need to be part of the governing structure of the new UN body on forests.
- g) The new UN body for forests should serve as the coordinating body of CPF.