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Programme element II.d (i)

Matters left pending and other issues arising from  
the programme elements of the IPF process

Underlying causes of deforestation; traditional forest-  
related knowledge; forest conservation and protected  
areas; and research priorities

Note by the Secretariat

SUMMARY

The present note by the Secretariat is prepared as a supporting document to a background discussion on underlying causes of deforestation; traditional forest-related knowledge; forest conservation and protected areas; and research priorities as a part of Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) programme element II.d of the programme of work set out in the report of IFF on its first session (E/CN.17/IFF/1997/4). This note reviews some of the major issues, key to the topics under consideration, and summarizes some of the main conclusions discussed; proposes a process to prepare a background document as a basis for the report of the Secretary-General; and notes other events preparatory to the substantive discussion scheduled for the third session, including a global workshop on the international underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation and their relationship to national underlying causes, and an international expert consultation on "Research and information systems in forestry". It takes note of the outcome of the third and fourth meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity related to traditional forest-related knowledge, and to forest conservation and protected areas.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The present note by the Secretariat is prepared as a supporting document to a background discussion on underlying causes of deforestation; traditional forest-related knowledge; forest conservation and protected areas; and research priorities as a part of category II.d of the programme of work set out in the report of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) on its first session (E/CN.17/IFF/1997/4). At its first session, IFF emphasized the need to build on the positive results achieved by the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) of the Commission on Sustainable Development and to consider matters left pending as well as other issues arising from the programme elements of the IPF process. This note therefore recalls the conclusions and proposals for action relevant to the above issues as contained in the final report of IPF (E/CN.17/1997/12). This note also reviews some of the major issues, key to the topics under consideration, and summarizes some of the main conclusions discussed. The note proposes a process for preparing a background document as a basis for the report of the Secretary-General and also notes other events preparatory to the substantive discussion scheduled for the third session.

2. Although the four topics under consideration in this note are interrelated, the note will treat them separately and, owing to the restrictions on the maximum length of official United Nations Secretariat documentation, each of the topics will be treated in a summary fashion.

## MANDATE

3. Category II of the IFF's programme of work mandates the consideration of "matters left pending and other issues arising from the programme elements of the IPF process".

4. The section of the mandate stipulating the work under IFF programme element II.d, concerning the topics of this note, states: "(d) Consider, inter alia, ... analysis of underlying causes, in particular international causes, including transboundary economic forces of deforestation and forest degradation, taking into account the historical perspective and the pressures exerted on forests by other sectors, notably agriculture, in the quest for food security; traditional forest-related knowledge (TFRK), consistent with, inter alia, the terms of the Convention on Biological Diversity;<sup>1</sup> ... identification and definition of global and regional research priorities, taking into account national priorities."

5. All of the above issues will receive substantive discussion by IFF at its third session.

II.d (1): Underlying causes of deforestation

Introduction

6. IPF noted, inter alia, "the critical need to understand the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, which are often country-specific. A focused approach is needed that concentrates on reversing the most damaging processes and promoting the most effective and beneficial measures. It is also important to recognize local initiatives that could counter current trends in deforestation and forest degradation, especially among indigenous and local communities".

7. The Panel also noted that "it is important to consider historical dimensions and to learn from experience. Many of the factors causing deforestation or forest degradation interact, and some are synergistic. Most causes are social and economic in character. Although some courses of action, such as unsustainable timber extraction, are linked to the forest sector itself, inappropriate policy choices and approaches in other sectors can also influence deforestation and forest degradation". The Panel noted a number of potential underlying causes, including production and consumption patterns, land tenure patterns, land speculation and land markets, illegal logging, illegal land occupation and illegal cultivation, grazing pressures, unsustainable agriculture, the demand for fuelwood and charcoal to meet basic energy needs, refugee-related problems, mining and oil exploitation, natural climatic events and forest fires, discriminatory international trade and trade distorting practices, poorly regulated investment, structural adjustment programmes, external debt, market distortions and subsidies, including those for agricultural commodities, poverty and demographic pressure.

8. In terms of underlying causes, the IPF proposals for action urged all countries, with the support of international organizations and the participation of major groups, to take, inter alia, the following significant steps:

(a) Case studies (proposal for action 31 (a)): "to undertake case studies using the diagnostic framework ... in order to identify (the most important) underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation; develop and test the usefulness of the framework as an analytical tool in assessing options for utilization of forest and forest lands"; and "refine it, disseminate the results and apply it more widely as appropriate";

(b) In-depth studies (proposals for action 27 (a) and (b)): "to prepare in-depth studies of the underlying causes at the national and international levels of deforestation and forest degradation; to analyse comprehensively the historical perspective of the causes of deforestation and forest degradation in the world, and other international underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, including transboundary economic forces";

(c) Global workshop (proposal for action 28 (c)): "to support the convening, as soon as possible, of a global workshop on the international underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation and their relationship to national underlying causes";

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(d) Land tenure and benefit-sharing (proposal for action 29 (c)): "to formulate policies aiming at securing land tenure for local communities and indigenous people, including policies, as appropriate, aimed at the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of forests";

(e) National strategies (proposals for action 29 (a) and (b)): "to formulate and implement national strategies, through an open and participatory process, for addressing the underlying causes of deforestation and, if appropriate, to define policy goals for national forest cover as inputs to the implementation of national forest programmes" and "to develop mechanisms, such as environmental impact assessments, to improve policy formulation and coordination, through an open and participatory process".

9. A special note on forest fires: Among several other underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, illegal logging, combined with land clearing for shifting cultivation, has been indicated as greatly increasing the incidence of forest fires around the world. These land-use activities replace the tall, dense, naturally fire-resistant forests with agricultural lands and degraded forests that are highly flammable. During the prolonged drought of the past season which affected half of Amazonia, and vast forest areas in Indonesia, Central America and Mexico, many of these flammable ecosystems burned. When seasonal drought is very severe, such as during the El Niño event of 1997-1998, even virgin forests become more vulnerable to the ravages of fire. Unfortunately, as a result of mismanagement, land-use changes and malpractices, many natural forests ecosystems are also losing their natural capacity to protect themselves from fires. This issue will be analysed as an important factor among the underlying causes of deforestation in the report to be prepared for the third session of IFF.

Implementation of the proposals for action on underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation

10. At the nineteenth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 27 January-7 February 1997, the Governing Council, by decision 19/22<sup>2</sup> on the Environment Fund budgets, approved the revised proposals for 1996-1997 and proposals for 1998-1999 which included activities for follow up to the work of IPF. IFF programme element II.d: underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation is reflected in Fund subprogramme 1.2 entitled "Caring for biological resources" as one of the priority activities. It is envisaged that a report entitled In-depth Analysis of Underlying Causes and their Regional Variances of Deforestation and Forest Degradation; Strategic and Policy Options to Address the Underlying Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation will be presented by UNEP to the third session of IFF to support substantive discussion by the Forum on this topic. The report will be based on:

(a) Contributions by countries concerning national and international underlying causes affecting them;

(b) Comprehensive analysis of the historical perspective of the causes of deforestation and forest degradation in the world and other international underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, including transboundary economic forces.

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11. At the first session of IFF, the particular interest of non-governmental organizations in contributing to the IFF deliberations on underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation was welcomed by the Panel. At one of the plenary meetings, a group of 20 non-governmental organizations presented a joint statement expressing their willingness to contribute to a joint initiative on national and international underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation. The non-governmental organizations' statement included the following:

(a) An offer to organize, in partnership with Governments, a global workshop on national and international underlying causes referenced above. The statement invited Governments and international agencies to join non-governmental organizations as partners in organizing this workshop, and suggested the workshop could include:

(i) Presentations by Governments of their case studies using the diagnostic framework proposed by IPF, with a focus on problem-solving and solution-oriented approaches to address underlying causes;

(ii) Presentations by non-governmental organizations and indigenous peoples on relevant reports and case studies on underlying causes;

(b) A proposal that the workshop organizers would prepare a synthesis report of the results, focused on solution-oriented approaches, and that this report would be available to IFF as one of the documents on the progress being made in implementing the IPF proposals for action on underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation.

12. The non-governmental organization process is coordinated by an organizing committee of which UNEP is a member. The coordination of this process will be carried out through the work of two committees, an organizing committee and a steering committee, each composed of representatives of the Government of Costa Rica, UNEP, non-governmental organization representatives from seven geographical regions and a representative of an international indigenous people's organization. A number of Governments, including those of Australia, Finland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, have indicated willingness to make financial contributions.

13. In its adopted work programme on forest biological diversity (decision IV/7), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, at its fourth meeting (Bratislava, May 1998), recognized the importance of further research on analysing measures related to the underlying causes of loss of forest biological diversity. Besides unsustainable forest management practices, there are other causes associated with the loss of forest biological diversity in forest ecosystems. These include habitat transformation, harmful alien species, pollution, erosion, uncontrolled forest fires and poverty. There is a need for a better understanding of the underlying social, cultural and economic causes of forest biological diversity loss, and for the enhancement of measures for mitigating the impact of these causes.

Preparations for substantive discussion

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14. The conclusions of the global workshop will be reflected in the report of the Secretary-General for the third session of IFF, to be prepared by UNEP. Countries, international and regional organizations, indigenous people's organizations and non-governmental organizations will be invited to contribute actively to the preparation of this report by submitting relevant inputs and information on case studies to the lead agency. All interested parties will be encouraged to participate in the global workshop.

#### II.d (2): Traditional forest-related knowledge

##### Mandate

15. II.d: "Consider other issues arising from the programme elements of the IPF process needing further clarification. Consider, inter alia, ... traditional forest-related knowledge (TFRK), consistent with, inter alia, the terms of the Convention on Biological Diversity."

##### Major issues

16. The major issues on TFRK were recognized by the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Bratislava, Slovakia, May 1998, as follows:

17. In its decision IV/7, the Conference of the Parties adopted a programme of work on forest biological diversity, aiming, inter alia, to identify traditional forest systems of conservation and sustainable use of forest biological diversity and to promote the wider use and role of TFRK in sustainable forest management and the equitable sharing of benefits, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

18. In its decision IV/9, the Conference of the Parties established an ad hoc open-ended inter-sessional working group on the implementation of article 8 (j) and related provisions to, inter alia, provide advice as a priority on the application and development of legal and other appropriate forms of protection for the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

19. In its decision IV/8, on matters related to benefit-sharing, the Conference of the Parties established a panel of experts appointed by Governments, composed of representatives from the private and the public sectors as well as representatives of indigenous and local communities. The mandate of this panel would be to draw upon all relevant sources, including legislative, policy and administrative measures, best practices and case studies on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing arising from the use of those genetic resources. In this decision, the Conference of the Parties also requested the financial mechanism of the Convention to give special emphasis to the programme priorities for funding initiatives by eligible parties, such as, inter alia, within biodiversity projects, other specific benefit-sharing initiatives, such as support for entrepreneurial developments by local and indigenous communities, facilitation of financial sustainability of projects promoting the sustainable use of genetic resources, and appropriate targeted research components.

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20. In its decision IV/15, on the relationship of the Convention with the Commission on Sustainable Development and biodiversity-related conventions, other international agreements, institutions and processes of relevance, the Conference of the Parties emphasized that further work was required to help develop a common appreciation of the relationship between provisions of the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, including Trade in Counterfeit Goods<sup>3</sup> and the Convention on Biological Diversity, in particular on issues relating to technology transfer and conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources, including the protection of knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

21. Furthermore, in its decision IV/9, the Conference of the Parties invited the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to take into account in its work the lifestyles and the traditional systems of access to and use of the knowledge, technologies and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and the relevant recommendations of the Conference of the Parties. It further requested the Executive Secretary of the Convention to seek ways, including the possibility of negotiating a memorandum of understanding with WIPO, to enhance cooperation between the Convention and WIPO on issues arising from article 8 (j) of the Convention and related provisions.

22. In the forthcoming years, major outcomes of the implementation of these decisions would include:

(a) Analysis of human impacts on forest ecosystems, enhanced ability to prioritize research needs and to apply results, and better understanding of the role of traditional knowledge in ecosystem management so as to minimize or mitigate negative influences, and promote the positive effects;

(b) Expansion of research capacity to develop and assess options incorporating the applications of traditional knowledge so as to minimize or mitigate negative influences, and promote the positive effects;

(c) A better understanding of the ecosystem approach as it relates to conservation and utilization of forest biological diversity, and an elaboration of the linkages to other work under the Convention, including the incorporation of article 8 (j).

Proposed process of preparation for substantive discussions at the third session of IFF

23. In accordance with decision IV/7 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in the period between the second and third sessions of IFF, the Executive Secretary of the Convention, in implementing the work programme on forest biological diversity, will actively continue collaboration and cooperation with the IFF secretariat and relevant institutions. In this regard, the Executive Secretary of the Convention is requested to transmit decision IV/7 of the Conference of the Parties to IFF at its second session. The key activities that will contribute to the preparation

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of the report of the Secretary-General for the third session of IFF are the following:

(a) Identification of traditional forest systems of conservation and sustainable use of forest biological diversity and promotion of the wider application, use and role of TFRK in sustainable forest management and the equitable sharing of benefits, in accordance with article 8 (j) and other related provisions of the Convention;

(b) Promotion of research on TFRK, with the full involvement of its holders, and advancing of a wider understanding and use of the knowledge gained;

(c) Implementation of requests to the financial mechanism of the Convention to consider the operational objectives of the programme of work on forest biological diversity as constituting guidance for funding in the field of forest biological diversity and strong encouragement of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to assist in the implementation of the programme of work at the national, regional and subregional levels.

24. In the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General for the third session of IFF, appropriate use will be made of the work of the ad hoc open-ended working group on article 8 (j), established by decision IV/9 of the Conference of the Parties, and other relevant activities established under other United Nations bodies, international agencies, organizations, Governments and major groups, in particular with regard to TFRK.

25. As outlined in decision IV/8 on access and benefit-sharing of the Conference of the Parties, the inter-sessional open-ended meeting of the Conference of the Parties will explore options for access and benefit-sharing mechanisms and will start work on developing a common appreciation of the relationships among intellectual property rights, including the protection of knowledge, innovation and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and will make recommendations for future work. Moreover, the panel of experts appointed by Governments, to be set up by the Conference of the Parties, will explore all options for access and benefit-sharing on mutually agreed terms, including guiding principles, guidelines and codes of best practice for access and benefit-sharing arrangements.

26. In its decision IV/9, the Conference of the Parties further requested that case studies on intellectual property rights, including existing sui generis systems and/or adapted forms of protection of the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, be compiled by the Executive Secretary of the Convention, for transmittal to WIPO and for use in initiatives on legislating on the implementation of article 8 (j) and related provisions of the Convention.

II.d (3): Forest conservation and protected areas

Introduction

27. The Convention on Biological Diversity states (preamble) that "the fundamental requirement for the conservation of biological diversity is the in situ conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings". In situ conservation (article 8) is complemented by ex situ conservation (article 9).

28. In its decision III/12, concerning the programme of work for terrestrial biological diversity: forest biological diversity, the Conference of the Parties recommended to the IPF, inter alia, that strategies for sustainable forest management should be based on an ecosystem approach, which would integrate conservation measures (for example, protected areas) and sustainable use of biological diversity.

29. The Conference of the Parties, at its third meeting, inter alia, also identified the following research and technological priorities: the assessment of ecological landscape models, the integration of protected areas in the ecosystems approach to sustainable forest management, and the representativeness and adequacy of protected areas networks.

30. In its decision IV/I on the ecosystem approach, the Conference of the Parties acknowledged the need for a workable description and further elaboration of the ecosystem approach.

31. The Conference of the Parties invites parties to address the issue of alien species as regards the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and to incorporate activities related thereto into their national strategies, programmes and action plans.

32. In its decision IV/7, in which it adopted the work programme on forest biological diversity, the Conference of the Parties identified as one main objective to identify the contribution of networks of protected areas to the conservation and sustainable use of forest biological diversity.

Background

33. The proposals for action related to forest conservation adopted by IPF and reflected in its final report (E/CN.17/1997/12) are reflected in several IPF programme elements as shown below:

34. Paragraph 40 (b): The Panel invited countries and relevant international organizations, especially the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to collaborate with indigenous people and forest-dependent people who possess TFRK to promote an internationally acceptable understanding of TFRK, and to identify, respect, preserve and maintain TFRK, including innovations and practices that are relevant for the conservation of forest biological diversity and the sustainable use of forest biological resources.

35. Paragraph 44: Protected areas need to be established and supported, where appropriate, in fragile and endangered ecosystems affected by drought and desertification, as part of in situ conservation strategies.

36. Paragraph 46 (c): The Panel urged countries to establish protected areas to safeguard forest and related ecosystems, their water supplies, and historical and traditional uses in appropriate localities in areas affected by drought, particularly in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid regions.

37. Paragraph 58 (b): The Panel urged countries with low forest cover: (v) to establish or expand networks of protected areas, buffer zones and ecological corridors, where possible, in order to conserve biodiversity, particularly in unique types of forests, working in close liaison with the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant international environmental agreements.

38. The Government of Australia has announced its willingness to sponsor an in-depth study on protected areas in support of the work programme of IFF.

Major issues for discussion at the third session of IFF

39. Recommendations from the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to IPF constitute the main issues. The impact of deforestation and forest degradation are in the form of soil erosion, loss of biological diversity, deterioration of the quality of life and reduction of the options for development.

40. The present situation calls for urgent and consistent action for forest conservation and conservation in protected areas. Areas should be selected and managed so that maximum biological diversity is preserved.

41. An important component identified at the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in the work programme of the Conference of the Parties on forest biological diversity (decision IV/7) relates to further research on assessing ecological landscape models, the integration of protected areas in the ecosystem approach to sustainable forest management and the representativeness and adequacy of protected area networks. Conservation of forest biological diversity should be carried out both by establishing protected areas and by taking into account plantation forests. The outcome of this programme of the Convention will also include further development of methods to integrate protected areas in sustainable forest management, as well as to reduce gaps in knowledge in the areas of fragmentation of habitats and population viability, and include mitigation options such as ecological corridors and buffer zones.

Proposed topics to be included in the report of the Secretary-General for discussion at the third session of IFF

42. The Forum may wish to consider:

(a) Approaches and mechanisms towards the establishment of a system of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity;

(b) Development, where necessary, of guidelines for the selection, establishment and management of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity;

(c) Regulation or management of biological resources important for the conservation of biological diversity whether within or outside protected areas, with a view to ensuring their conservation and sustainable use;

(d) Definition of protected areas in terms of their aim, size and approaches to management.

II.d (4): Research priorities

Introduction

43. The International Workshop on Integrated Application of Sustainable Forest Management Practices (Kochi, Japan, November 1996) (see document E/CN.17/IPF/1997/9) concluded, inter alia, with the following proposals for action:

44. A new culture on land-use planning and forest research and extension recognizes and accepts that integration of a wide variety of environmental, social and economic values, needs and aspirations is essential to achieve sustainable forest management practices ... recognizes the linkages between the field level and the international level ... involves institutional changes and linkages including new mechanisms for decision-making ... Research in this new culture is stakeholder-driven, focused and practical. Planning is iterative between planning levels and evolutionary over time; it results in implementation of planning decisions. The products of this emerging culture will be a new generation of applied research and its inclusion in all levels of planning processes is an important supportive tool necessary for achieving sustainable forest management.

45. Subsequently, the report of the IPF Co-Chairs also called for "measures to focus and improve coordination of forest research and development, possibly through the development of a strategic framework for a global forest research network, making full use of existing organizations".

46. In response, the Governments of Indonesia and Austria, assisted by the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), have organized an international expert consultation on "Research and information systems in forestry" to be held in Austria from

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4 to 11 September. The Forestry Research Support Programme for the Asia and Pacific Region (FORSPA) organized an International Seminar on "Emerging institutional arrangements for forestry research", assisted by FAO, IUFRO and CIFOR in December 1997 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

IPF proposals for action

47. The first session of IFF recognized eight issues arising from the IPF process and needing further clarification, namely (a) underlying causes of deforestation; (b) traditional forest-related knowledge (TFRK); (c) assessment, monitoring and rehabilitation of forest cover; (d) forest conservation; (e) research priorities; (f) valuation of forest goods and services; (g) economic instruments, tax policies and land tenure; and (h) supply and demand of wood and non-wood forest products and services.

48. While the above configuration implies that "research and research priorities" constitute a distinct and separate topic, an alternative perspective is that the IPF and IFF processes have identified the great number of crucial gaps in existing information and knowledge (as regards the other seven outstanding items listed in the preceding paragraph). In respect of each of these, enhanced information gathering and analysis (in other words, research) are urgently required, in order that better-informed decisions may be made and forest management at the local, national and global levels improved. "Research" should not be considered an object of discussion per se, but rather the crucial means whereby science can enhance and advance discussions on all other outstanding issues, especially when its focus is on the real needs of clients who participate in and contribute to the research.

49. It is now widely agreed that some new research-coordinating mechanisms are necessary to strengthen both the individual scientific units and the linkages between them and to enable a "worldwide web of forest researchers" to function effectively. These research coordinating mechanisms and networks need to be closely linked with real-world forest management problems. Ideally, an international framework for interdisciplinary research collaboration would:

- (a) Provide a support mechanism for scientists from developing countries;
- (b) Promote comparative and widely applicable analysis;
- (c) Allow a division of labour to maximize efficiency and minimize wasteful duplication;
- (d) Enable scientists from different disciplines to interact constructively;
- (e) Ensure the critical mass of effort needed to make important breakthroughs;
- (f) Facilitate research in practical ways, by improving accessibility of large global data sets used by researchers in individual countries;
- (g) Provide a focus for priority strategic research questions identified in close collaboration with clients;

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(h) Serve as a vehicle to guide allocation of funds;

(i) Provide access to existing information including databases, compendia and other value-added information products;

(j) Provide a "bulletin board" to promote rapid electronic communication.

50. Many of these functions are currently performed through the activities of IUFRO, CIFOR and FAO. These three (different but complementary) organizations have highlighted the need for:

(a) Recognition of the need for a forest research agenda greater than, and qualitatively different from, the one that existed in the past, which was national or local in scope and oriented mainly towards industrial timber production;

(b) Strengthening of mechanisms to enable research communities to contribute adequately to the seeking of solutions to those researchable problems identified in forums such as IFF;

(c) Dismantling of financial and institutional impediments to effective and enhanced cooperation, whether these occur at the national or the international level.

51. Furthermore, IUFRO, CIFOR and FAO proposed that:

(a) They needed to work with other international forestry and environmental research institutions to facilitate such coordination and develop a strategic framework for global forest research;

(b) The international community (especially those in charge of official development assistance (ODA)) should recognize the need for this new, improved international coordination mechanism, whose objectives also include capacity-building and strengthening of national and regional research systems, and consider how the forest research community, funding agencies and research users could harmonize strategies, ensure adequate resources for research and disseminate results;

(c) The Commission on Sustainable Development recognizes the opportunities for improved forest science to be addressed in IFF and the need for a "strategic framework for global forest research".

#### Major issues

52. Forums such as IFF and policy and decision makers at the national and regional levels need access to unbiased sources of authoritative information, and objective analyses of the technical and scientific options. This is essential not only for formulating the possible path forwards, but even for clarifying the sources of existing weaknesses in knowledge and understanding, and setting the agenda for both research and policy action. Improved quality of, and access to, scientifically sound information and research are an integral part of consensus-building around the need for action, and the direction of future international action on forests. Yet there are still frequent

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disagreements about basic information on forest areas, rates of change, management options, underlying causes of deforestation and so on, as well as about, inter alia, the future role of plantations, the potential for rehabilitation of degraded or non-forested lands, and traditional forest-related knowledge. Here lies an opportunity to identify the most important information gaps that must be filled, in order to analyse more succinctly the current state of the world's forests, and their use, management and conservation, and, then, what still needs to be done to improve the situation.

53. A longer-term goal would be to assist in laying out the architecture of an international institutional framework that will continue to support research aimed at resolution of high-priority problems facing international (in other words, global and regional) forestry and forests, and at capturing new opportunities; that is to say, the goal would be to try to ensure that, in the post-IFF international institutional framework, the need for and the potential role of research are explicitly recognized and adequately supported. Another important goal is to enhance the capability of forest researchers in developing countries to diagnose and solve their existing and yet-to-emerge forestry problems. New international institutional arrangements for forests need to include a detailed and well-conceived mechanism elaborated towards the goal of strengthening national capability, as well as better cooperation, priority-setting and mechanisms at the regional and global levels.

54. A new mechanism for priority-setting might help to achieve the proposed renewal and redefinition in forest science. The work plan for a new international network should be modelled on the research agenda presented and discussed at IPF. There is a need to undertake systematic review of the state of knowledge in particular areas, and synthesize the results so as to produce a comprehensive report that also identifies gaps to be filled by further interdisciplinary research, or specially commissioned short-term collaborative research projects, combined with long-term research initiatives in selected areas. All this presumes a mechanism to disburse international funds to support the high-priority collaborative research activities. It is imperative that the eventual clients of forest research have involvement in not only the identification of research topics but also the conduct of the ensuing research activities.

55. Developing a new mechanism (strategy/initiative) for global or eco-regional interdisciplinary forest research should incorporate and integrate:

(a) A "clearing house" that guides the identification, definition and prioritization of interdisciplinary research problems and evaluates the results of research addressing them;

(b) Research institutes, consortia or networks that lead and organize the research and ensure that the results are made available to users;

(c) A body that assists with capacity-building and dissemination of results.

56. These should be seen, however, as interdependent and integrated rather than independent functions, and each of them should be undertaken with the active involvement of appropriate national institutions.

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Proposed process of preparation for substantive discussion at the third session of IFF

57. After the proposal made to IFF by Austria and Indonesia to hold a meeting of experts was presented at the first session of IFF, initial preparations for a response to the mandate from IFF were held during the World Forestry Congress in Turkey, October 1997. Subsequently, a Steering Committee meeting was held on 27 and 28 November 1997, at the Federal Forest Research Centre, Vienna, Austria. The meeting discussed possible objectives and outputs for an expert meeting, including, among others:

- (a) Review of priorities for global, regional and even national researchable issues;
- (b) Capacity-building in research institutions;
- (c) Establishment of centres of excellence and structures for collaborative research;
- (d) Ways of changing research culture (follow-up to the Kochi meeting);
- (e) Ways of making research attractive for donors, and policy and decision makers;
- (f) Regional and global forest data information systems;
- (g) Networking and compilation of forest research data;
- (h) Environment issues (biotic, abiotic, anthropogenic).

58. Proposed topics for some of the background papers and keynote addresses also include (a) "geographical information"; (b) sample plot data; (c) literature review of value-added information; and (d) cost-benefit analysis of previous research investments.

59. The participants at the expert meeting will include leading researchers, opinion leaders in science policy, "institutional" experts, the World Bank, United Nations organizations, major foundations, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources-World Conservation Union (IUCN) and other non-governmental organizations, providing for an overall equitable North-South and gender distribution.

60. The new broad international concern of societies about forest issues requires a re-examination of forest research institutions. Is the culture of forest research already changing or is there a need for new initiatives to create a new culture? What types of new approaches and new alliances are needed now and for the future? The Austria-Indonesia initiative will place more emphasis on how research gets done and less on what gets done but the meeting will not produce a "shopping list of worthy research topics". It is therefore intended to resemble more a brainstorming and consensus-building meeting than a planning session to list priority research areas.



61. The desired overall outcome of the Austria-Indonesia initiative is to prepare options for the third session of IFF as regards a new, effective mechanism for better priority-setting, conduct, application and funding of international forest research, recognizing the need for more, better and different forest research to solve the "forest problems and dilemmas" recognized by IPF. The meeting aims to design a mechanism that can consistently present the donors with "investment opportunities" in focused research that will have high impacts on forest developmental programmes.

62. The specific output from the meeting of experts at Ort Gmunden (Austria) organized by Austria and Indonesia will be a consensus text from the meeting for transmittal to the third session of IFF, with strong support from diverse communities of interest groups including developing countries, donors and non-governmental organizations. The output will service and feed into the intergovernmental process, highlighting mechanisms to/for:

- (a) Identification, definition and prioritization of research (including review);
- (b) Consortia/networks for global and regional research;
- (c) Capacity-building;
- (d) Implementation, including constraints to utilization, and interface between research and user communities;
- (e) Mobilization of funding.

63. The expert meeting will also address such issues as:

- (a) The meaning of globalization and new information technology for forest research. For instance, IUFRO, especially in the past two to three years, has been dynamic as an international institution, with considerable potential for impact and delivery of research capacity-building, covering both biophysical and managerial aspects of forests;
- (b) New technology and mechanisms for sharing information. There are multiple initiatives to develop information systems. The meeting therefore plans a strategic-level review of information needs for IFF;
- (c) Funding mechanisms: already, many donor agencies are paying for global environmental public goods. The potential for carbon emissions trading could be greater than current ODA, with major ramifications as regards the demand for research and resources for research.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See United Nations Environment Programme, Convention on Biological Diversity (Environmental Law and Institution Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 25 (A/52/25), annex, decision 19/22.

<sup>3</sup> See Legal Instruments Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, done at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994 (GATT secretariat publication, Sales No. GATT/1994-7).

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