



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 March 2004

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests

Fourth session

Geneva, 3-14 May 2004

Item 5 (e) of the provisional agenda*

Common items for each session: intersessional work

Proposal for a process to facilitate the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note describes a proposal for a process to facilitate the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. It is proposed that the information for the review process would be collected mainly from the following sources: (a) voluntary reports by the Member States, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other relevant organizations and forest-related processes; and (b) meetings of the ad hoc expert group on consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests and possible informal meetings. The note also contains a proposal for the preparation of documentation to facilitate the review at the fifth session of the Forum.

* E/CN.18/2004/1.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1–5	3
II. Background information	6–11	4
III. Consideration of a process to facilitate the review	12–23	5
IV. Matters for consideration at the fourth session of the UNFF	24	8
Annexes		
I. Principal functions of the international arrangement on forests		10
II. Specific criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests		11

I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/35, established the United Nations Forum on Forests and also invited heads of relevant organizations of the United Nations system and heads of other relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments to form a collaborative partnership on forests to support the work of the Forum. It decided that the main objective of this international arrangement on forests was to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end. To achieve this objective, the Council decided that the international arrangement on forests would perform six principal functions (see annex I). It also decided, *inter alia*, that the effectiveness of the arrangement would be reviewed after five years and that the review would also address the institutional framework of the United Nations Forum on Forests, including its position within the United Nations system.

2. At its second session, the Forum, recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/35, decided, in its resolution 2/3, that the review of the international arrangement on forests would be carried out in the context of the principal functions of the arrangement. It also identified specific criteria, in relation to each of the principal functions, for the assessment of the effectiveness of the international arrangement. The specific criteria are attached as annex II to the present paper.

3. In resolution 2/3, the Forum invited its secretariat, in collaboration with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to identify and propose at its fourth session a process to facilitate the carrying out of the review on the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at its fifth session. Accordingly, the present proposal has been prepared by the secretariat, in conjunction with the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

4. On 23 June 2003, the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/270 B on the integrated and coordinated implementation of, and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. In the resolution, the Assembly stressed the importance of regular review; and requested, in paragraph 46, each functional commission to examine its methods of work in order better to pursue the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Functional commissions are expected to report to the Economic and Social Council no later than 2005 on the outcome of this examination. In responding to the Council's request, the United Nations Forum on Forests may draw upon the review of the effectiveness carried out at its fifth session.

5. The Council, in its decision 2003/299, approved the establishment of three ad hoc expert groups for the Forum: one on approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting; a second on finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies; and a third, on consideration, with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests. The present note indicates how the work of the ad hoc expert groups relates to the review process.

II. Background information

A. Decisions of the United Nations Forum on Forests related to the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests

6. In resolution 2/3, the Forum decided that the review would:

(a) Take into account specifically the work of the Forum and its members and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in facilitating implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF);

(b) Take into consideration, inter alia, the efforts of countries to implement the IPF/IFF proposals for action, the outputs of the ad hoc expert groups, intersessional meetings and country-led and organization-led initiatives and forest-related work sponsored and/or undertaken by the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests;

(c) Draw on voluntary reports from countries, organizations and processes and other outcomes of its sessions.

7. In resolution 2/3, the Forum also invited:

(a) Its secretariat, in cooperation with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and taking into account the work of the ad hoc expert groups, to gather baseline information relevant to the specific criteria;

(b) Countries to voluntarily provide quantifiable benchmarks, where appropriate, against the specific criteria, in a timely fashion, for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at its fifth session;

(c) The Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its members, as well as forest-related processes, to voluntarily provide quantifiable benchmarks, where appropriate, against the specific criteria, relevant to themselves, in a timely fashion, for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at its fifth session;

(d) Major groups to voluntarily present, at the multi-stakeholder dialogue at its fifth session, quantifiable benchmarks, where appropriate, against the specific criteria, relevant to themselves.

B. Gathering of baseline information

8. In response to the invitation to gather baseline information, the secretariat has begun to compile information against each of the specific criteria. It has drawn upon the reports of the Secretary-General for past sessions; reports of the sessions themselves; voluntary national reports to the Forum; Collaborative Partnership on Forests Framework reports and reports of major groups to sessions of the Forum; findings of country-led initiatives in support of the Forum; information on forests contained in country reports to the Commission on Sustainable Development; and other sources of information. The secretariat has also taken account of the work of the Forum's ad hoc expert groups on monitoring, assessment and reporting (see

E/CN.18/2004/2) and on finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (see E/CN.18/2004/3), as well as the preparations for the ad hoc expert group on consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests (see E/CN.18/2004/6).

C. Other review processes

9. To assist in the preparation of the present note, the secretariat took note of and collected information on the review processes undertaken by some intergovernmental organizations and functional commissions of the United Nations, namely the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Sustainable Development.

10. Some common features emerge from these review processes:

(a) A major review is a lengthy and potentially complex process; in the cases looked at, preparatory work was done over a period of from 18 to 27 months;

(b) Each review process involved considerable consultation during a preparatory phase. Often this was achieved by holding a series of informal and formal (preparatory committee) meetings at subregional, regional and international levels, involving countries, organizations, major groups and other stakeholders, and often culminating in a large conference or preparatory meeting several months before a special session of the General Assembly;

(c) Voluntary reports from countries formed a major input to the review process. These covered matters such as progress in implementation, lessons learned and critical areas of concern.

11. The proposed process to facilitate the review has many of the same elements, but on a more modest scale, reflecting the time and resources available.

III. Consideration of a process to facilitate the review

A. Main elements and sources of information for the process to facilitate the review

12. Based on the analysis of other review processes and the requirements set out in the resolutions referred to earlier in this present note, it is proposed that the main elements of a process to facilitate the review consist of:

(a) Submission of voluntary reports by countries, major groups and relevant organizations and processes;

(b) Preparations for and the meeting of the ad hoc expert group on consideration, with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests;

(c) Possible informal meetings;

(d) Preparation of documentation for the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

These elements are discussed further in the following paragraphs.

B. Voluntary reports

13. The voluntary reports would be intended to provide information against the specific criteria related to the six principal functions of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Voluntary reports submitted to the Forum at its second, third and fourth sessions, as well as views submitted in response to Economic and Social Council decision 2003/299, address the first function: implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. The ad hoc expert group on approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting noted that there were gaps in the information available from country reporting and identified ways by which additional information could be gathered so as to get as comprehensive a view as possible on countries' implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. The following proposal is broadly consistent with the recommendations of the ad hoc expert group. Additional information on the criteria related to the other five principal functions of the Forum would need to be collected from the member States, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other organizations and forest-related processes to supplement the baseline information collected by the secretariat of the Forum.

14. It is proposed that voluntary reports submitted to the Forum at its fifth session by the member States, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other relevant organizations and processes would be structured according to the agreed specific criteria for the review. These reports would:

(a) Provide additional or new information (not already contained in earlier voluntary reports to the United Nations Forum on Forests or the Commission on Sustainable Development) on progress and lessons learned related to implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, decisions and resolutions taken by the Forum (in reference to the first function of the Forum);

(b) Referring to the compilation of baseline information, provide new and additional information related to the specific criteria of the final five of the six principal functions;

(c) Provide quantifiable benchmarks.

C. Ad hoc expert group on consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests

15. The Economic and Social Council, in decision 2003/299 of 25 July 2003, established the ad hoc expert group on consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests. The report of the meeting of the expert group, which will be held in New York from 6 to 10 September 2004, will be submitted to the Forum at its fifth session to address the consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests, and to facilitate the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

16. As part of the preparations for the meeting of the above-mentioned ad hoc expert group, the member States and members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests have been invited to submit their views on the progress made and catalysts

and obstacles encountered by member States of the United Nations Forum on Forests and member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action and the decisions and resolutions of sessions of the Forum. In addition, one of the tasks of the ad hoc expert group is to consider other outcomes of the international arrangement on forests, inter alia, the efforts of countries to implement the IPF/IFF proposals for action, other expert groups, country-led and organization-led initiatives in support of the Forum and previous relevant initiatives, and forest-related work undertaken by the member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. All relevant information from the ad hoc expert group would be used for a process to facilitate the review of the effectiveness.

D. Possible informal meetings

17. The convening of informal meetings held at the subregional, regional and global levels would allow countries, international and regional organizations, processes, partnerships and major groups, among others, to have an opportunity to discuss progress in carrying out the principal functions of the international arrangement on forests and to provide an opportunity to examine lessons learned, success stories and obstacles and constraints encountered. Furthermore, they would offer participants an opportunity to touch upon critical areas of concern and identify priorities for action.

18. Options for meetings could include country-led and organization-led initiatives, workshops and informal consultations, as well as an agenda item on the review process in meetings already planned. Some member States may wish to organize such meetings. It may also be noted that the ad hoc expert group on approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting has recommended for the consideration of the United Nations Forum on Forests that the Forum invite the regional forestry commissions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to take the opportunity to hold discussions on the relationship between regional priorities and the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, in order to contribute to the overall assessment to be done at the fifth session of the Forum.

E. Preparations of documentation to facilitate the review at the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

19. The review process would include the drafting of a synthesis report on the work of the international arrangement on forests. It could be structured along the six principal functions of the United Nations Forum on Forests. It would be based on the voluntary reports received from member States, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other organizations and processes; the compilation of baseline information; inputs and results of the ad hoc expert groups; information related to a review of methods of work; results of informal meetings held in conjunction with preparations for the review; other relevant information about the work of the Forum, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and major groups; reports of country-led and organization-led initiatives in support of the Forum; and information on other supporting elements of the international arrangements on

forests, such as reports submitted by the major groups concerning implementation of the functions and the proposed benchmarks relative to themselves prepared for the multi-stakeholder dialogue.

F. The review at the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

20. The Forum's multi-year programme of work agreed upon at the first session, in resolution 1/1, includes three items for consideration at the fifth session of the Forum, as follows:

- (a) Review of progress and consideration of future actions;
- (b) Consideration, with a view to making recommendations, of the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests;
- (c) Review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

The process proposed in the present paper would contribute to the first and third items.

21. The review referred to in the first item is seen as focusing on (a) progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and (b) progress towards sustainable forest management (as consistent with the Forum's monitoring, assessment and reporting function defined in resolution 1/1). Based upon the review of progress both in implementation and towards sustainable forest management, the Forum would consider future actions to facilitate further progress in these areas. The process proposed in the present note would contribute information related to the review of progress in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. The ad hoc expert group on approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting has proposed, for the consideration of the Forum at its fourth session, a way to assess progress towards sustainable forest management at the fifth session (see E/CN.18/2004/2).

22. The review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests would concern the arrangement's effectiveness in carrying out all six of its functions.

23. The results of the discussions on these first and third items would be taken into consideration, along with the recommendations of the related ad hoc expert group, in the deliberations on consideration with a view to recommending the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests. This would also ensure that the review takes account of the need to address the institutional framework of the Forum, including its position in the United Nations system, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/35.

IV. Matters for consideration at the fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

24. At its fourth session, the Forum may wish to consider the following process to facilitate the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at its fifth session:

(a) Distribution to the member States, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other organizations and forest-related processes, of the following documents by 15 August 2004:

- (i) Suggested formats for reporting, with accompanying guidelines;
- (ii) Compilation of baseline information relevant to the specific criteria that has been prepared by the secretariat of the Forum, in accordance with its resolution 2/3;
- (iii) Background note on the identification of quantifiable benchmarks against the specific criteria, which would outline the scope of the exercise and suggest possible units of measurement for quantifiable benchmarks;

(b) Submission of voluntary reports by the member States, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other organizations and forest-related processes by 29 October 2004. These reports would include:

- (i) Provision of additional and new information on progress made on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action;
- (ii) New, additional and/or amended information further to the compiled baseline information;
- (iii) Quantifiable benchmarks from member States, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and forest-related processes in accordance with Forum resolution 2/3;

(c) Convening of informal meetings during the second half of 2004, involving the participation of the member States, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other organizations and processes and aimed at providing a perspective on:

- (i) Progress in carrying out the principal functions of the international arrangement on forests as against the specific criteria for the assessment of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests;
- (ii) Lessons learned, success stories, obstacles and constraints encountered in promoting sustainable forest management in the regional context;
- (iii) Critical areas of concern, together with possible future challenges and priorities for action;

(d) Preparation of documentation for the review of the effectiveness at the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, including:

- (i) A synthesis report on the work of the Forum, based on: the voluntary reports (including benchmarks) received; the compilation of baseline information; inputs to and results of the ad hoc expert groups; information related to a review of methods of work; results of informal meetings held in conjunction with preparations for the review, and other relevant information about the work of the Forum and the international arrangement on forests; the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; and information from country-led and organization-led initiatives in support of the Forum;
- (ii) Reports from the major groups concerning implementation of the functions and the proposed benchmarks relative to themselves.

Annex I

Principal functions of the international arrangement on forests^a

(a) Facilitate and promote the implementation of Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF) proposals for action, as well as other actions that may be agreed upon, including through national forest programmes and other integrated programmes relevant to forests; catalyse, mobilize and generate financial resources; and mobilize and channel technical and scientific resources to this end, including by taking steps towards the broadening and development of mechanisms and/or further initiatives to enhance international cooperation;

(b) Provide a forum for continued policy development and dialogue among Governments, which would involve international organizations and other interested parties, including major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, to foster a common understanding on sustainable forest management and to address forest issues and emerging areas of priority concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner;

(c) Enhance cooperation, as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues among relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, as well as contribute to synergies among them, including coordination among donors;

(d) Foster international cooperation, including North-South and public-private partnerships, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation at the national, regional and global levels;

(e) Monitor and assess progress at the national, regional and global levels through reporting by Governments, as well as by regional and international organizations, institutions and instruments, and on this basis consider future actions needed;

(f) Strengthening political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests through ministerial engagement; developing ways to liaise with the governing bodies of international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments; and the promotion of action-oriented dialogue and policy formulation related to forests.

^a From Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/35.

Annex II

Specific criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests^a

“The United Nations Forum on Forests,

...

“Decides that the specific criteria for the assessment of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests are the following:

(a) Implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action:

“(i) The extent to which countries, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other actors have made progress in implementing the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action;

“(ii) The extent to which countries have developed and started to implement national forest programmes or equivalent processes;

“(iii) The extent to which participation of stakeholders in those programmes and processes has been enhanced;

“(iv) The extent to which the international arrangement on forests has facilitated and promoted countries’ implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, focusing on the means of implementation (finance, transfer of environmentally sound technologies and capacity-building) as well as the relevant common items;

“(v) The extent to which countries have made progress in assessing the IPF/IFF proposals for action in order to determine their relevance in their national context;

(b) Forum for continued policy development and dialogue:

“(i) The extent to which the international arrangement on forests, including, inter alia, Forum sessions, intersessional work and the multi-stakeholder dialogue, and the related work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its members, as well as country- and organization-led initiatives, have enhanced forest policy development and dialogue;

“(ii) The extent to which the international arrangement on forests has worked in a transparent and participatory manner, including through the involvement of major groups;

“(iii) The extent to which the Collaborative Partnership on Forests members have responded to the guidance of the Forum;

“(iv) The extent to which progress has been made in reaching a common understanding of forest-related concepts, terminology and definitions;

(c) Cooperation and policy and programme coordination:

^a From resolution 2/3 adopted at the second session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, see *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 22 (E/2002/42)*, chap. II.B.

“(i) The extent to which partnerships relevant to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action have been advanced;

“(ii) The extent to which the international arrangement on forests has facilitated and promoted coordination and cooperation among other forest-related organizations, instruments and processes;

“(d) International cooperation:

“(i) The extent to which the international community, including bilateral and multilateral donors and organizations, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and international and regional processes, have facilitated the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, inter alia, through the provision of financial, technical and scientific resources and capacity-building;

“(ii) The extent to which the international arrangement on forests has promoted efforts by the international community to facilitate the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action through, in particular, North-South cooperation and public-private partnerships, as well as through South-South and North-North cooperation;

“(e) Monitoring and assessing progress through reporting:

“(i) The extent to which countries, regions, organizations and processes respond to the call from Forum and Collaborative Partnership on Forests members for voluntary reports, with a focus on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action;

“(ii) The extent to which trends, lessons learned, emerging issues and actions are identified and become apparent through those voluntary reports;

“(iii) The extent to which major groups have been encouraged to participate in developing voluntary reports;

“(iv) The extent to which Collaborative Partnership on Forests members have worked to strengthen countries’ abilities to monitor, assess and report progress in the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action;

“(v) The extent to which Forum sessions provide opportunities to voluntarily report progress and lessons learned;

“(vi) The extent to which countries make progress in monitoring, assessment and reporting through, inter alia, applying criteria and indicator processes or similar tools in their efforts to achieve sustainable forest management;

“(f) Strengthening political commitment:

“(i) The extent to which high-level engagement furthers political commitment to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action by countries;

“(ii) The extent to which the international arrangement on forests succeeds in enhancing the positioning of forests on the international agenda;

....”