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Common items for each session: enhanced cooperation

Enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The United Nations Forum on Forests and its secretariat actively pursue a wide range of cooperation and coordination in order to effectively promote and implement the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action and achieve sustainable management of forests. The present report provides an outline of efforts made by the United Nations Forum on Forests to engage other relevant United Nations bodies, international instruments and mechanisms, intergovernmental organizations and stakeholders in increased collaboration and coordination resulting in many tangible advances in consensus-building and coordinated action. It also highlights new and emerging areas where the participation of the United Nations Forum on Forests will be crucial for ensuring that political commitment to forest issues is strengthened. As the international community moves further towards greater collaboration and coordination on sustainable forest management, a number of new opportunities are arising that the United Nations Forum on Forests could and should seize.

* E/CN.18/2004/1.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 6 of resolution 1/1,¹ the United Nations Forum on Forests decided, *inter alia*, to address enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination at each session. Many actions related to that function take place within the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and are described in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Framework 2004 (E/CN.18/2004/INF.1). The present note underscores how important it is for the United Nations Forum on Forests to work closely with other intergovernmental bodies, international and regional processes, organizations, institutions and instruments to raise the profile of forests and their role in addressing broader development concerns; enhance linkages with other sectors; strengthen ties with regional bodies; and facilitate partnerships with and among major groups.

II. Enhanced cooperation

A. Collaborative Partnership on Forests

2. The United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat is an active participant in this collaborative partnership, which was established in 2001 to support the work of the Forum and to enhance cooperation and coordination on forest issues among its members. It contributes to the joint activities of the partnership and conveys the results of the work of the Forum to the governing bodies and other meetings of the partners. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests consists of 14 international organizations, institutions and secretariats,² has been chaired by FAO and supported by the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat. Terms of reference and working modalities are described in the latest version (revised, June 2003) of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Policy Document.³

3. The CPF Framework 2004 (E/CN.18/2004/INF.1) highlights joint Collaborative Partnership on Forests initiatives, such as the Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management,³ and work on streamlining forest-related reporting and on harmonizing forest-related definitions. It also describes other joint activities of Collaborative Partnership on Forests members in support of the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests and enhanced cooperation and coordination on forest-related issues, including support given to intersessional activities, such as Ad Hoc Expert Groups and country/organization-led initiatives. While the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests receive guidance from the United Nations Forum on Forests, each takes direction from and is accountable to its own governing body. In addition, FAO, UNEP and ITTO second staff to the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat.

B. Stakeholders

4. Stakeholders provide important perspectives on the implementation of intergovernmental agreements and they are well placed to identify emerging issues and share innovative ideas. The United Nations Forum on Forests holds a multi-stakeholder dialogue at each of its sessions and invites representatives of the nine major groups to contribute discussion papers. At the same time, lack of financial and

human resources frequently constitutes a bottleneck for major groups to participate in the Forum and related activities. Major groups participated in the meetings of the ad hoc expert groups established in support of the work of the Forum, in which their participation was particularly effective in focusing attention on action that the United Nations Forum on Forests could take to support stakeholder efforts to advance sustainable forest management. The secretariat of the Forum has maintained close contacts with the focal points of all major groups and has also used every opportunity during meetings and conferences it has attended to inform major groups about the work and aim of the Forum as well as to explore how their engagement in the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests can become more purposeful and effective.

C. Country-led initiatives in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests and other relevant meetings

5. The country- and organization-led initiatives in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests provide an opportunity for experts to consider matters prior to the sessions of the Forum, thereby increasing the understanding of the issues and thus facilitating discussions. The United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat provides input and advice to all initiatives explicitly held in support of the Forum. The Global Workshop on Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies and Capacity-Building for Sustainable Forest Management, held in Brazzaville; the workshop on lessons learned on sustainable forest management in Africa, held in Nairobi; and the country-led initiative on decentralization, federal systems in forestry and national forest programmes, held in Interlaken, Switzerland, are all examples of the usefulness of that kind of initiative in gathering a large number of country representatives, major groups and relevant organizations; disseminating information and lessons learned, as well as in providing more informal settings for discussions and exploring new and emerging forest-related issues. An additional meeting of particular relevance to the Forum at its fourth session was the Expert Consultation on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management held in Cebu City, Philippines. Outcomes of the country-led initiatives and other relevant meetings will be available at the current session to inform deliberations.

D. Partnerships and processes

6. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, confirmed the importance of partnerships to achieve sustainable forest management. Since that Summit, several additional collaborative arrangements have been established. Key partnerships that specifically address forests include the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, the Asia Forest Partnership, the International Model Forest Network, and the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration. The United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat supports and in some cases participates in those efforts.

7. The Forum secretariat is also compiling information on regional initiatives and processes, such as the regional and international processes on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, of which there are currently nine, to identify potential synergies and collaboration. South-South and North-South partnerships

will also be examined, along with strengths and weaknesses in regional cooperation so that ways to replicate successful examples can be identified.

III. Enhanced policy and programme coordination

A. Meeting intergovernmental goals and targets

8. The United Nations Forum on Forests has several opportunities to relay to the international community how forests can contribute to broader development concerns both now and in the future. In its resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, the General Assembly decided that organizations and bodies of the United Nations system should incorporate the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits into their programmes of work. Recent summits and conferences most relevant to the United Nations Forum on Forests are the Millennium Summit (New York, September 2000); the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August-September 2002); and the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, Mexico, March 2002).

9. When the United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted as the outcome of the Millennium Summit in resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000, the General Assembly resolved to intensify efforts related to the sustainable management of forests. As the United Nations body established by the Economic and Social Council to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, the United Nations Forum on Forests is in a unique position to take a lead in promoting the role of forests in implementing the Millennium Declaration and contribute to achieving the goals related to sustainable development and poverty eradication.

10. The Secretary-General was also requested to review, in 2005, progress in implementing the Millennium Declaration and to prepare a report to be submitted for review to the General Assembly. At its fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly also considered convening a high-level plenary meeting during its sixtieth session to further review implementation.

11. In its resolution 57/253 of 20 December 2002, the General Assembly recognized the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development as a framework for the future work of all United Nations bodies. It endorsed the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and adopted sustainable development as a key element in all United Nations activities and urged timely implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the Summit.

12. The General Assembly in its resolution 58/230 of 23 December 2003 also highlighted the importance of implementing the Monterrey Consensus to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, the effective use of national resources, trade, official development assistance for technical cooperation, and foreign direct investment are critical to creating a macroeconomic environment for supporting sustainable forest management. The United Nations Forum on Forests Ad Hoc Expert Group on Finance and Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies can be seen as a first step towards addressing many of those issues as they relate to forests both at the national and international levels.

B. The Economic and Social Council: implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

13. When the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/270 B on 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, it also examined the role of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions. The General Assembly requested that the methods of work be examined by each functional commission and relevant subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council on the basis of a report of the Secretary-General. The General Assembly also requested that the outcome of that examination be submitted to the Council no later than 2005. The exercise coincides with the United Nations Forum on Forests review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, thus providing an opportunity to respond to the request.

C. Functional Commissions of the Economic and Social Council

14. As the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council continue to seek ways to further link the work of its subsidiary and related bodies, interaction with other functional commissions and United Nations bodies, particularly with the Commission on Sustainable Development, will become increasingly important for the United Nations Forum on Forests and its secretariat. For example, the participation of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in the deliberations of the Forum at the current session on indigenous forest-related issues is highly relevant.

D. Regional bodies

15. The United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat has encouraged and engaged regional bodies as well as drawn more heavily upon their knowledge and expertise for enhanced regional cooperation and coordination on the forest sector. They are becoming increasingly important in assisting countries to achieve sustainable forest management. At the third session, various regional institutions, bodies and processes contributed to discussions, and showcased lessons learned. At the fourth session, the trend of incorporating regional perspectives will continue, primarily through holding panels on Africa and small island developing States as part of the session.

16. Six Regional Forestry Commissions operate under the auspices of FAO: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin American and the Caribbean, the Near East, and North America. Efforts are being made to strengthen the links between these commissions and the United Nations Forum on Forests. In March 2003, the FAO Committee on Forestry recommended that the Regional Forestry Commissions facilitate the flow of information between the United Nations Forum on Forests and countries and help to increase awareness of the importance of implementing IPF/IFF proposals for action.⁴ In response, FAO organized workshops in conjunction with regional forestry commission meetings to discuss the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals of action. The results of the meetings on the Africa and Asia-Pacific regions will be presented to the United Nations Forum on Forests at its fourth

session during the panels on implementation in Africa, Africa Day, and implementation in Small Island Developing States, Small Island Developing States Day, respectively.

17. The United Nations regional commissions could also bring their expertise to the table in the same way. While the Economic Commission for Europe is the only one that currently deals specifically with forests and timber, others have programmes on natural resource use, governance, renewable energy and sustainable development in the context of human settlements — areas all relevant to forests. Moreover, the newly established Regional Committees on Sustainable Development align their work with the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development that will include forests on its agenda during its 2012/2013 cycle.

E. International instruments and mechanisms relevant to the forest sector

18. Consistent with United Nations Forum on Forests resolution 1/1, the Forum, through its secretariat, has sought to increase cooperation and coordination as well as to promote synergies with relevant international instruments. The Forum secretariat has made every effort to participate in and make substantive contributions to many of the meetings and workshops relevant to forests organized by different instruments and mechanisms. The secretariat's increased efforts to play an active role have resulted in growing recognition and consideration of sustainable forest management principles in the deliberations of those instruments and mechanisms. Cooperation, coordination and the creation of synergies will be increasingly important to further promote the consideration of sustainable forest management.

1. Instruments

(a) Convention on Biological Diversity

19. Both the United Nations Forum on Forests and the Convention on Biological Diversity recognize that their forest-related work is mutually supportive, and the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Coordinator and Head of the United Nations Forum on Forests are collaborating on issues of common interest. Convention on Biological Diversity decision VI/22 on forest biological diversity,⁵ the Ministerial Declaration and Message from the United Nations Forum on Forests to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (see Forum resolution 2/1),⁶ and Forum resolution 3/4⁷ reflect the need for this collaborative arrangement.

20. In resolution 3/4, the United Nations Forum on Forests also invited member States and members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to submit their views on three topics relevant to the United Nations Forum on Forests and Convention on Biological Diversity collaboration for discussion at its fourth session: (a) the relationship between the ecosystem approach and sustainable forest management; (b) the management, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of forest biological diversity; and (c) the relationship between IPF/IFF proposals for action and the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity. To date, the

views of Member States and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests have not yet been received by the Forum secretariat. However, the secretariat will introduce these views in an oral report to the Forum at its fourth session and the results of the discussions at the session are to be provided to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity for their information

21. A meeting of experts hosted by the Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat in July 2003 concluded that sustainable forest management “can be considered as a means of applying the ecosystem approach to forests”.⁸ In addition, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity conducted a preliminary assessment of the links between IPF/IFF proposals for action and the Convention on Biological Diversity expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity, which was made available at the ninth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. At its seventh meeting, the Conference of the Parties took note of this assessment and invited the Coordinator and Head of the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat, the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and others, to provide any further views on the assessment.

(b) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

22. The ninth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held in Milan, Italy, from 1 to 12 December 2003, and its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, tackled many forest-related items, including rules guiding afforestation and reforestation under the Clean Development Mechanism. The good practice guidance for land use, land-use change and forestry, developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, was also considered as well as a format to report greenhouse gas emissions and removal by sinks under the convention. In view of the many issues on the agenda of the ninth Conference of the Parties that were relevant to forests, the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat organized a side event on Collaborative Partnership on Forests activities during the session.

(c) United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

23. The sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification met in Havana, Cuba, from 25 August to 5 September 2003. The United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat highlighted the links between forests and efforts to combat desertification and poverty. It also noted synergies between the United Nations Forum on Forests and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and identified opportunities to strengthen collaboration with other conventions, international organizations, institutions and agencies through continued participation in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

24. At its sixth session, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, in collaboration with the Coordinator and Head of the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests and the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, to address the needs of low forest cover countries, including by developing a joint approach on forests and, inter alia, to cooperate with the Tehran process and its secretariat to strengthen

the capacity of low forest cover countries to combat desertification, land degradation and deforestation. The United Nations Forum on Forests specifically addressed the issues of low forest cover countries and the Tehran process during the second session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. The governing bodies of FAO and UNEP have also responded to the call to cooperate with the Tehran process.

(d) Other multilateral environmental agreements

25. The United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat has continued to exchange information with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora on issues of common concern and is working with the secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to support regional initiatives such as the Antigua Guatemala convention for the sustainable management of mangrove forests (see E/CN.18/2003/11).

(e) Global Environment Facility

26. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) provides substantial funding to the forest sector through its programme on biological diversity. As of June 2003, GEF committed more than US\$ 777 million for forest-related projects and that funding leveraged nearly US\$ 2 billion from partners. GEF has also the potential to enhance financial support to sustainable forest management under its new Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management. To this end, the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Finance and Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies recommended (see E/CN.18/2004/5) that the United Nations Forum on Forests invite GEF to seek the advice of the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests on developing the sustainable forest management component of the sustainable land management focal area.

(f) International Tropical Timber Agreement

27. The International Tropical Timber Council, the governing body of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), held its thirty-fifth session in Yokohama, Japan, in November 2003, followed by the second preparatory committee meeting for negotiation of the successor agreement to the International Tropical Timber Agreement 1994. The current Agreement is scheduled to expire on 31 December 2006. Two working group sessions and two preparatory committee meetings identified issues and clarified the scope, funding mechanisms, institutional set-up, and emerging issues to be addressed in the successor agreement. The next step is the conference on the negotiations, which will take place under the aegis of UNCTAD from 26 to 30 July 2004 in Geneva.

2. Other bodies and mechanisms

(a) Governing bodies of the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

28. Many of the governing bodies of the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests are increasingly calling for greater focus on sustainable forest management in their activities and for support to the United Nations Forum on Forests and the work of the partnership. Many of the outcomes of, for example, the FAO Committee on Forestry, the UNEP Governing Council, ITTC, as well as many

of the Conferences of the Parties mentioned above, explicitly support enhanced policy and programme coordination. Those forums are also, in many instances, well placed to assist in country implementation. For example, the FAO National Forest Programme Facility supports development and implementation of national forest programmes that embrace cross-sectoral and participatory approaches.

(b) World Trade Organization

29. The Doha Ministerial Declaration adopted in November 2001 called for enhancing ways in which trade and the environment can be mutually supportive and encouraged cooperation between the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international organizations. The United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat has been participating in the dialogue through the Committee on Trade and Environment and in a side event organized during the fifth Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003. The work with WTO is particularly relevant to paragraph 45 (c) of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,⁹ concerning illegal international trade in forest products and paragraph 45 (f) which calls for international cooperation on issues tied to sustainable forest management, including trade.

IV. Conclusions

30. The United Nations Forum on Forests, its secretariat, other intergovernmental organizations, institutions and processes, as well as a wide variety of stakeholders, have increasingly been finding opportunities to enhance collaboration and coordination on forest issues. These efforts have culminated in the many activities outlined in the present note and increased understanding of the importance of sustainable forest management and the role of forests in addressing broader development goals, sustainable development and other cross-cutting issues relevant to forests.

31. To the United Nations Forum on Forests and the international forest community, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests remains a valuable mechanism for United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, convention secretariats and other stakeholders, to address common concerns, harmonize and streamline reporting, avoid duplication and promote increased cooperation and collaboration in a number of projects and programmes.

32. Country- and organization-led initiatives continue to provide important support to the United Nations Forum on Forests by helping to build consensus on issues prior to their discussion at sessions. Similarly, regional and international partnerships among Governments and stakeholders are transforming proposals into action on the ground.

33. As the international community places greater emphasis on a holistic and coordinated approach to development, it will be important for the United Nations Forum on Forests to ensure that the use of forests for development and the effects on forests of other activities, are well understood. By engaging in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of other major summits and conferences, the United Nations Forum on Forests can be instrumental in keeping forests as an integral part of the development agenda. In this respect, there is a need to further enhance communication between the

United Nations Forum on Forests and other relevant bodies and processes, and to further strengthen collaboration on common priorities.

V. Points for discussion

34. The United Nations Forum on Forests may wish to:

(a) Consider the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the relationship between poverty eradication and forests in its future work, including as part of the review on the international arrangement on forests at its fifth session;

(b) Invite the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to prepare a contribution on the role of forests in implementing the Millennium Declaration as part of the Secretary-General's comprehensive review;

(c) Consider and redirect its work in relation to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, including the links between forests and other sectors, as well as invite newly established relevant partnerships to contribute to the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests;

(d) Assess the impacts of implementing the Monterrey Consensus on sustainable forest management and how these changes affect the relationship between forests and poverty;

(e) Prepare a message to the eighth Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity conveying the results of deliberations on the three topics on which views were sought;

(f) Acknowledge the contribution of the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in streamlining forest-related reporting and further invite them to continue their joint efforts, make information accessible on sources of funding sustainable forest management, and harmonize forest-related definitions;

(g) Consider ways and means to provide more opportunities for stakeholders to participate in its work, such as through ad hoc expert groups and country-led initiatives;

(h) Encourage the increased participation of regional bodies, institutions and processes, such as the regional commissions and FAO Forestry Commissions, to contribute more directly to the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

Notes

¹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 22* (E/2001/42/Rev.1-E/CN.18/2001/3/Rev.1), part two, chap. I, sect. B.

² Collaborative Partnership on Forests members: Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO); International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO); secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF); secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat; United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF); World Bank; World Conservation Union (IUCN).

³ See the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat web site: www.un.org/esa/forests.

⁴ For the report on the sixteenth session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO-2003/REP), see: www.fao.org/DOCREP/MEETING/007/Y9203E/Y9203E00.HTM.

⁵ See: www.biodiv.org.

⁶ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 42 (E/2002/42-E/CN.18/2002/14)*, chap. I, sect. B.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2003, *Supplement No. 42 (E/2003/42-E/CN.18/2003/13)*, chap. I, sect. C.

⁸ For the final report of the meeting, see UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/INF.4.

⁹ See *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.