

# **THE ROLE OF REGIONAL INTERACTIONS IN SUPPORTING THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS**

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

CLI	Country-led Initiative
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GOFs	Global Objectives on Forests
HLS	High Level Segment
IAF	International Arrangement on Forests
IFF	Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (1997-2000)
IPF	Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (1995-1997)
IYF	International Year of Forests (2011)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MYPOW	Multi-year Programme of Work
NFPs	national forest programmes
NLBI	Non-legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PfA	IPF/IFF Proposals for Action
RLI	Region-led Initiative
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
TEST	Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies
UN	United Nations
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

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By Don Wijewardana<sup>1</sup>

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## 1 Introduction

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 2006/49 marked a new and more comprehensive global approach towards sustainable forest management (SFM), by strengthening the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) through several measures. Adding to the original six principal functions, in 2006 the Council included three new functions to the IAF. Of relevance to this paper is the third principal function which sets the mandate for the UNFF to strengthen interaction with regional and sub-regional forest-related entities<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, the four Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs) and the agreement from member States to progress their achievement by 2015 requires integrated and mutually supportive actions from regional and sub-regional entities.

Building on Resolution 2006/49 a year later, ECOSOC adopted, through Decision 2007/277, the UNFF Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) and the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests (NLBI). This paper considers the NLBI and the MYPOW in relation to the role of regional and sub-regional entities.

In doing so, it focuses on the regional component and how best to strengthen interaction between the global and regional levels, as well as how to optimise regional input to Forum sessions. It concludes with identifying some key issues that could be addressed to ensure that regional and sub-regional entities play a constructive role in implementing the MYPOW and the NLBI.

## 2 Executive Summary

Successive United Nations (UN) forestry fora established since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) identified a wide range of actions needed to promote SFM. While it generated consensus building on several forest policy matters, over a decade of such policy development there has had limited progress in generating action on the ground. To address the problem the UNFF was established in 2000 with implementation of action as one of its primary purposes. Six years later, to further strengthen the Forum, members agreed on a NLBI and a MYPOW that aim to facilitate greater implementation of agreed policy activities.

The NLBI provides a valuable framework to facilitate implementation and measure progress in implementing SFM. Central to the NLBI were the four shared GOFs. But the significance of the NLBI lies not only in its content but also in the fact that this was the first time that such a comprehensive programme of action has been put in place since UNCED in 1992. The other key feature of the agreed UNFF mandate included greater recognition of the role of regional entities in the work of the UNFF.

The MYPOW, which was also endorsed by UNFF7, details the action needed to translate the aims of the international arrangement on forests as an ongoing work programme. The

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<sup>2</sup> Entities here are defined to include forest related mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes

sessional and intersessional activities, high level segments (HLSs), and monitoring, assessment and reporting needs, all involve regional entities in an unprecedented scale. The ECOSOC Resolution 2006/49 further emphasised the regional content when it added a new principal function to the UNFF: to strengthen interaction between the UNFF and relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related entities. It invited forest-related regional and sub-regional entities to strengthen collaboration and to provide input to the work of the Forum.

These approaches were intended to enhance the UNFF/regional interface. They included regional feedback on policy development, country-level implementation and lessons learned, and at the same time provided a platform for countries and other players in the region to coordinate and collaborate in the implementation of the NLBI and agreed UNFF actions<sup>3</sup> and to follow up the outcomes of the global sessions, as well as in highlighting regional priorities and concerns.

The interaction offers mutual benefit. However, opportunities may be constrained by three main factors: parameters of session agendas already set under the MYPOW; varying demands on intersessional years; and the diverse nature of regional entities, often with widely differing objectives, with many not having any hierarchical links to any other. In the circumstances, to be effective the relationship needs to be mutually beneficial and managed carefully.

Within these boundaries regional entities can optimise interaction with the Forum providing inputs to UNFF sessional agenda, participating at the HLSs, helping development and implementation of the programme to celebrate the International Year of Forests (IYF), contributing to intersessional activity, facilitating the two way flow of inputs between regions and UNFF and implementing action on the ground. What is important for an effective contribution to the UNFF is for the regional entities to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the UNFF bureau and the Secretariat and ensure effective and timely input to Forum sessions.

Providing regional perspectives to global level policy making is essential to implementing global forest policy commitments. The execution of the MYPOW and NLBI to achieve the four shared GOFs requires enhanced cooperation at all levels. But stimulating national level action or reporting progress are often rendered difficult by several factors including varying capacities and differing national priorities. A regional approach to facilitate action may help overcome some of these impediments to yield better results.

There are other potential constraints to making the regional interface effective. Among them are developing appropriate working modalities to allow for an effective relationship with the UNFF, working to ensure regional positions are effectively represented, promoting action on the ground to implement the provisions of the NLBI and agreed UNFF actions and generating high level commitment within the countries in the region. The NLBI is a voluntary arrangement similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/ Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) proposals for action. The difference is that the new features of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) provide greater certainty and a comprehensive framework for action. Regional entities can play a pivotal role to help achieve the objectives of the NLBI.

### **3 Background**

The latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a marked decline in global forest cover as well as widespread forest degradation. The two *ad hoc* bodies of the United Nations established to address the problems – the IPF (1995-1997) and the IFF (1997-2000) – produced a wide range of proposals for action. However, only limited progress on the ground resulted, and the problem continued unabated. In 2000, ECOSOC, by Resolution 2000/35, established an IAF to promote SFM, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and

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<sup>3</sup> UNFF actions include the IPF/IFF proposals for action and subsequent decisions of the UNFF.

strengthen long-term political commitment to this end. It emphasised that the purpose of this international arrangement was **“to promote the implementation of internationally agreed actions on forests at the national, regional and global levels, to provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global framework for policy implementation, coordination and development and to carry out principal functions...”** (ECOSOC 2000). The resolution also established the UNFF, as an intergovernmental and subsidiary body of the Council with the main objective of achieving the objective and the functions of the IAF.

Although the ECOSOC Resolution showed a new promise of implementing SFM, early years of UNFF saw global emphasis moving in the direction of social aspects of forestry, such as poverty eradication, rather than SFM per se. It became clear then that a significant strengthening and improvement of the IAF was necessary to make it more effective at mobilizing political commitment to SFM and facilitating action on the ground. While some saw a legally binding instrument as an effective way to address the issues there was no consensus on such a course of action.

In 2006 the IAF was strengthened through a new ECOSOC resolution - Resolution 2006/49 - with a new, focused approach to implementing internationally agreed actions towards SFM. It included four shared GOFs as well as three new principal functions for UNFF including one on regional: global interaction (ECOSOC 2006). At UNFF7 member States reached agreement on the MYPOW and content of the NLBI. In December 2007, fifteen years after the UNCED Earth Summit commenced discussions on a global approach to protect the world’s forests, the UN General Assembly adopted the landmark agreement (UNGA 2007). It was the culmination of nearly three years of intense negotiation.

## 4 Multiyear programme of work

How the NLBI is to be translated into action is detailed in the MYPOW which was also endorsed by UNFF7<sup>4</sup>. This detailed programme of work for the Forum embodies the overall purpose, functions and strategy of the IAF, with the NLBI being one of its items. Accordingly, it includes a description and scheduling of key tasks to be undertaken during the period 2007-2015, including policy issues for deliberation at each session as well as intersessional activities (ECOSOC 2007). There are several important features of the MYPOW, relating to regional and sub-regional entities, which are explained in the following section.

### 4.1 Forum Sessions

While each session will focus on progress in the achievement of SFM; implementation of the NLBI; achievement of the four GOFs; implementation of the proposals for action of the IPF/IFF; and implementation of previous resolutions adopted by the Forum, there will also be a specific overall theme for each session (See Box 1).

**Box 1: Overall themes of UNFF sessions**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Proposed Themes</b>
Eighth session (2009)	<i>Forests in a changing environment ; and Means of implementation for sustainable forest management</i>
Ninth session (2011)	<i>Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication</i>
Tenth session (2013)	<i>Forests and economic development</i>
Eleventh session (2015)	<i>Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward for the international arrangement on forests.</i>

<sup>4</sup> Resolution 7/1 of the ECOSOC Resolution 2007/277

To address the work of the Forum and exchange regional experiences and activities, the Forum will hold interaction panels, providing a platform for dialogue with regional and sub-regional forest-related entities, among other stakeholders. This will allow the Forum to receive perspectives from regions and foster an open sharing of best practices and lessons learned among the regions.

Involvement of regional and sub-regional entities, during the Forum's HLSs in 2011 and 2015 and in the preparations as well as the IYF in 2011, will also be important.

With respect to these points, regional and sub-regional entities may wish to consider exploring how they will go about addressing the issues and agenda items planned for each UNFF session. Linked to this, views should be provided as to how best to organize regional and sub-regional inputs on such issues and agenda items, including the submission to the UNFF Secretariat on emerging issues and matters of regional priority. In this context, flexibility should be offered since approaches need to be consistent with regional mandates.

#### **4.2 Intersessional activities**

During periods between the biennial sessions of the Forum, the Bureau and the Forum Secretariat will coordinate to effectively prepare for the coming sessions, drawing on the outcomes of the following:

- (a) Consultations with member States;
- (b) Forest-related, and other relevant regional and sub-regional entities;
- (c) Member organisations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF);
- (d) Major group activities;
- (e) Country-, organisation and region-led initiatives on topics relevant to the upcoming Forum session;
- (f) Ad hoc expert group meetings; and
- (g) Expert meetings and/or preparatory working meetings that the Forum may decide to organise for the preparation of its future sessions.

Emerging issues of global significance that are related to and/or have an impact on forests and SFM may be included in the agenda of any of the Forum sessions.

Relevant regional and sub-regional forest related mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organisations and processes are invited to address issues and agenda items planned for each Forum session and to provide a concise summary of their deliberations to be submitted well in advance to the Secretariat prior to the upcoming Forum session.

In order to take advantage of the intersessional periods of the Forum, the UNFF Bureau and the Secretariat as well as regional and sub-regional entities will need to maintain communication to ensure targeted and timely input to Forum sessions. Moreover, regional and sub-regional entities could use the periods between sessions to organize their contributions to the Forum and to provide views on how the Forum can improve its work at the regional level and collaboration with regional and sub-regional entities. This feedback will facilitate in the preparation of Forum sessions and help integrate UNFF themes into regional meetings.

#### **4.3 Monitoring, assessment and reporting**

The MYPOW includes a call to member States to submit, on a voluntary basis, national reports to the Forum, in accordance with a timetable established by the Forum.

Regional and sub-regional entities can play a role in assisting countries exchange experiences and track progress in implementing measures, policies, actions or specific objectives towards achieving the GOFs. Such activities could greatly draw on the seven thematic elements of SFM. In some regions, entities could also explore the possibility of devising a regional strategy and/or action plan for implementation and accordingly develop a regional reporting format to monitor process.

#### **4.4 Assessment of progress and review**

At its ninth session, in 2011, the Forum will assess overall progress made on the implementation of the NLBI and towards the achievement of the four GOFs. It will devote the entire eleventh session in 2015 to review the effectiveness of the IAF, the NLBI, and the contribution to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and make recommendations for the future.

Given the importance of reviewing progress at all levels, regional and sub-regional reports will be increasingly important for these tasks in 2011 and 2015. Regional entities could consider their potential role in preparing reports as they could constitute a critical component in assessing regional forest related advancements with respect to the implementation of the NLBI and SFM.

### **5 Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all types of forests**

The purpose of the NLBI was to:

- a) strengthen political commitment and action at all levels, to implement effectively sustainable management of all types of forests and to achieve the shared GOFs;
- (b) enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, in particular with respect to poverty eradication and environmental sustainability; and
- (c) provide a framework for national action and international cooperation.

The principles that govern the NLBI flow largely from UNCED 'Forest Principles'<sup>5</sup>. Among other things they include its voluntary nature, the responsibility of states for SFM and law enforcement, the need to involve major groups in implementing SFM, and the need for good governance. It also emphasises the need for significantly increased new and additional financial resources for SFM and the important role of international cooperation to support the effort of countries to achieve SFM.

The NLBI states SFM as a dynamic and evolving concept aimed "to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests, for the benefit of present and future generations".

Countries reaffirmed in the NLBI the four GOFs (See Box 2) and their commitment to work globally, regionally and nationally to achieve progress towards their achievement by 2015. The strength and utility of the NLBI is grounded in its implementation. Thus, it requires a holistic approach that brings all stakeholders together.

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<sup>5</sup> The full title of the document: 'Non-legally binding authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests', Report of UNCED, (Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992) Annex III

## Box 2: Shared Global Objectives

### Global Objective 1

Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation;

### Global Objective 2

Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people;

### Global Objective 3

Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests;

### Global Objective 4

Reverse the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management and mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources, for the implementation of sustainable forest management.

In this regard, concerted regional and sub-regional efforts are crucial to reinforce practical measures at the country-level to integrate forest issues in relevant government policies.

In achieving the purpose of the NLBI, regional sub-regional entities could contribute in UNFF's preparatory work on funding matters for SFM, called on countries by the Forum for its adoption in 2009. Through the development of studies on lessons learned and technical South - South and triangular cooperation, countries could exchange experiences and report on realities and challenges encountered in their regions. Such suggestions are worth considering.

The NLBI sets a different approach to the regions in comparison to the MYPOW, which details how regions could contribute to the work of the IAF. The NLBI<sup>6</sup> contains several actions towards: enhanced regional cooperation on international trade in forest products from sustainably managed forests; addressing illicit international trafficking in forest products through the promotion of forest law enforcement and good governance at all levels; strengthening the capacity of countries to combat effectively illicit international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources; promoting international technical and scientific cooperation, including South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, in the field of SFM; strengthening forestry research and development

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted from the NLBI:

7 (g) Enhance bilateral, **regional** and international cooperation with a view to promoting international trade in forest products from sustainably managed forests harvested according to domestic legislation;

(h) Enhance bilateral, **regional** and international cooperation to address illicit international trafficking in forest products through the promotion of forest law enforcement and good governance at all levels;

(i) Strengthen, through enhanced bilateral, **regional** and international cooperation, the capacity of countries to combat effectively illicit international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources;

(n) Promote international technical and scientific cooperation, including South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, in the field of sustainable forest management, through the appropriate international, regional and national institutions and processes;

(p) Strengthen forestry research and development in all regions, particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, through relevant organizations, institutions and centres of excellence, as well as through global, regional and Sub-regional networks;

(q) Strengthen cooperation and partnerships at the regional and sub-regional levels to promote sustainable forest management;

in all regions, particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition; and cooperation and partnerships at the regional and sub-regional levels to promote SFM.

### **5.1 Emphasis on the role of regional and sub-regional entities**

Another key element highlighted in the MYPOW and paragraph 7(q) of the NLBI was the role of regions in SFM. Specifically, member States agreed to strengthen cooperation and partnerships at the regional and sub-regional levels to promote SFM. The range of actions earmarked for both sessional and intersessional periods is a response to the clamour of countries for greater priority to regions both for implementing action and for providing feedback to the Forum. For details see section 6 below.

## **6 The role of regions and regional entities**

### **6.1 Background**

The role of regions and regional bodies in SFM has been clearly recognised in all UN forestry fora beginning with UNCED. For instance, the Forest Principles noted “the vital role of all types of forests in maintaining the ecological processes and balance at the local, national, regional and global levels...” It also recognised the role of regional institutions in training and education. IPF noted that its work on SFM will benefit from consideration of regional initiatives and regional dimensions. The IFF went further to recognise the work of international and regional organisations as part of its SFM initiatives and welcomed regional approaches<sup>7</sup>.

By the time the UNFF was established there was universal agreement among members that regions have a critical role to play in the work of the Forum. This view was articulated in the ECOSOC Resolution 2000/35 which introduced a new principal function for the Forum to “*enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest related issues among relevant international and regional organisations, institutions and instruments, as well as contribute to synergies among them, including coordination among donors*”<sup>8</sup>.

In the years that followed, interaction between the Forum and regional bodies and mechanisms expanded significantly. These included:

- regionally and sub-regionally focused events showcasing experiences and realities in the implementation of SFM;
- closer ties and networking by UNFF Secretariat with regional and sub-regional entities, increasing accreditation from regional entities and enhancing further collaboration and involvement in SFM;
- information exchange to heighten awareness and mainstream forests in development issues at the regional level and create cross-sectoral policy and programme links between SFM and the MDGs; and
- workshops at the regional level to provide an effective means to understand approaches to address challenges, position negotiations at UNFF sessions and develop a basis for cooperative work between countries and civil society.

As a specific example of UN system cooperation, the regional forestry commissions provide a variety of links from regional to global level, including to the UNFF. The commissions focus on the implementation of SFM in the region, which is the broad objective of UNFF. In 2004, the

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<sup>7</sup> Report of the open-ended ad hoc Intergovernmental Forum on Forests on its first session (New York, 11-15 September 1995) page 5 para 12.

<sup>8</sup> ECOSOC Resolution 2000/35 paragraph 2c.

African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC) and the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) organized a special workshop on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. The results of these workshops were presented in a panel discussion during the Africa day in UNFF4. All commissions had a special session on implementing and monitoring progress in SFM in 2006.

Most regional forestry commissions have a recurrent agenda item on developments in global processes, including the UNFF, so they are kept informed of global policy dialogue. The commissions work to translate the international dialogue into more practical implementation. For example, in responding to the outcomes of the IPF/IFF and the UNFF and other processes, the APFC, supported by FAO, has implemented a large number of inter-sessional seminars, workshops and training initiatives and disseminated information on key issues and challenges to the region. Several of these are important globally, such as forest finance, criteria and indicators, national forest programmes, invasive species, codes of practice and the role of forestry in poverty reduction.

In their 2008 sessions, most of the regional forestry commissions are planning to address climate change, which is also UNFF issue. Some commissions previously addressed this in 2006.

A number of CPF members attend the regional forestry commission sessions and have made specific contributions by presenting their work and serving as resource persons. The UNFF secretariat has also a particular role in briefing participants on developments in the UNFF process.

In addition to these UN-based initiatives there were also major advances in regional arrangements such as forest partnerships and processes. These included dialogue on criteria and indicators of SFM, as well as on forest law enforcement, governance and illegal international trade. They have demonstrated how it is possible to achieve networking and partnership within regions, and between processes, in order to benefit from experiences in different parts of the world (UNFF5).

All these measures have contributed in some way to promote SFM at all levels. But in the absence of progress on the ground member States sought a greater role for regional entities. Intersessional work by countries such as Australia prior to the 5th session of UNFF and the country-led initiatives in Guadalajara in January 2005 (UNFF5A), Berlin November 2005 (UNFF5B), and in Bali in 2007 (UNFF7 p8) urged a more direct role for regions in implementing Proposals for Action (PfA) and other measures towards SFM, and greater visibility of the future IAF through regional initiatives and processes (ECOSOC 2006).

## **6.2 Working Modalities**

The ECOSOC Resolution 2006/49 changed the IAF substantially. It expanded its scope with the addition of three principal functions, one of which, as noted earlier, was to strengthen interaction between the UNFF and relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related entities.

The new principal function related to regional interactions (2c) was intended to “Strengthen interaction between the UNFF and relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organisations and processes, with participation of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21 and relevant stakeholders to facilitate enhanced cooperation and effective implementation of sustainable forest management, as well as to contribute to the work of the Forum”.

This was further elaborated in paragraph 7(c), as follows: “Strengthening cooperation and partnerships at the regional level, as needed to:

- (i) Increase political, financial and technical support and capacity;

- (ii) Develop regional strategies and plans for implementation;
- (iii) Collaborate on implementation activities; and
- (iv) Exchange experiences and lessons learned”.

In relation to working modalities of the new IAF the Resolution<sup>9</sup> invited “forest-related regional and sub-regional bodies, mechanisms and processes, in coordination with the Forum Secretariat, as appropriate, to strengthen collaboration and to provide input to the work of the Forum by:

- (a) Raising awareness of the work of the Forum at the regional and sub-regional levels;
- (b) Addressing topics identified in the MYPOW, with a view to sharing with the UNFF regional and sub-regional perspectives on these topics; and
- (c) Encouraging participation of interested members of the Forum, especially from within the region, as well as members of the CPF, relevant regional organisations and major groups (ECOSOC 2006).

The Resolution also stressed that the UNFF, should consider inputs from forest-related regional and sub-regional bodies<sup>10</sup>, as well as provide guidance to the CPF to explore ways to involve major groups in their activities and to strengthen the CPF’s contribution to activities at the regional level<sup>11</sup>.

### **6.3 ECOSOC Resolution 2007/277**

ECOSOC Resolution 2007/277, which outlines decisions taken at UNFF7, provides additional guidance on regional interaction.

Relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related entities were invited to address issues and agenda items planned for each Forum session and to provide a concise summary of their deliberations, to be submitted well in advance to the Secretariat prior to the upcoming Forum session. They were also encouraged to contribute to the discussions of the Forum sessions, according to their respective mandates<sup>12</sup>.

It is also possible for emerging issues to be brought forward from the regions and sub-regions to be considered for inclusion in Forum sessions<sup>13</sup>.

The ECOSOC Resolution 2007/49 does not give precise direction about the timing of regional interactions. However, given that UNFF will hold its global meetings biennially, early in 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015, it would be useful for the regional interactions to occur during the year preceding the session, namely 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014.

Major elements of the Resolution 2006/49 and the MYPOW that impact on regions are identified in table 1.

<sup>9</sup> ECOSOC 2006/49 paragraphs 11 (a) – (c)

<sup>10</sup> ECOSOC 2006/49 paragraph 15

<sup>11</sup> ECOSOC 2006/49 paragraph 22.d

<sup>12</sup> ECOSOC 2007/49 Annex C, paragraph 7

<sup>13</sup> ECOSOC 2007/49 Annex C, paragraph 10

Table 1:  
MULTIYEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK 2007-2015  
Regional Involvement

Intersessional activities (Years 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014)	Sessional activities (Years 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015)
1. The Forum welcomes the convening of country-, organization- and region-led initiatives in support of the work of the Forum and focused on topical issues of the MYPOW.	Forum will address the common agenda items achieving the 4 global objectives, implementing the NLBI; regional and sub-regional inputs; multi-stakeholder dialogues and participation; and enhanced cooperation and cross-sectoral policy and programme coordination.
2. Bureau and the Forum Secretariat will coordinate to effectively prepare for the sessions, drawing on the outcomes of the following: (b) Forest-related, and other relevant regional and sub-regional entities*; (e) Country-, organization- and region-led initiatives on topics relevant to the upcoming Forum sessions	The Forum will provide, including through interactive panels, a platform for dialogue with: (i) The members of the CPF, the Chairpersons of the governing bodies of relevant MEAs, (ii) Representatives of major groups, and (iii) Regional and sub-regional forest-related and other relevant entities*
3. Regional and sub-regional forest-related entities* are invited to address issues and agenda items of each Forum session and to provide a summary of their deliberations, to the Secretariat prior to the upcoming Forum session, and are encouraged to contribute to the discussions of the Forum sessions	Discussion at each session will focus on the exchange of national and regional experiences, activities and sharing best practices and lessons learned, identifying constraints and challenges in the advancement of elements in 1 above.
4. The Secretary-General is requested to prepare a report summarizing the submissions described in paragraph 3 above.	In 2011 and 2015 high-level ministerial segments, including a dialogue with the heads of member organizations of the CPF, as well as other forest-related international and regional entities will be held.
5. <b>Enhanced Cooperation:</b> The Forum encourages partnerships involving multi-stakeholders and relevant forest-related international, regional and sub-regional entities, as well as the members of the CPF, to develop synergies and to explore possibilities for joint activities towards the achievement of the objectives of the IAF.	
6. Major groups and other forest stakeholders are encouraged to contribute to and participate actively in the discussions of the Forum and, in relevant regional and sub-regional discussions with a view to providing their perspectives and input to the Forum's programme of work and engaging in an exchange of views and experiences with other Forum participants.	
7. <b>International Year of Forests:</b> Member States, the CPF, regional and sub-regional groups, major groups and other stakeholders are invited to share information on their activities in support of the International Year of Forests.	
8. <b>Monitoring, assessment and reporting:</b> For the 9 <sup>th</sup> session (2011) and the 11 <sup>th</sup> session (2015) the Secretary-General is requested to prepare, in collaboration and coordination with the FAO as Chair of CPF, analytical consolidated reports, based on voluntary country reports, contributions from members of the CPF and other relevant organizations, relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related entities*, major groups and other stakeholders, in order to assess progress in implementing the NLBI, to provide input to CSD, and review contribution of forests to the achievement of MDGs.	
9. One of the principal functions of the UNFF introduced by ECOSOC Resolution 2006/49 was to strengthen interaction between the UNFF and relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related entities*. This is likely to add greater momentum to the activities identified above.	

\*Entities here are defined to include forest related mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes

## **7 Global / regional interface**

The strengthening of the global-regional interface, arising from ECOSOC Resolution 2006/49 and the programme of action detailed in the MYPOW, is expected to enhance the feedback on policy development, country-level implementation and lessons learned through a critical link that regional and sub-regional entities can provide. It is also meant to provide a platform for countries and other players in the region to coordinate and collaborate in the implementation of SFM, the NLBI and the achievement of the GOFs, and to follow-up the outcomes of the global sessions, as well as in highlighting regional priorities and concerns.

The interaction offers prospects of a win-win outcome. But it needs to be managed carefully and efficiently to gain maximum benefit as the opportunities are limited by three main factors. They are: parameters of session agendas already set under the MYPOW, demands on intersessional years and the nature of regional entities themselves.

### **7.1 Parameters of UNFF sessions**

The MYPOW provides guidance on the underlying features of the programme. They include: a focus on implementation; clarity regarding expected agenda items; a focus on exchanges at national and regional expenses; identifying implementation constraints and challenges; and adaptability to changing needs.

Priorities already in place for the agenda of sessions impinge on the time available for regional interaction. They include:

- Thematic focus of each session (see appendix 1 for details);
- Emphasis of each session on implementation of the NLBI, including the GOFs, and SFM;
- Identified main task, number of common items and crosscutting issues for each session; and
- Possibility of dealing with emerging issues.

Other factors include:

- Scope, duration and expected outputs. For a detailed list of already determined items see appendix 2.
- The absence so far of appropriate guidelines and reporting formats to ensure coherent and comparable inputs from regions to allow the UNFF Secretariat to capture them in a consistent and effective way.

While some of these caveats help in greater efficiency of the sessions others tend to restrict the scope and limit the time available for regional interaction.

### **7.2 Intersessional periods**

There is also a range of similar limitations that need to be taken into account in relation to intersessional activities.

- There are only three substantive sessions (excluding the final year of 2015, devoted to evaluating effectiveness and determining future options) within the nine year duration of the IAF. This means regional inputs from intersessional activities need to be precisely targeted to ensure maximum effectiveness in the limited number of UNFF sessions.
- There is a need to work within the priorities and modalities set for the UNFF, which include the following:

- (a) To review the implementation of the NLBI;

- (b) To provide an interface for interregional dialogue and inputs from the regional organizations, processes and stakeholders;
- (c) To engage the representatives of the member States in preliminary discussions on the thematic issues of the following session of the Forum.

This would mean that regional input needs to be targeted to meet the criteria of Forum sessions.

### **7.3 Nature of regional entities**

There are well streamlined regional entities and networks, particularly the regional commissions of the United Nations and regional forestry commissions of the FAO. At the same time, there are regional entities that do not fall within UN structures and that can also contribute significantly. For example criteria and indicator processes, Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. They may have different priorities relating to SFM and are also at different levels in the political spectrum. Other examples of the diverse nature of regional entities are the Tehran Process, the Asia Forest Partnership, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation and the South African Development Community.

At the same time there are also sub-regional entities. How to incorporate inputs from a diverse range of entities that wish to provide inputs needs to be considered.

In the case of intergovernmental processes, although it is individual countries that make them up the only common thread running through all these diverse organisations is SFM. Harnessing their input in a coordinated, effective and timely manner is likely to offer challenges.

The awareness of the nature and the extent of limitations should help parties involved in working out appropriate strategies to maximise benefit from the limited opportunities. It is important that regional entities make efficient contributions to, and gain input, from the UNFF.

## **8 Optimising regional interaction**

The IAF offers major opportunities for regions to make an effective contribution to global policy development on SFM through several means. They include providing inputs to UNFF sessional agenda, participating at the high level segments, help developing and implementing the programme to celebrate the IYF, contributing to intersessional activity as well as in facilitating the two way flow of inputs between regions and UNFF. It is also important to see how much the UNFF could contribute to implementation of SFM in the regions. It is important that regional entities work to gain maximum benefit from these opportunities.

Facilitating effective regional interaction requires action by other stakeholders such as countries, the CPF and the UNFF Bureau and the Secretariat. This section identifies some of the important tasks for the key players.

### **8.1 UNFF Sessions (2009, 2011, 2013)**

There is provision for input at a number of levels. They include:

- Thematic focus of sessions<sup>14</sup>. The theme for the 8<sup>th</sup> session (2009) is 'Forests in a changing environment' and "Means of implementation for SFM", 9<sup>th</sup> session (2011) 'Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication and for the 10<sup>th</sup> session (2013) 'Forests and economic development'. There is a range of items identified under

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 1 for details for each session

each category and regions will be in a position to make an effective contribution to the debate;

- Identify regional experiences, priorities and concerns for consideration at the global level;
- Multi-stakeholder dialogue. This is held as part of the Forum sessions and provides an opportunity for regions to benefit from the experiences of a range of stakeholders on the wider spectrum of the forest industry;
- Identify emerging issues. Emerging issues can be global, regional or national but currently regions do not get much opportunity to put forward their own ideas before the international community;
- Workshops, seminars, side events. These events held in conjunction with sessions offer opportunities to share information, seek advice, explore ideas without the formality involved in UNFF Sessions. Another advantage in holding them during sessions is the availability of expertise from around the globe at such meetings; and
- Feedback to UNFF on policy development, lessons learnt, and regional priorities. This is an effective way of keeping the UNFF relevant, practical and useful to regions.

The issue of timely submission of regional and sub-regional input to the UNFF Secretariat is key for an effective contribution and depiction of regional action in advancing the work of the Forum. With respect to this, consideration should be given to a suitable deadline for such submissions. There may need to be some flexibility from the regions and the Secretariat on the timeframe during the first cycle of the new modality (2008/09) as the schedule of meetings has already been determined for many of the regional and sub-regional organisations.

## **8.2 High level segment (2011, 2015)**

HLSs aim to enhance political commitment and are critically important for the success of the IAF. They offer an opportunity to make progress in SFM which can only be realised with high level commitment. There is potential to enhance regional contributions to the HLS. Key areas for action could include:

- Encourage political leaders in the region to participate;
- Develop regional strategies for presentation at HLSs; and
- Following up zealously on decisions made at HLSs.

## **8.3 International Year of Forests 2011**

Preparations for IYF will commence in 2008 to celebrate the event in 2011. Regions could play a key role in using the opportunity to raise awareness and ensure engagement of political and public interest in the event. This offers an opportunity to promote SFM and to seek high level regional political commitment. At the same time regions will be able to contribute to the event at the global level through both the UNFF session in 2011 and the preparations leading up to it.

## **8.4 Intersessional activities**

In order to implement this new UNFF principal function, existing forest-related regional entities will need to consider how they plan to address UNFF agenda items and pertinent issues. There may be different modalities of doing this, depending on the region and process. Most regional organisations will hold their meetings in between the UNFF sessions. At the same time, they might examine how they will be able to provide consolidated input to the sessions of the Forum.

## **8.5 Intra-regional actions**

As essential as providing regional perspectives to global level policy making is implementing global commitments at the regional level. The execution of the NLBI, in particular the GOFs, is

the prime aim of the MYPOW. But stimulating national level action or reporting progress are often rendered difficult by several factors including varying capacities, and differing national priorities. A regional approach to coordinate action, on the other hand, may yield better results.

Other key responsibilities flowing from the MYPOW include the following:

- Follow up on outcomes of global sessions;
- Implement actions related to the IYF – raise public awareness, engage political and public interest in SFM;
- Coordinate implementation of action towards SFM at the ground level in member countries;
- Prepare for the forthcoming Forum session; and
- Organise/participate in country-led, region-led initiatives as appropriate.

The important role of regional entities is designing appropriate actions, applying them consistently, coordinate effectively and inspiring member countries into action.

## **8.6 Management bodies of regional entities**

Regular meetings of regional entities are often held annually or biennially. In the meantime the management bodies, bureaus and Secretariats, need to implement action and respond to emerging issues. Their role is particularly important given the need for ongoing action to meet commitments related to the Forum. Following are some of the key tasks related to the IAF.

### **8.6.1 Interface with UNFF**

- Provide to the Secretariat of the UNFF, well in advance of the upcoming Forum session, a concise summary of deliberations in the region on issues and agenda items planned for each Forum session;
- Contribute to the discussions of the Forum sessions, according to their respective mandates. Particularly, contributing regional experiences and challenges with SFM implementation;
- From the MYPOW identify action necessary to provide timely and effective input for non-session activities planned for the following year;
- Ensure decisions emanating from UNFF sessions as well as intersessional activities are promptly passed on to member countries for action, and then, follow up as necessary;
- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with UNFF Secretariat relating to formats and deadlines for reporting;
- Seek guidance from CPF members as well as bilateral sources to build capacity among member countries in the region to respond to the needs; and
- Ensure systems are in place to collect inputs from member countries, analyze as necessary and submit well in time for the target events.

### **8.6.2 Interface with other regional and sub-regional entities**

There may be an opportunity in some cases for streamlining regional input through interaction with other regional entities. This should be done in a way that adds value rather than becoming too complicated.

### **8.6.3 Interface with member countries of the regional entity**

- Share the information gathered through interaction with UNFF Secretariat on requirements, timing etc and ensure members understand and show commitment;

- Set up appropriate programmes for implementation of actions. These include data collection, implementation of action on the ground, monitoring and reporting; and
- Collect inputs and, prepare regional reports.

### **8.7 UNFF Bureau and the Secretariat**

- Provide guidelines, timelines and formats for regional input;
- Prepare for each session a report summarizing the submissions from regions;
- Recommend options to assist CPF find ways to strengthen the Partnership's contribution to activities at the regional level;
- Allocate specific timeslot during sessions for regional input/discussion;
- Assist in organising workshops and panel discussions during sessions as appropriate;
- Provide assistance as appropriate for region-led or country-led initiatives; and
- Maintain close coordination with regional entities.

### **8.8 Members of the CPF**

- Play a facilitative role for regional input;
- Work with UNFF to explore ways to strengthen the Partnership's contribution to activities at the regional level; and
- Help build regional capacity.

## **9 Constraints**

There are some potential obstacles to optimising regional interaction in fulfilling the principal functions of the MYPOW and the new IAF. Four of the critical areas that need to be addressed are identified below. The meeting may want to consider ways to address them.

### **9.1 Facilitating participation of the diverse range of regional entities**

The MYPOW provides a very broad range of entities in this category. They include forest-related mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organisations and processes as well as sub-regional entities. As noted in section 7.3, the existence of well streamlined entities and networks, particularly the regional economic commissions of the United Nations and regional forestry commissions of the FAO, alongside many diverse bodies present opportunities.

In facilitating the diverse range of inputs from different types of regional entities, the questions that arise are:

- Is a coordinated approach necessary and achievable?
- If so, how to bring it about?
- What is the most effective way to get effective engagement of all the relevant regional entities?

### **9.2 Ensuring regional views and priorities are effectively represented in UNFF**

There are two main elements associated with this:

- a) Ensuring issues are adequately considered within the regional entity and presented in an effective manner; and

- b) Timely reporting the views to the UNFF Secretariat to ensure representing those views in the Forum documentation.

Timing is particularly important in this regard. Working backwards from the deadline for input to the UNFF Secretariat will help chart the timeline. To allow for time to incorporate regional views in the write up of session documents and for translation into main UN languages the latest deadline for submitting inputs will be six months prior to the beginning of the relevant UNFF session. Time needed for developing the regional view will be in addition to this. Obviously different regional bodies will have different time frames for this depending on the ease with which internal discussions can be accomplished. But one thing is clear: all regional entities may need to arrange their programmes to ensure adequate consultations among members, and preparing submissions that meet the required criteria within the deadlines.

### **9.3 Promoting action on the ground to implement SFM**

The rationale for the new emphasis on the regional element in the IAF is that it will facilitate implementation at the ground level. Unlike in the past where the IPF/IFF proposals for action were not presented as an action plan this time the NLBI not only provides such a plan but also sets targets for accomplishment. This means within the timeframe of the NLBI countries need to show progress in implementing particularly the GOFs. Regional entities need to play an active role in ensuring this happens.

### **9.4 High Level commitment to SFM**

A crucial determinant of action on the ground in implementing the MYPOW is political commitment. It was the absence of this key ingredient that has been blamed for inaction in the past. While the NLBI offers a more effective tool to facilitate action the extent of national effort may yet hinge largely on political commitment. Regional bodies will need to consider ways to stimulate high level dedication to SFM.

## **10 Conclusions**

The strengthening of the IAF and the adoption of the NLBI and the MYPOW are highly significant moves by the international community to promote action on the ground towards SFM. Its main points of departure from previous UN based initiatives include its comprehensive nature as an action plan, identifying the four GOFs which embody many of the aims of the vast range of actions promoted under IPF and IFF, and setting target dates to measure progress. In addition to these it also offers a longer timeframe to show results – almost three times to that of the IPF and IFF.

Regions are in a strong position to play an important role in achieving the objectives of the IAF. In recognition of this the ECOSOC, in its 2006 resolution, added a new principal function to the UNFF: to strengthen interaction with relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related entities. The NLBI highlighted a number of ways to promote this objective through Forum sessional and intersessional activities. They include providing inputs to UNFF sessional agenda, participating at the HLS, help developing and implementing the programme to celebrate the IYF, contributing to intersessional activities as well as in facilitating the two way flow of inputs between regions and UNFF.

It is important that regional entities work to maximise these opportunities. Other stakeholders, in particular the CPF and the UNFF Bureau and the Secretariat, need to assist in the process. However, translating regional responsibilities into meaningful actions may require overcoming a number of challenges. They include working out a basis for effective input and engagement from the diverse regional and sub-regional entities with widely different objectives; stimulating action at the ground level in member countries in implementing SFM; coordinating timely provision of inputs to sessions of the UNFF; as well as relaying policy developments

emanating from the Forum back to member countries. These are issues that need careful consideration at the RLI.

The NLBI is a voluntary arrangement similar in basis to IPF/IFF proposals for action. The difference is the new features of the IAF provide greater certainty and a comprehensive framework for action. Regional entities are in a strategic position to help enhance the capacity of the IAF to deliver the expected outcomes. It will greatly assist in overcoming the perceived hurdles with a concerted and coordinated approach.

## 11 Appendix 1

### THEMES FOR SESSIONS

#### **Eighth session (2009): “Forests in a changing environment” and “Means of implementation for SFM”**

- forests and climate change;
- Reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification, including low forest cover countries;
- forests and biodiversity conservation, including protected areas; and
- Decision on a voluntary global financial mechanism/ a portfolio approach/ forest financing framework.

#### **Ninth session (2011): “Forests for people ,livelihoods and poverty eradication”**

- community based forest management;
- social development and indigenous and other local and forest- dependent communities, including forest land tenure; and
- social and cultural aspects.

#### **Tenth session (2013): “Forests and Economic Development”**

- Forest products and services;
- National forest programmes and other sectoral policies and strategies;
- Reducing risks and impacts of disasters; and
- Benefits of forests and trees to urban communities.

#### **Eleventh session (2015): Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward for the international arrangement on forests**

- Reviewing the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and consideration of all future options, as stated by the Council in its resolution 2006/49, para 32;
- Reviewing progress towards the achievement of the global objectives on forests and the implementation of the NLBI; and
- Reviewing the contribution of forests and the international arrangement on forests, including the NLBI, to the internationally agreed development goals.

## 12 Appendix 2

### UNFF: MULTIYEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE PERIOD 2007-2015

	<i>Eighth session</i>	<i>Ninth session</i>	<i>Tenth session</i>	<i>Eleventh session</i>
Main task	Achieving the four global objectives on forests and implementing the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests			Achieving the four global objectives on forests and implementing the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the international arrangement on forests
Overall themes	Forests in a changing environment; Means of implementation for sustainable forest management	Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication	Forests and economic development	Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward for the international arrangement on forests
Themes	<p>Forests in a changing environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forests and climate change</li> <li>• Reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification, including low forest cover countries</li> <li>• Forests and biodiversity conservation, including protected areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based forest management</li> <li>• Social development and indigenous and other local and forest-dependent communities, including forest land tenure</li> <li>• Social and cultural aspects</li> </ul> <p>International Year of Forests 2011 Assessment of Progress High-level segment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest products and services</li> <li>• National forest programmes and other sectoral policies and strategies</li> <li>• Reducing risks and impacts of disasters</li> <li>• Benefits of forests and trees to urban communities</li> </ul> <p>An emerging issue may be also considered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and consideration of all future options, as stated by the Council in its resolution 2006/49, paragraph 32</li> <li>• Reviewing progress towards the achievement of the global objectives on forests and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests</li> </ul>
	<p>Means of implementation for sustainable forest management</p> <p>Decision on a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework</p> <p>An emerging issue may be also considered</p>	An emerging issue may be also considered		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing the contribution of forests and the international arrangement on forests, including the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, to the internationally agreed development goals</li> </ul> <p>High-level segment</p> <p>An emerging issue may be also considered</p>
Cross-cutting issues	Means of implementation (finance, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, capacity-building, awareness-raising, education and information-sharing); forest law enforcement and governance at all levels			
Common agenda items	Achieving the four global objectives on forests and implementing the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests; regional and subregional inputs; multi-stakeholder dialogues and participation; enhanced cooperation and cross-sectoral policy and programme coordination, including activities and inputs of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests			

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