



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**



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Federal Office for the Environment FOEN

**Australian – Swiss Region-Led Initiative
on regional input in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests**

International Meeting

Geneva, Switzerland, 28-30 January 2008

Thematic outline

Australia and Switzerland are pleased to announce the hosting of a Region-Led Initiative (RLI) **on regional input in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)** in preparation for its 8th session to be held from 20 April to 1 May 2009. The RLI will be co-sponsored by countries and organizations including Switzerland, Australia, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the FAO Asia Pacific Forestry Commission, the UNECE Timber Committee and the UNFF Secretariat.

The meeting and its preparations are guided by an international Steering Group, composed by organisations and countries.

The RLI entitled “Australian-Swiss Region-Led Initiative in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests” will take place on 28-30 January 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland.

Introduction

In strengthening the work of the UNFF, countries agreed that there should be a greater interaction between the UNFF and the work being carried out by forest-related organizations and processes that operate at the regional level. In resolution 2006/49 ECOSOC decided, as an additional principal function, to strengthen interaction between the United Nations Forum on Forests and regional and sub-regional forest-related mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organisations and processes. These regional entities are invited by the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of the Forum (ECOSOC decision 2007/277) to address issues and agenda items planned for each UNFF session, to provide a concise summary of their deliberations to the UNFF secretariat, and to contribute to the discussions of UNFF sessions.

Responding to the UNFF’s invitation, forest-related regional and sub-regional entities will need to give consideration as to how they can best address the UNFF issues and contribute positively to policy deliberations at future UNFF meetings. The aim is to find practical ways to address UNFF agenda items, and raise the awareness of the UNFF’s work in existing regional processes in a way that provides benefits to both the global and regional levels.

The scope of the RLI is to promote, stimulate and enhance the contributions and participation of regional and sub-regional forest-related mechanisms, institutions and instruments,

organizations and processes in UNFF's work with a view to contribute to enhanced implementation of sustainable forest management.

Objectives of the RLI:

- Raise awareness at the regional and sub-regional levels of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) and the role and work of the UNFF, especially its mandate to strengthen interaction between the UNFF and regional and sub-regional mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organisations and processes;
- Inform on the topics identified in the UNFF MYPOW with a view to sharing regional and sub-regional perspectives on these topics with the UNFF;
- Examine opportunities for and constraints to integrating the planned UNFF agenda items into meetings of the regional or sub-regional processes;
- Identify practical mechanisms and timelines for ensuring that the outputs from regional meetings are submitted to the Forum secretariat and integrated into the UNFF sessions, as appropriate and likewise enhancing outputs from the global level to the regional level;
- Encourage inputs from forest-related regional and sub-regional mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organisations and processes to UNFF, by 1) sending written focused contributions; 2) and/or participating in the sessions of the UNFF.

Working mode:

In order to allow for an in-depth discussion, two Working Groups (one with English-French and Spanish simultaneous translations and the other in English) will work in parallel on:

- Ways to enhance the integration of UNFF topics/matters into regional meetings
- Key priorities/challenges of regional bodies and how these link to the topics of the UNFF sessions (including any other topic that would need to be added)
- Capacity to influence future UNFF deliberations (emerging issues, 2-way process). What kind of outcome/decision/document from UNFF could contribute to improving SFM at the regional level?
- Modalities for providing regional input to UNFF (What type of support is required to hold regional meetings to deal with UNFF agenda items; and to use reporting mechanisms to collect and organise input to UNFF?).

Enough time will be provided for discussions afterwards in plenary setting. Background material will be prepared and circulated in advance to registered participants to facilitate discussion during the RLI. The report from the RLI will be circulated to countries, the UNFF Secretariat and regional forest-related organizations and processes to help them with implementing the required interactions during 2008.

Working languages

English, French and Spanish.

Participants

The meeting will be limited to 50 participants, giving the priority to regional and sub-regional entities.

Contacts

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