



United Nations
Forum on Forests



Key issues for UNFF3

Highlights

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UNFF3 is right around the corner. For general information on the UNFF3 session, please visit our website at <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/session.html>. The main issues for the third session of the Forest Forum, being held from 26 May to 6 June 2003 in Geneva, include: economic aspects of forests, maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs, and forest health and productivity.

Growing Money on Trees: Economic Aspects of Forests

An estimated one-fourth of the world's population depends to varying degrees on forests for their livelihood, but 16.1 million hectares of the world's natural forest are lost every year. The World Summit on Sustainable Development recognized that forests have significant potential to reduce poverty. Related to this, access to markets is of crucial importance in creating income and employment. One aspect that is lacking in the international trade negotiations arena is a comprehensive definition of environmental goods. Given the positive consumer interest in sustainable timber and non-timber products, there is a strong case to develop such a framework. Another crucial element in sustainable forestry is the private sector. Most countries' private sector investments and activities in forests far exceed international and national public investment. It is important to develop strategies to deal effectively with the private sector and create a climate that encourages environmentally and socially responsible investments. Given that an estimated 500 million people, mostly poor, living in or near forests, are crucially dependent on forests, it is essential to encourage sustainable forest practices. Increasing and establishing access to forests and defining stable and transferable ownership rights will provide benefits to the rural poor

living in or near forest areas. Involving forest-dependent communities in forest management would also increase their income, improve the status of women and reduce illegal activities, among other things.

Maintaining Forest Cover to Meet Present and Future Needs

The successful maintenance of forest cover relies on the recognition of the multiple functions and roles of forests, consideration of society's long-term needs for forest goods and services, and the development of national forest policies that will provide for these future needs. Progress has been made in this area. There has been a steady development of regional and global forest sector planning. However, vital information needs to be gathered at the national level. National forest programmes in many countries are increasingly reflecting a wide range of forest values, covering a planning horizon of ten or more years. A survey of 145 countries, which was undertaken by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in 1999, showed that 96 per cent of countries had national forest programmes in various stages of development. What is lacking in many cases, however, is long-term trend studies of non-wood products. Developing criteria and indicators for forest policy and planning is another useful tool that many countries are using for sustainable forest management. Currently about 150 countries, covering most forests of the world, are participating in nine regional and international processes to develop criteria and indicators. A key challenge in the near future is to integrate sustainable forestry objectives into broader agendas and instruments for poverty reduction and sustainable rural development. For example, agricultural subsidies for crops, plantations and cattle-ranching have a demonstrated impact of accelerating deforestation.

New Zealand Plantations Meeting Available

The UNFF New Zealand inter-session expert meeting on maximising the role of planted forests in sustainable forest management took place 24 – 30 March 2003. The meeting built on the outcomes of the first Expert Consultation on the role of planted forests held in Santiago, Chile in 1999. Participants

succeeded in building consensus through informed dialogue among major interest groups and the report will directly support the UNFF in implementation of its work plan. The report and other details are available on: <http://www.maf.govt.nz/mafnet/unff-planted-forestry-meeting/index.htm>

Forest Health and Productivity

Forest health and productivity are negatively affected by a variety of factors, including air pollution, wildfires, pests and diseases and storm damage, among others. Damage to forests from air pollution in parts of Europe and North America in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and more recently in other regions, highlighted the need for preventive measures to reduce air pollution and for regional and international cooperation in prevention and monitoring. There are also indications that outbreaks of forest pests and diseases are on the increase, due in part to increased international trade of agricultural and forest products coupled with ineffective quarantine measures. Major storm and flood events in the late 1990s and early 2000s also have raised concern over the impacts of long-term climate change on forests. Progress has been made on several fronts. There is increased implementation of air pollution abatement policies at national levels, with significant improvement of air quality in Europe and North America. New regional agreements for the prevention of air

pollution have been adopted in Asia and Africa. National efforts for community-based fire management are making progress in some countries, and there is increased regional collaboration, including transboundary agreements to address forest fire emergencies in the Asia and Mediterranean regions. Data collection and dissemination of information on forest fires and pest and disease outbreaks are improving. Future challenges include the need to put in place air pollution prevention measures in countries experiencing rapid industrial growth and increased energy use, which lead to heightened levels of air pollution. Many countries need to shift the emphasis from emergency response to prevention of damage from forest fires. Also, forest management plans need to be adjusted to take into account potential damage due to adverse weather conditions and climate change.

Full reports on each of these issues can be found on the official website <http://www.un.org/esa/forests>

Stakeholder Dialogue at UNFF3

Multi-stakeholder dialogue at UNFF3 provides an opportunity for civil society, in the form of major groups, to enter into direct dialogue with governments and intergovernmental agencies on sustainable forest management issues important to them within the UNFF3 elements: Economic Aspects on Forests, Forest Health and Productivity and Maintaining Forest Cover to meet Present and Future Needs. In order to plan the dialogue day as well as discuss further how to strategically ensure that their concerns are addressed within UNFF3, major groups focal points

will be meeting Sunday 25 May 2003, 9:30 am for a MSD Consultation. Further, a MSD Briefing is planned for Mon 26 May. Further information on major groups contribution to UNFF3 can be found within the official documentation. Six major groups have submitted official contributions to the UNFF3 discussions. These documents are available online at <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/documents-unff.html#3>. MSD organization at UNFF3 can be found at <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/session-msd-plan.htm>. General UNFF3 session page can be found at <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/session.html>.

UNFF Session

26 May - 6 June 2003. UNFF 3rd Session in Geneva, Switzerland.

CPF Meeting

25 May 2003. Collaborative Partnership on Forests Meeting organized by CPF Secretariat in Geneva Switzerland.

Other Meetings

25 May 2003. UNFF Multi Stakeholder Dialogue Consultation 2 in Geneva Switzerland.

23-27 June 2003. The Forest Science/Policy Interface in Europe, Africa and the Middle East Workshop organized by IUFRO in Copenhagen, Denmark. www.iufro.boku

Informal Newsletter Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests

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The UNFF newsletter aims to provide updated information on matters related to the international arrangement on forests.

This informal newsletter is produced and distributed electronically by the UNFF Secretariat. If you wish to subscribe to this free newsletter contact the Secretariat at unff@un.org.