



UNITED NATIONS – NATIONS UNIES

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS  
SECRETARIAT



*Discussion points delivered by  
Mr. Pekka Patosaari, Director, Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests,  
on the occasion of the XXII IUFRO World Congress  
(Brisbane, 8-13 August 2005)*

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## **Working Effectively at the Interface of Forest Science and Forest Policy**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished authorities of Australia and Queensland,

Dear friends from IUFRO,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and my pleasure to attend and make a short presentation on behalf of the United Nations Forum on Forests at the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations.

You have already been briefed about the Guidelines, and I have to admit that the Guidelines are an excellent collection of fine principles. The package should be taken as a serious set of advice by all researchers and research institutions

In conducting research, researchers should address questions that are relevant to policy issues, with a focus on values and needs, conducting research in a multi-faceted manner and looking forward. The second point on communication and collaboration sets out the

importance of effective communication, openness and transparency. Creating partnerships is important. And in doing research we should understand and serve the policy process. When engaging in the processes it is important to build close linkages to all stakeholders and decision makers.

Ultimately you need to create organizational capacity and culture that enables and encourages the science-policy interface, improve the policy-relevance of your functions and maintain neutrality.

Mr Chairman,

I would like to review briefly some of the experiences and lessons learned by the UNFF since its 4<sup>th</sup> Session (UNFF4), held in May 2004, when progress in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action on forest-related scientific knowledge has been thoroughly assessed by countries at the United Nations.

24 out of the 270 IPF/IFF proposals for action specifically refer to forest-related scientific knowledge. These relevant proposals concerning scientific research and its interactions with forest policy and practice have been summarized into 4 clearly defined areas of action, and a fifth one, transversal or cross-cutting to the other four, that refers to applying participatory mechanisms to better integrate research into planning processes:

- 1) strengthening the interactions between science and policy,
- 2) promoting the provision of efficient sharing of information and strengthening networks,
- 3) setting research priorities and addressing the knowledge gaps, and
- 4) strengthening research capacity and mobilizing funding for forest research.

The most important finding of the assessment carried out, of the 4 areas for action needed, contains some guidance to enhance the contribution of science to sustainable forest management.

1. The experience has shown that although progress has been made at the international level, the degree of interaction and the extent to which forest-related scientific knowledge is used for policy making still vary considerably among countries and tend to be low particularly in developing countries.

However, there are some innovative initiatives at the international level that have narrowed the gap between science and forest policy-making, including the UNFF, intergovernmental conventions and their subsidiary scientific advisory bodies and the members of Collaborative Partnership on Forests. There has been significant collaboration when preparing the UNFF sessions, and an increased cooperation between the scientific community and international organizations leading to key informative publications, such as FAO's State of the World's Forests, the ITTO Principles, Criteria and Indicators for SFM of Tropical Forests, the work of the Regional Processes of C&I for SFM, and IUFRO's task-force on science/policy interface, just to mention a few.

The use of science in international policy deliberations still needs to be further enhanced. Stronger efforts are particularly needed to facilitate science-policy interaction within developing countries in order to enhance research uptake in policy-making. In this respect the existing lack of human and financial resources and inadequate communication constitute major bottlenecks for conveying scientific information effectively from the science system to the policy system. We need stronger support from national governments and international cooperation programmes for expanding the participation, communication and networking capacities of national and sub-national research organizations.

2. In relation to promoting the provision and efficient sharing of information and strengthening networks, evidence has shown that although a significant number of information services and systems have been established in recent years due to rapid advancements in information and communication technologies, and that related network activities have reduced duplication of research and facilitated skills development. Lack of

information and communication technologies and related capacity in many countries still constitute a major obstacle for generating, providing and sharing forest information.

Many outstanding initiatives in this area have allowed progress, suffice to recall here just a few: the Global Forest Information Service-GFIS developed by IUFRO, the “Info Finder” established by CGIAR in collaboration with FAO. Nevertheless, access to information and communication technologies and their use continue to be unequally distributed on a global scale, thus hampering science-policy interaction for SFM.

3. With regard to setting research priorities and addressing the knowledge gaps, experience has shown that science and technology have made significant contributions to addressing knowledge gaps at local, national, regional and global levels, and to the implementation of many IPF/IFF proposals for action that have helped in further defining research priorities.

There has been significant progress in the understanding of forest ecosystem dynamics and functions, on the broad range of factors that affect forest health and productivity, such as in the phenomenon of Climate Change and its interrelations with forest use and deforestation.

The ongoing development of sound valuation methodologies for forest goods and services and of market-based policy instruments to better enable society to capture the multiple benefits provided by forests is another example of how forest-related scientific knowledge has been enhanced on a range of environmental, economic and social aspects of forests.

IUFRO has placed emphasis under its Special Programme for Developing Countries on training topics related to the science-policy/management interface, and has also promoted research and networking activities among developing countries. A number of organizations, inter alia, the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre and two networks attached to ICRAF, have also been promoting collaboration between

research and education. A number of regional networks, such as the Asia-Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions, and the Forum of Heads of Forestry Research in Latin America have been established to promote research collaboration and strengthen research capacity in support of national and regional development.

Mobilizing funding for forest research is becoming more difficult. Public funding has been decreasing in many developing countries, moreover, Official Development Assistance (ODA), on which most least developed countries are heavily dependent, has also declined in recent years. This has hampered the continuity of many recipients' research programs.

In contrast, the share of private research funding has increased, particularly in developed countries. In general, the private sector focuses on applied research in areas that provide competitive economic advantages.

But public funding continues to be of vital importance for forest research all over the world and is of particular relevance to developing countries. In many of these countries a significant proportion of financial support to forest research is provided by development assistance agencies that have changed the focus of their priorities towards sustainable development during the last decade.

Although there has been an increased attention given to forest-related scientific research over the past decade, the challenge facing scientists, managers, and policy makers is to fund integration of complex information and data into a user-friendly scientific and technical knowledge base in support of SFM. This integration should pay particular attention to the linkages between forest policy and the broader development agenda.

A concept for improved science-policy interface:

Firstly to synthesize existing scientific information and traditional forest-related knowledge, as well as the results of ongoing forest-related research programmes, and to

develop a globally targeted research agenda in tropical forests, that responds to the pressing need for information and know-how facing managers and decision-makers.

Secondly, the present focus of global and regional organizations, institutions and processes on sustainable development, climate change, biological diversity, forest governance and other cross-cutting issues relevant to forests indicates that effective forest-related policies now require coordinated and integrated approaches across sectoral boundaries.

Greater efforts are also needed to adapt intra-institutional structures and processes within research organizations and to establish mechanisms for inter-institutional cooperation, in particular to address the new roles for forestry research, development and training bodies and agencies in the specific context of poverty alleviation.

Another important challenge, Mr. Chairman, is to proceed further in integrating science and research into management planning. In this respect, adaptive collaborative management has emerged as an approach that can help improve the management of natural resources and assist local communities in problem solving through more participation, collaboration, learning together and collective action. Although application of adaptive collaborative management in various places has had positive impact in more recent years, more concerted effort is needed by policy and decision-makers to further improve institutional arrangements at the local level and to strengthen collaborative processes in formal forest management.

Mr Chairman,

Forest research must continue to develop and adapt strategies to the multiple dimensions of sustainable forest management and sustainable development in order to attract finance.

Forest research needs to increasingly adopt new, “client-driven” research agendas and approaches and, in this respect, it is crucial to understand the needs of the intended

audiences, including those of policy makers, forest owners, local communities, indigenous communities and other potential users of technologies and information.

There is also the need to better communicate and demonstrate the positive impact of forest research. Forest research has to become more and more responsive and accountable regarding its “impact on the ground”, particularly where environmental services and livelihood-related benefits are key goals. This gap is nowadays a particular challenge when aiming to increase investments in forest research.

I am sure that the scientific forest community gathered here will be discussing these issues thoroughly and will provide remarkable inputs to allow us to narrow the gaps and make the dialogue between forest science and forest policy more efficient.

I thank you very much for your attention.