



Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in the context of United Nations Forum on Forests

Expert group meeting on
“International cooperation in preventing and combating illicit international
trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest
biological resources”

Statement by the UNFF Secretariat
Jakarta, Indonesia
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Mr. Chair, Distinguished Experts:

On behalf of the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), I thank you for the opportunity to inform this Expert Meeting of the work undertaken by the Forum on matters related to forest law enforcement and governance. The Secretariat attaches great importance to this event and the issues addressed, as it provides a constructive exchange of information on efforts to combat illicit international trafficking in forest products and accordingly, promotes sustainable forest management. At this stage, I would like to express our deep appreciation to the Government of Indonesia for hosting this important meeting, and for organizing it, in collaboration with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime.

Mr. Chair:

The problem of illegal harvesting of forest products, conflict and associated trade has remained high on the political agenda of the UNFF. The issue was first addressed in the mid -1990s, under the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), the predecessor of UNFF, and has been gaining importance and urgency in various international fora during the last several years. Illegal harvest and trade of forest products exacerbate unsustainable forest practices, increase the cost of forest management and accentuate market failures. Tackling illegal activities of this nature requires actions from all stakeholders- both producer and consumer nations- as well as consolidated international cooperation. It is an encouraging sign that several FLEG processes, at regional and sub-regional levels, have been initiated to tackle these problems.

UNFF has been playing a significant role in combating forest-related illegal practices, ranging from conflict prevention to community tenure and use rights. In following Forum decisions, countries have made concerted efforts to ensure that measures are established and laws enforced, within their national context. Keeping to this, such law enforcement and governance approaches should be coordinated with and complemented by a broader national policy framework.

In this regard, exploring possibilities of closer collaboration on forest law enforcement and governance between the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) and the Forum, in accordance with resolution 16/1, could prove valuable in advancing actions to combat transnational organized crime and achieve sustainable forest management. This call for strengthened collaboration will significantly assist in meeting the challenges that forest illegal

activities, including harvesting of forest products and associated trade implicate in the work of both fora.

In view of this, the Forum Secretariat provided an information note on the matter, as a contribution to the report of the CCPCJ for its seventeenth session in April 2008. The information note, which has been distributed here, demonstrates decisions of the Forum, liaison activities with regional initiatives, and inter-agency cooperation through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as through DESA on a UN system wide level.

Drawing from the note, I wish to mention two points related to countries commitments to forest law enforcement and governance. First, at the 62nd session of the General Assembly, member States adopted the Non-Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) on All Types of Forests, (A/res/62/98). The NLBI represents a historic landmark of the global forest dialogue over the last fifteen years, built on concepts and elements from those negotiations. In addition to strengthening political commitment to sustainable forest management and enhancing its contribution to achieving the internationally-agreed development goals, the purpose of the NLBI is to provide “a framework for international cooperation”. The NLBI also gears efforts to achieve the four Global Objectives on Forests, adopted by the Forum in 2006. It sets out national policies and measures to be used in achieving sustainable forests management. Contained in these, is the call to review and improve forest-related legislation, strengthen forest law enforcement and promote good governance to support sustainable forest management, and to create enabling environments for forest investment, as well as to combat and eradicate illegal practices.

The Instrument further defines measures of international cooperation and means of implementation. Actions are addressed to strengthen countries’ capacities to combat illicit activities in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources. Communicating the seriousness of this problem is also extremely important. Hence, education, public awareness, institutional capacity-building and technological transfer, as well as technical cooperation, law enforcement and information networks, are emphasized as fundamental aspects to address illegal practices, and to achieve the implementation of the Instrument.

Secondly, the topic of forest law enforcement and governance features as an important cross-cutting issue within the new Multi-Year Program of Work (MYPOW) of the Forum for 2007-2015. This topic will be on the agenda of all forthcoming Forum sessions, beginning with the Eighth Session of the UNFF in 2009.

Mr. Chair,

The Commission and the UNFF, as subsidiary bodies of the UN Economic and Social Council, have also been invited by the Council, to increase their interaction and to contribute to the reactivation of the UN Development Agenda, taking into account the specificities of each intergovernmental process. Correspondingly, this juncture offers another occasion to jointly contribute to the theme “Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development” at the upcoming Annual Ministerial Review of the Council.

In summary, the new phase of international cooperation on forests will strongly benefit from synergistic approaches. We anticipate that the continued collaboration between our Secretariats, through activities that offer greater technical cooperation and facilitate exchange and sharing of information on these social and environmental challenges, will strengthen in the years to come.

Thank you.