

**1<sup>st</sup> Session of the MCPFE Ad Hoc Working Group  
"Development of Pan-European Understanding of the Linkage between  
Ecosystem Approach and Sustainable Forest Management"  
19-21 April 2004  
Krakow, Poland**

*Intervention by Pekka Patosaari,  
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished MCPFE representatives, ladies and gentleman,

First, allow me to congratulate the Polish Government and its new team on the official opening of the MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw last month, and to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election. This is a fundamental working group session and I wish you every success in this very important task.

Due to the preparations of the upcoming fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), 3- 14 May 2004, in Geneva, I deeply regret that the Secretariat was unable to attend this Ad Hoc Working Group on "Development of Pan-European Understanding of the Linkage between the Ecosystem Approach and Sustainable Forest Management". At any rate, I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the working group and participate by means of this intervention. I hope you find the following information about UNFF's activities and other developments regarding collaborative work on the relationship between the ecosystem approach and sustainable forest management useful for your tasks ahead during the next couple of days.

The UNFF Secretariat participated in the July 2003 meeting on the "Further Elaboration, and Guidelines for Implementation, of the Ecosystem Approach", hosted by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Montreal, Canada. This meeting elaborated explanatory material on each of the 12 principles of the ecosystem approach. It also identified concepts and tools that have been developed in various sectors which can help implement the ecosystem approach concept, including sustainable forest management. The pioneering work of the forest sector in holistic and integrated resource management and the supportive role of sustainable forest management in implementing the ecosystem approach were positively recognized. The results of this meeting were communicated to CBD's SBSTTA 9, and they contributed significantly to the deliberations of the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the COP to the CBD in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2004, as regards Decision VII/11 on the ecosystem approach.

Focusing on the items included in the agenda and background paper for this 1<sup>st</sup> ad hoc working group session, it is clear that this meeting is of significant importance to the work of the Forum. In fact, the findings of this group will contribute directly to the upcoming discussions in UNFF in response to Resolution 3 / 4, paragraph 7, adopted by the third session of the Forum. The resolution welcomed the request of the CBD to work collaboratively on issues of common interest, and invited Member States of the UNFF and member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) to provide their views to the UNFF Secretariat, by end of February 2004, on the following three issues: 1) *Clarifying the concept of the ecosystem approach and the concept of sustainable forest management*; 2) *Management, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of forest biological diversity*; and 3) *The relationship between the IPF/IFF proposals for action and the activities of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity*.

These issues will be discussed at the fourth session of Forum, under the session's Agenda Item 5 (b) *Enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination*. The Secretariat has already posted on its website the views received from UNFF Member States and member organizations of the CPF. Furthermore, the Secretariat will present and make available a summary of these views at UNFF 4.

I am pleased to note that Ireland, as Presidency of the European Union (EU), submitted information and views to the Secretariat, as requested, on behalf of the EU and the accession countries scheduled to become full members of the Union from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004. As such, they noted the establishment of this working group and underscored the outcomes, which will contribute to the issue on "clarifying the concept of the ecosystem approach and the concept of sustainable forest management". Hence, the outcomes of your session will provide the solid basis for the EU to put forward more detailed views on the relationship between these two concepts at UNFF 4.

In the context of Europe, many aspects of the ecosystem approach are already being realized through sustainable forest management practices. Efforts at the pan-European level have led to significant changes in forest policy and legislation, as well as sustainable management activities in many countries within Europe. Building on the work achieved so far by the MCPFE, it is worth noting that, ministers responsible for forests decided, at the Second Ministerial Conference in Helsinki, that biological diversity is an essential and operational element of sustainable forest management. In 1993, European countries participating in the MCPFE process adopted the Helsinki Declaration and Resolution H1: General Guidelines for Sustainable Management of Forests in Europe where a definition for sustainable forest management was agreed.

Furthermore, there has been considerable recognition and application of sustainable forest practices and the development of tools under sustainable forest management which provide a potential utility in helping to implement the ecosystem approach. Principles of the ecosystem approach have been also further developed and clarified through practical, every day forestry experiences when applying the best available knowledge and scientific information.

In this context, I must highlight the use of criteria and indicators (C&I) as a valuable tool for strategic planning and for monitoring progress toward sustainable forest management. Their usefulness has been constantly recognized at the global level by the IPF, IFF and UNFF, and will also be further discussed at UNFF 4. The development and implementation of C&I of sustainable forest management represents one of the greatest achievements of the forest sector in the past decade. Nine regional and international C&I processes, involving 149 countries around the world and about 85 percent of the world's forests, have developed C&I sets for use at national and sub-national level and have contributed to a common global understanding of what constitutes sustainable forest management, while recognizing that biological diversity is integral to it. All international C&I processes include the conservation of biological diversity as an essential element, or criterion, of sustainable forest management.

In light of this, I am also very pleased to have received the documents from the Executive Secretary of the CBD relevant to UNFF, particularly Decision VII/11 of the CBD which recognizes the potential tools under sustainable forest management, including C&I developed under various regional and international processes, national forest programmes, model forests, and certification schemes, among others, to serve in helping with implementation of the ecosystem approach. There is no doubt about the substantial potential for further improvement in implementation, particularly the much added value from sustainable forest management through the application of C&I.

Regional efforts to implement UNFF's principle functions are extremely important, and we welcome the biodiversity related work on forests in helping us to reach common goals related to international forest policy and national policies on forests. Moreover, we must work together to find ways to apply sustainable forest management tools in other sectors. There is a need to strengthen cross-sectoral integration, to make forests a means to help develop economies and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, simultaneously maintaining the functionality of ecosystems and building capacity for sustainable forest management. I assure you of the Secretariat's commitment to continued collaboration with the CBD Secretariat in efforts to achieve sustainable forest management, while raising political awareness and greater commitment to forests.

Your discussions during this working group session, as will be reflected in the final report and other background documents, will be important not only for furthering issues related to the ecosystem approach and sustainable forest management, but unquestionably contributing to the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests. UNFF recognizes the importance of regional processes in advancing sustainable forest management and in facilitating country implementation at the national level. The efforts taken by the MCPFE and the Environment for Europe/Pan European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (EfE/PEBLDS) are a concrete and constructive steps forward, and by doing this you support a broader adaptation of the concept sustainable forest management as the guiding principle for national implementation of forest policies. European countries can be proud of adopting the principle, already in 1993, that biological diversity is an essential and operational element of sustainable forest management. Now this doctrine deserves to be adopted by the broadest international audience too.

My best wishes for a very productive meeting. I look forward to receiving the final report of this ad hoc working group and to your active participation in the deliberations and discussions on this matter at the fourth session of the Forum in Geneva next month.

Thank you for your attention.