CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS URGE INCLUSIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT PROCESSES,

AS TENTH SESSION OF UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS CONTINUES

Grass-Roots Organizations Present Common Position on Forests, Economic Development; Forum Hears Presentation of National Reports from Japan, German, Netherlands, Ukraine

Civil society must have a say in how to sustainably manage the world’s forests, and activities involving woodlands must not threaten those whose livelihoods depended on those vital global resources, representatives of major groups said today as the United Nations Forum on Forests continued its tenth session today.

Meeting through 19 April in Istanbul, Turkey, the Forum today convened a multi-stakeholder dialogue with civil society organizations, who shared their unique and vital perspectives on issues related to sustainable forest management. For the first time, the groups, representing youth, indigenous people, scientific and technical communities, women, farmers and small forest landowners, business community, forest workers, and major trade unions, presented a single discussion paper, on “forests and economic development”, the theme of the session.

When the lively dialogue got under way, Cécile Ndjebet, President of the African Women’s Network for Community Management of Forests, said that rural and indigenous women were key contributors to forest-based economic development, but their views and rights on the subject continued to be sidelined. She, therefore, called on the United Nations, the Forest Forum’s Secretariat, and all other decision-makers to give women a seat at the decision-making table.

Similarly, Tolulope Daramola, of the International Forestry Students’ Association, said that as the global economic downturn disproportionally inhibited the job prospects for the world’s young people; those youths must be empowered to help fuel the green economy. He called on the Forum to partner with young people to develop a “global youth initiatives” framework that would involve them in sustainable forestry management.

Jukka Halonen, of the Finnish Forest Industries Federation said stakeholders in forestry matters must have a say, particularly as the contribution of those whose livelihoods were derived from forests was crucial for achieving sustainable forest management goals. “We are willing to do our share and act responsibly. We are producing more out of less — resource efficiency is a key in our business,” he said, pointing to investments in clean technology, research and development, and carbon neutral, recyclable products made from renewable forest resources. At the same time, it was “utterly important” to include the voices of civil society.

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Picking up that thread, Paul Opanga, of Building and Wood Worker’s International, said that forest industry workers needed better protection against on-the-job accidents and injuries, unstable employment and poverty. They needed vocational training, skills training, lifelong learning, and an enabling environment for exchanges and dialogue. “Forest jobs must remain green but they must be decent,” he said, adding: “A forest that pays is a forest that stays.”

Hubertus Samangun, Regional Coordinator, International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests, expressed alarm that those peoples’ rights were still being ignored and the forests in areas where many of them lived were being logged without their free, prior and informed consent. He cited the plight of the indigenous people of Yamdena Island in eastern Indonesia, and called on the Forum to take concrete action to help curb the current shocking rate of deforestation and forest degradation.

Jan McAlpine, Director of the Forum Secretariat, introduced the note on the dialogue; Shashi Kant, Professor of Forestry at the University of Toronto, Canada, moderated the event and introduced the discussion paper submitted by the major groups on forests and economic development.

During the morning session, the Forum heard the presentation of reports on four country-led initiatives in support of its work. The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan discussed the main points and outcome of the international seminar titled “Challenges of sustainable forest management: integrating environmental, social and economic values of forests” held in Tokyo in March 2011. A Member of Germany’s Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, summed up the conference titled “Contribution of Forests to a Green Economy” held in Bonn in October 2011.

Also making a presentation was a representative from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation of the Netherlands, who informed the Forum about the meeting titled “A pathway to a green economy in the context of sustainable development: focus on the role of markets and the promotion of sustainable forest management” held in Hanoi in January 2012. Finally, a member of Ukraine’s State Forest Resource Agency of Ukraine reported on the international forum titled “Forests in a Green Economy for Countries in Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia: Livv Forum,” held in September 2012.

Ms. McAlpine introduced the Secretary-General’s two related reports; Eduardo Rojas-Briales, Assistant Director-General of the Forestry Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, introduced the Secretariat’s related note.

The Forum will reconvene at 10 a.m., on Thursday, 11 April, to consider emerging issues.

Background

As the United Nations Forum on Forests continued its tenth session today, it heard the presentation of reports on country-led initiatives in support of the Forum and held a multi-stakeholder dialogue featuring presentations by representatives from major civil society groups.

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Introduction of Reports by Secretary-General and Forum Secretariat

JAN MCALPINE, Director of the Forum Secretariat, introduced the Secretary-General’s reports on “Enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination” (document E/CN.18/2013/8) and on the “Collaborative Partnership on Forests Framework 2011 and 2012” (document E/CN.18/2013/10).

EDUARDO ROJAS-BRIALES, Assistant Director-General, Forestry Department, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, introduced a note by the Secretariat titled “International Year of Forests, 2011 activities: trends and lessons learned” (document E/CN.18/2013/9).

Presentation of Country-Led Forestry Initiatives

GEN TOTANI, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, introduced a letter dated 1 February 2012 (document E/CN.18/2013/14), which contained the Co-Chairs’ summary report of the international seminar on the theme “Challenges of sustainable forest management: integrating environmental, social and economic values of forests” held in Tokyo from 8 to 10 March 2011.

Mr. Totani said the seminar — co-hosted by the Governments of Indonesia and Japan and co-organized with the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Forest Europe and the Montreal Process — aimed to contribute to the Forum’s work under its multi-year agenda for 2007 to 2015. Some 170 experts from Governments, multilateral and non-governmental organizations and the private sector from 30 countries participated. The seminar also sought to provide an overview of global trends in sustainable forest management since the 1992 Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), review the development and implementation of policy tools and instruments for such management, and discuss challenges and opportunities in advancing it in the future.

Participants had acknowledged the considerable progress since the Earth Summit towards sustainable forest management in many countries and regions, he said. That included declining forest cover loss, an increase of forests under sustainable management and the introduction and broad use of various policy tools and instruments such as criteria and indicators, guidelines, forest certification, national forest programmes and countermeasures against illegal logging. Global commitments to sustainable forest management had grown through policy dialogues like the Forum. The participants had also recognized that, on the ground, challenges existed to putting sustainable forest management into practice.

Mr. Totani said that developing countries in particular faced difficulties in implementing those tools and instruments at the field level due to inadequate capacity, a lack of commitment, insufficient funding and underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, such as poverty. There was a need for policy tools and instruments to identify, monitor and report on critical aspects of forests and forest management such as those related to biodiversity conservation and the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), which included the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

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Participants called for the following: streamlining forest-related reporting to reduce countries’ reporting burden; periodically reviewing the relevance of policy tools and instruments; operationalizing existing guidelines; facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues; creating synergies among different policy tools and instruments; sharing useful knowledge and experiences gained through the practice; and mainstreaming forests into the sustainable development agenda, he said. Several of the recommendations had since been implemented.

He cited the creation of the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire, or CFRQ, which had significantly reduced countries’ reporting burden; the development of guidelines for safeguard information systems and forest reference emission levels and forest reference levels to achieve the REDD+; and the publication by the Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute in Japan of the REDD+ Cookbook, an easy-to-understand technical manual for Forest Carbon Monitoring for REDD+.

Following that presentation, MATTHIAS SCHWOERER, Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of Germany, introduced a letter dated 27 February 2012 (document E/CN.18/2013/16), which contained the Co-Chairs’ summary report of the conference titled “Contribution of Forests to a Green Economy” held in Bonn from 4 to 7 October 2011. Organized in close cooperation with the Forum and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), co-chaired by Brazil and Germany, with support from Finland, the conference aimed to contribute to the Forum’s current session.

He said that forests provided a variety of goods and services for long-term socioeconomic development, and income and subsistence for hundreds of millions of people. Wood, non-wood, timber and non-timber products significantly contribute to the world economy. To be sustainable and competitive, the forest sector had the adherent potential to further improve its efficiency and at the same time reduce its ecological footprint in terms of emissions and waste. Green investments provided long-term rates of return, promoted biodiversity, and provided protective functions related to soil and water control.

The conference also conducted an analysis of progress since the 1992 Earth Summit in various fields, among them, agreements on the forest instrument since 2007, action to combat the illegal logging trade, and the emergence of a new paradigm for international cooperation, he said. The conference then deliberated on the existing limitations and challenges to unleashing the full potential of forests to contribute to long-term sustainable development.

The increasing competition for land and the focus on short-term economic benefits were among the major challenges identified. Participants recommended a series of priority actions for presentation to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the Forum’s present session on matters related to institutions, governance and stakeholders; forest valuation and financing; benefitting people; bio-based products and the private sector. The conference’s outcome was a comprehensive and precise source of information for the Forum’s current session, he added.

The next presenter, ROB BUSINK, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation of the Netherlands, introduced a letter dated 4 March 2013 (document (more)
E/CN.18/2013/17) which contained the Co-Chairs’ summary report on the meeting titled “A pathway to a green economy in the context of sustainable development: focus on the role of markets and the promotion of sustainable forest management” held in Hanoi from 10 to 13 January 2012.

He said that the meeting had been co-organized by the Governments of Viet Nam and the Netherlands, and co-sponsored by Finland, with support from the Forum’s Secretariat. More than 130 representatives from Governments, international and regional organizations and civil society, from over 45 countries, had participated in the country-led initiative. The programme had focused on the role of market-based instruments, especially in promoting international trade and legally produced timber, as well as private and Government procurement policies in the context of combating deforestation and the role of forests in contributing to a green economy. The four themes that had been discussed in breakout groups were: market instruments; removing obstacles for sustainable trade; lessons learned in forest law enforcement; and sustainable forest management and food security.

Forests were critical for human well-being and poverty reduction, he continued, adding that they played a key role in transitioning countries to green economies. That provided an opportunity for development of policy frameworks and market instruments that effectively curbed deforestation and degradation and that unleashed the full potential of forests in contributing to long-term sustainable development. The value of natural assets and ecosystems, including forests, to economies, people’s livelihoods and society was routinely undervalued in development decision-making.

Mr. Busink said that the key messages of the initiative were: the role of the private sector in driving the green growth agenda needed to be emphasized; achieving sustainable forest management was a critical cornerstone for a green growth strategy in the context of sustainable development; there was a need to recognize the linkages between agriculture, food security and sustainable forest management within a broader landscape approach; and it was a must to mainstream sustainable forest management in United Nations organizations and international financial institutions, as well as at the national level.

LYUBA POLYAKOVA, State Forest Resource Agency of Ukraine, introduced a letter dated 19 December 2012 (document E/CN.18/2013/15), which contained the Co-Chairs’ summary report on the international forum titled “Forests in a Green Economy for Countries in Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia: Lviv Forum,” held in Lviv from 11 to 14 September 2012. She said that the event had been co-organized by Ukraine and Switzerland, and more than 130 forestry professionals from 34 countries, including representatives of forest administrations, scientific organizations, politicians and international experts, had gathered for the meeting to share experiences and identify opportunities for the application of the concept of a green economy in the forestry sector. Participants had also included eight international organizations and observers.

All participants had split into regional working groups, respectively for the Balkans, Eastern Europe and North and Central Asia, with a separate group established for Ukraine, she noted. Each group had prepared conclusions and recommendations under four themes: sustainable forest industries and products; forest ecosystem services and the role of forests in low-carbon economies; employment and livelihood opportunities in the forest sector; and forest governance in a green economy.

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economy. At the end of the session, 10 key messages had been adopted, she said. They were: capture the true values of forests; use all resources efficiently; be energy-wise; make jobs decent and green; address threats to forests; define governance principles and stick to them; update skills; innovate and build partnerships; cooperate across boundaries; and make the case for the forest sector’s role in the green economy.

During the ensuing discussion, delegates shed light on efforts to achieve sustainable forest management in their respective countries and regions. They also made suggestions on how the Forum could strengthen its role.

Ireland’s representative, speaking on behalf of the European Union, shed light on the range of activities in the Union to strengthen sustainable forest management. He cited the Union’s forest strategy, the action plan launched in 2003 to curb illegal harvesting and trade of associated timber products, the entry into force this year of the European Union timber regulation banning illegally harvested timber on Union markets, and the “Forest Europe” intergovernmental process launched in 2011 to negotiate a legally binding agreement on forests by 2015.

Ethiopia’s representative, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the Council of the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan, said the Network, which comprised Government, private and civil society representatives from more than 50 countries, advocated inclusive, green development through the production of bamboo, rattan and non-wood forest products. He asked the Forum to consider accepting the Network as member in 2015.

The representative from Bolivia sharply criticized the Forum session’s theme “forests and economic development”, saying such a narrow focus created a “dreadful precedent” and violated the guidelines set forth in the Rio+20 outcome for a holistic, comprehensive approach to sustainable development. Rather than focusing on the market value of forests, the Forum should focus on the rights of Mother Earth; promote the public sector’s role in creating policies and plans to strengthen sustainable forest management, and the collective role and rights of rural, indigenous communities; and advocate for financial aid to developing countries to achieve sustainable forest management.

China’s speaker said his Government had held a tree-planting activity last month to further enhance public awareness and protection of sustainable forest management. He called on the Forum to formulate a road map to implement its mandate and to strengthen collaboration with FAO to conduct evaluations of sustainable forest-related instruments and action plans.

The delegate of New Zealand, speaking on behalf of the Montreal Process, said its 12 member countries had created a network of knowledge and technology-sharing to tackle climate change and problems related to water, bioenergy and biodiversity. It had partnered with the ITTO, the Forum, FAO and other groups on several regional initiatives, such as the Forests for Central Africa. In August 2012, it had met with those bodies and with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; the Convention on Biological Diversity; and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to develop a forests’ indicators’ partnership.

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Iran’s speaker stressed the importance of the current session of the Forum to low-forest-cover countries like his own. According to a report presented to the session, 71 countries had been identified as such, with less than 10 per cent forest and tree coverage. A case study had been conducted on Iran. Major achievements, including the Tehran Process, had been made towards sustainable forest management in countries with similarly low forest cover. To promote sustainable forest management in those nations, he said, workshops had been held in 2001 and thereafter. In light of strengthening regional and subregional cooperation, Iran will hold a first-ever ministerial meeting of low-forest-cover countries in November 2013 in Tehran, he added.

The representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo described his country’s challenges to manage forests amid recurring conflicts. Despite such a situation, the Government had taken many measures, including fiscal reform, combating trade of illegally produced forest products and forest rehabilitation programmes. As a result of those efforts, protected areas were expected to increase from 9 per cent to 17 per cent. But with recurring conflict, it had been difficult to secure funding for forest management, he said, calling for the establishment of a global forest fund. To that end, there was a need to also set up a facilitation mechanism as soon as possible and conclude an agreement on the fund at the next Forum session in 2015.

Taking the floor again to conclude the dialogue, Mr. ROJAS-BRIALES took note of the requests made by Ethiopia and China, and said the Partnership might review its membership towards more universal representation in 2015.

Also participating in the discussion were speakers from Brazil, Malaysia, India, United States and Argentina.

Multi-stakeholder Dialogue

Ms. MCALPINE opened the dialogue by introducing the Secretariat’s note on the dialogue (document E/CN.18/2013/7).

SHASHI KANT, Professor, Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto, Canada, who moderated the event, introduced a discussion paper submitted by the major groups on forests and economic development (document E/CN.18/2013/7/Add.1).

Participating in the dialogue were the Focal Points and Alternates of the following major groups: Cécile Ndjebet, President, African Women’s Network for Community Management of Forests (Women); Tolulope Daramola, International Forestry Students’ Association (Children and Youth); Andrei Laletin, Friends of the Siberian Forests (Non-Governmental Organizations); Lambert Okrah, Partnership on Forests (Alternate Focal Point for Non-Governmental Organizations); and Hubertus Samangun, Regional Coordinator, International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests (Indigenous People).

Also taking part in the event were: Paul Opanga, Building and Wood Worker’s International (Forest Workers and Trade Unions); Peter deMarsh, Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owner (Farmers and Small Forest Landowners); Ghanshyam Pandey, Chair, Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal, and member, Global Alliance of Community Forestry (Alternate Focal Point for the Farmers and Small Forest Landowners); Sim Heok-Choh, Asia
Mr. DE MARSH lauded the high focus placed on cross-sectoral issues; that represented an important and long overdue shift. Sustainable economic development based on forest resources was characterized by the recognition of the full contribution of natural forests to local communities and livelihoods as a whole; increased recognition among the urban population of its dependence on forests; and recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, rural communities and smallholder farmers to forest resources. It was also characterized by increased investment in and use of scientific and traditional knowledge; greater investment in education, training and other aspects of capacity-building for all major groups, including the development of networks and associations; equal access to markets; a fair sharing of benefits; and assurances that sustainable forest management involved the full participation of youth and women.

When a robust process of putting those things in place was under way, livelihoods improved, the forest cover increased and woodlands were better protected, he said. That process was not based on wishful thinking, but on a growing list of spectacular examples of work carried out in China, Nepal and the Nordic countries. He appealed to the global community to focus on whatever achieved the best results. As the world population headed towards 9 billion, people from all ideological sides must view each other not as burdens, but as assets and partners.

Speaking next, Ms. NDJEBET said the rural and indigenous women were now interactive strongly with Governments. Women were one of the main actors in sustainable forest management, development and other matters. But they had not been given due attention they deserved. As that was the case, she called on Governments, United Nations, the Forest Forum’s Secretariat, and all other decision-makers to recognize the work of women in all matters, especially how they contributed to forest-based economic development. She asked those decision-makers to recognize the rights of women, facilitate efforts to that end, develop specific funding mechanisms, enhance sustainable development, develop a system of capacity-building, give access to information, and increase qualitative and quantitative representation at decision-making processes. Unless such measures were taken, forests would hardly continue to provide benefits.

Mr. DARAMOLA expressed concern over diminishing economic opportunities for youth caused by the global economic downturn. In May, a global youth conference in Germany aimed to outline the specific role of youth in sustainable forest management and green economic development. Participants concluded that a true understanding of the role of forests and their sustainable management would only be achieved when youth and cultural values were linked to forests. He asked the Forum to: give more recognition to young people; give youth a more active role in developing joint initiatives for youth; streamline youth’s views into the Forum’s work; employ a youth representative in the Forum Secretariat to create youth-related programmes; create a youth ambassador post; and include national and regional youth programmes in its work plan.

He asked Member States to support students with traditional knowledge of medicines that would facilitate green economic development and to support the participation of at least one national youth representative at their meetings on forest-related issues. He also called for development of a “global youth initiatives” framework that would empower young people in...
sustainable forestry management. The International Forestry Students’ Association had already
drafted a structure that the Forum could adapt.

Taking the floor next, Mr. LALETIN said there had been numerous proposals for action
since the global forest crisis had prompted dialogue on policy solutions. Noting the challenges
arising from the exploitation of forests, he stressed the importance of sustainable use of resources.
He also indicated that markets, from which many problems had originated, may be able to provide
solutions. It was essential to start with existing commitments before making new ones. There was
an erroneous assumption in general that forests could be replaced by artificial plantations, he said,
calling for a paradigm change. He also stressed the need to provide financial resources and
reducing unsustainable consumption and the need to explore the possibility of involving such
stakeholders as private companies in the forest sector, as well as exploring emerging opportunities
between the forest sector and other sectors.

Mr. SAMANGUN stressed the importance of the 2007 Universal Declaration of the Rights
of Indigenous Peoples and the creation of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous
Issues. Indigenous people wanted a simple process to access funds for sustainable forest
management, such as the small grant programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The
Permanent Forum had formally recognized the important contribution of traditional knowledge and
had set up permanent working group on that subject. But in practice, indigenous peoples’ concerns
and rights were still being ignored.

In that regard, he cited paragraph 16 in the common position paper introduced by Mr. Kant,
which pointed to the continued lack of recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights in many of their
territories, where their customary forests were being logged without their free, prior and informed
consent. The major groups were deeply concerned about the lack of action by key actors, including
Governments, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector, to curb the current alarming
rate of deforestation and forest degradation. The major groups had urged Governments to stop the
destruction of remaining natural forests and companies to end land grabbing. He asked the Forum
Secretariat to take concrete action on those points.

Mr. OPANGA noted that chairs and tables in the conference hall had been made by the
hands of forest workers. The forest industry had been one of the most hazardous industries because
workers were susceptible to accidents and injuries. They also faced early retirement. Such
conditions stemmed from poor governance and illegal activities. He stressed the importance of the
rights of trade unions to negotiate collectively, urging participants to examine the issue of unstable
employment and poverty facing forest workers. They needed vocational training, skills training,
lifelong learning, and an enabling environment for exchanges and dialogue. It was also vital to
ensure social security and protection for workers. “Forest jobs must remain green but they must be
decent,” he said, adding: “A forest that pays is a forest that stays.”

In his statement, Mr. SIM said science and technology were crucial for addressing climate
change mitigation and adaptation, and biodiversity conservation. He urged the Forum and Member
States to promote science, technology, innovation and traditional knowledge about forests without
destroying them. He asked the body to bolster the role of regional and subregional networks;
support regional databases and information clearinghouses; promote information sharing among
researchers, institutions, and people employed in the forest sector; strengthen forest-related

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research, education and training; create an enabling environment for private sector investment in science and technology; support local research and development, and technology transfer to further enhance scientific values.

Mr. PANDEY said communities, individual families, and indigenous people had responsibilities for managing 30 per cent of the world’s forests. While, 70 per cent of the world’s forests were owned by States and Governments, the rights of community and family were not recognized formally. “We are heading towards a world of 9 billion people. How will we feed, shelter, provide energy and a good quality of life for them?” he asked. As a renewable resource, forests had a critical role to play in meeting those unbelievable challenges. Community, family and indigenous peoples’ forests were at least 30 per cent of the solution. There were four preconditions for the full sustainable economic development of those forests: secure tenure; fair market access; good quality support services; and effective associations. One thing he liked to see was a fund dedicated to community and family forestry, which was a locally controlled forestry fund.

Mr. HALONEN said the forest industry had much to give to the Forum and its contribution was essential to reach sustainable forest management goals. Economic development had strong links to sustainability; the forest industry could enhance sustainability and alleviate poverty. “We are willing to do our share and act responsibly,” he said, adding that the industry had taken steps to support sustainable development. “We are producing more out of less — resource efficiency is a key in our business,” he said and stressed the need to ensure the sustainable use of resources, education and fair employment.

Today’s successful, competitive carbon industry could produce carbon neutral, recyclable products from renewable forest resources sustainably. Its products ranged from traditional ones to renewable materials that substituted non-renewable ones. By investing in clean technology, research and development, and innovation, it could offer more in the near future in the green economy. Stakeholders must have a voice and seat at the table in Forum’s processes, he said, as the Forum’s decisions would greatly impact the forest industry. Sustainably managed and used, forest resources had a positive effect on climate change mitigation and livelihood, especially in rural areas and on poverty reduction.

Mr. OKRAH reported on the workshop under the Major-Group-led Initiative. First such project started in Ghana, which had contributed to the Forum’s ninth session in 2011. Forests were critical for the survival of humanity. To realize the full potential of forests’ contribution to human well-being, the Major Group-led Initiative had made the following recommendations: rights-based approach; principles of good forest governance; legal and policy framework for community forestry; public and private partnerships; financing mechanism and community empowerment. The Initiative planned to similarly contribute to the eleventh session of the Forum in 2015.

During the ensuing discussion, Member States highlighted their respective national efforts, in partnership with major civil society groups, to achieve sustainable forest management and equitable benefit-sharing of forest resources. For example, Uganda’s representative discussed her Government’s collaboration with the Uganda Forestry Group and the Uganda Timber Growers Association to carry out programmes and generate awareness about forestry conservation and resource harvesting.

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Also, the representative of Papua New Guinea cited public-private partnerships for timber production and forestry information exchange. Ghana’s representative said his country’s Environment and Natural Resource Advisory Council sought input from various stakeholders, including civil society and landowners. In that effort, it had set up a multi-stakeholder committee to promote cooperation and reduce conflict among the various stakeholders.

Sweden’s representative stressed the need to ensure gender equality and promote the vital role of women and young people to ensure sustainable forest industry. The delegate from Finland said that a simple, effective way to sustainably manage the world’s forests was to secure land and tenure rights and to give incentives to support the organizations and cooperatives of producers of forest products.

The speaker for Mexico supported the recommendations presented by the Major Groups, but said they must be tailored to national needs. Nigeria’s delegate said his country had enshrined the needs of vulnerable groups in national strategy and those groups part of institutional arrangements at the local, regional and subregional levels.

Among the other speakers, the representative of Guinea noted that women walked for kilometres to get water and food. Her Government helped them organize community groups and had provided them with technical assistance. The Government was also working closely with non-governamental organizations because they made invaluable contributions, including being the first to point out when something went wrong in the conservation of nature and other matters.

The representative of Lesotho said he had grown up “in the old days”, when communities were able to plant trees and manage forests without involving other stakeholders. But that era was gone, he said, stressing the need for multi-stakeholder approach, as well as for local communities to be part of the drafting of forest policy. Their involvement in such decision-making could help reduce forest fires and illegal cutting of trees, among other challenges.

Also speaking were the representatives of Indonesia, Germany, Turkey, Nepal, Senegal, Malaysia, Philippines, Argentina, United States, Togo and Liberia.

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