



INFORMATION NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT

Third Session, United Nations Forum on Forests
Geneva, Switzerland, 26 May –6 June 2003

REGIONAL FOREST PANEL AT UNFF-3 **Regional Realities and Challenges in Sustainable Forest Management**

I. Introduction

As a key intergovernmental mechanism, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) facilitates and coordinates the implementation of sustainable forest management at national, regional and global levels. The Forum has a particular role to play in building global to national, and global to regional links on forests and promoting concrete actions on the ground. In this regard, the Forum has been focusing on issues including, regional realities and challenges in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and regional initiatives on sustainable forest management.

The Bureau of UNFF 3 met in February 2003, in New York. At this meeting, the Bureau members indicated the benefit of bringing into UNFF sessions a regional perspective of sustainable forest management. Given this, it was suggested that, first, a section on regional forest-related processes and initiatives be included in the Secretary General's Note on Enhanced Cooperation and Policy and Programme Coordination, under agenda item 4(b) of the provisional agenda. As such, the importance of regional cooperation and coordination in promoting sustainable forest management on the ground would be underlined. Secondly, the notion of a Regional Panel was proposed for UNFF 3 to provide an opportunity for experts to share regional experiences and lessons learned on forests and sustainable forest management.¹

In accordance with suggestions provided by the Bureau, the UNFF Secretariat has dedicated the afternoon session of Friday 30 May for a Regional Forest Panel on "Regional Realities and Challenges in Sustainable Forest Management". This background document was prepared by the Secretariat to provide information on the scheduling and main points to be considered during the Regional Forest Panel at UNFF 3.

II. Scheduling of the Regional Forest Panel at UNFF 3

As a new feature of the third session, a Regional Forest Panel has been scheduled for Friday 30 May, in an afternoon plenary session, to facilitate the participation and presence of government delegates, international as well as regional processes, organizations and instruments and major group representatives.

The two hours scheduled for this Panel will, first, allow Panelists to make a 15-minute presentation on the realities, activities, collaborative approaches and coordinated efforts, as well as challenges and lessons learned on forests in their respective regions. Secondly, after the Panelists

¹ In addition to the Regional Panel and its subsequent discussion, accredited regional organizations will have an opportunity, throughout the third session, to provide inputs and contribute to the discussion on the substantive elements of UNFF 3: forest health and productivity, maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs, and economic aspects of forests.

provide their regional perspective on forests and forest management, the remaining time will be allotted for a general open discussion, inviting delegations, regional processes, organizations, bodies and experts to share their own regional experiences, approaches and challenges as well as potential regional engagements and activities in support of the UNFF.

Points that may be considered during the discussion period include:

- ***Regional Coordination on Forests***
 1. Describe how regional initiatives enhance regional cooperation and coordination on forests, and between the forest and related sectors. (e.g., forest biodiversity, rural development, and sustainable development, etc.)
- ***Contribution to the work of the UNFF***
 2. Explain the main activities (i.e, policy development, technical networks, ministerial engagements and political commitments, information collection and monitoring, research, etc.) undertaken regionally that contributes to UNFF's work.
- ***Lessons Learned***
 3. Explain what lessons you have learned from positive and negative regional experiences? What factors contribute to successful implementation of activities in support of sustainable forest management and which make implementation challenging?
- ***Recommendations***
 4. Suggest how the UNFF can better facilitate regional coordination and support actions on the sustainable management, use and conservation of forests at the regional level.

III. Discussion Session and Background Papers

The Secretariat encourages all delegations, regional processes, organizations, bodies and major groups to attend the panel presentations and actively participate in the discussion. It is anticipated that the discussion will set the stage for a constructive exchange of information, while equally exploring future actions on forests to support the work of the UNFF. The Forum should profit from this information exchange on regional forest activities and likewise engage in the discussion to share experiences and concrete actions taken on the ground.

The Secretariat encourages the Panelists making presentations during this event to provide an information paper highlighting in greater magnitude their regional experiences and approaches. Such papers will be circulated during the session and used as background information.

Representatives of regional processes, organizations, bodies, major groups and other interested experts are also invited to prepare information papers on their regional forest experiences, challenges and opportunities in sustainable forest management, as contribution and input to the regional discussion. Regions that do not make presentations at this session will have an opportunity to display their collaborative approaches and activities on forests in subsequent UNFF sessions.