United Nations Forum on Forests
Tenth session
Istanbul, Turkey, 8 – 10 April 2013
Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Multi-stakeholder dialogue
Note by the Secretariat

Summary
The United Nations Forum on Forests recognizes the value of and encourages the active participation by major groups, as identified in Agenda 21 in the Forum sessions and intersessional meetings in promoting sustainable forest management. Agenda 21 has identified the following major groups: (i) Business and industry; (ii) Children and Youth; (iii) Farmers; (iv) Indigenous peoples; (v) Local authorities; (vi) NGOs; (vii) Scientific and technological community; (viii) Women; and (ix) Workers and trade unions. As such, from its inception, the Forum has been very participatory in its working modality and has consistently encouraged the forest-related organizations pertaining to those major groups in the multi-stakeholder dialogue of the Forum. Pursuant to the United Nations Forum on Forests resolutions 1/1 and 7/1, a multi-stakeholder dialogue is held as an ongoing component of every Forum session in accordance with the provisions of the Economic and Social Council and the relevant rules of procedure. It should be noted that the Non-legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (Forest Instrument), adopted by the Forum and the General Assembly in 2007 specifically called for active and effective participation by major groups in the work of the Forum.

At the tenth session of the Forum in April 2013, the multi-stakeholder dialogue will be held during the first week of the session, where representatives of the major groups will share their perspectives on the issues related to sustainable forest management, financing sustainable forest management, and the implementation of the forest instrument and the achievement of its four Global Objectives on Forests, in the context of the main theme of the session, “Forests and Economic Development”. It should be noted that the focal points of the participating seven major groups have demonstrated remarkable coordination and prepared one joint discussion paper for this session, which is contained as addendum to the present note.

The present note gives an account of relevant developments since the ninth session of the Forum and offers a number of measures the Forum may wish to consider in order to continue enhancing substantive contributions by major groups to its discussions.

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I. Introduction

1. The major groups as identified in Agenda 21 have been one of the key constituents of the Forum. Agenda 21 has identified the following major groups: (i) Business and industry; (ii) Children and Youth; (iii) Farmers; (iv) Indigenous peoples; (v) Local authorities; (vi) NGOs; (vii) Scientific and technological community; (viii) Women; and (ix) Workers and trade unions. The Forum has recognized the role and contributions of the forest-related organizations pertaining to those major groups in implementing sustainable forest management. Therefore it has consistently promoted stakeholder participation in its work, and has incorporated interactive multi-stakeholder dialogues during its sessions. In order to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogue process, major group networks have nominated focal points to assist in coordination of inputs from various major group networks.

2. During intersessional periods, the Forum Secretariat works in close collaboration and cooperation with major group focal points to coordinate and plan for the next multi-stakeholder dialogue and to enhance their participation in accordance with the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. Accordingly, the Forum secretariat facilitates consultations among the focal points of each group\(^1\) to plan and prepare for the multi-stakeholder dialogue. The format and content of the dialogue is proposed by the focal points, in consultation with the Forum secretariat, to the Bureau of the Forum for consideration.

3. As with the previous sessions, the present note has been prepared to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogue, to be held during the tenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

II. Enhancing stakeholder participation in the work of the Forum

4. Effective participation of stakeholders is critical to the success of the Forum in its pursuit for sustainable forest management. The United Nations Forum on Forests recognizes and encourages the active participation by major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, in the Forum sessions and intersessional meetings in promoting sustainable forest management. During the intersessional period, representatives of major groups participated and contributed significantly to a number of Forum-related meetings and activities. They participated in the four workshops organized by the Forum secretariat on facilitating finance for small island developing countries (SIDS) and low forest cover countries (LFCCs) held in Tehran, Iran (November, 2011), Niamey, Niger (January 2012), Port-of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago (April, 2012), Fiji (July, 2012). They also actively participated in the four country- and organization-led initiatives in support of the Forum, namely, the country-led initiatives entitled: “Contributions of forests to a green economy: Exchange ideas and experiences concerning the roles of forests and sustainable forest management for developing a Green Economy” (Bonn, Germany -October 2011); “A pathway to a green economy in the context of sustainable development: Focus on the role of markets in the promotion of sustainable forest management” (Hanoi, Viet Nam- January 2012); “The Lviv Forum on Forests in a Green Economy: Actions and Challenges for the Countries of Eastern Europe and Northern and Central Asia” (Lviv, ...)

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\(^1\) A complete list of the focal points of major groups is available at www.un.org/esa/forests/contacts-major_groups.html
Ukraine- September 2012); the organization-led initiative entitled CPF Organization Led Initiative (OLI) on forest financing in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (Rome, Italy-September 2012).

5. Finally, the major group representatives participated and contributed to the second meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on forest financing convened from 14-18 January 2013, in Vienna, Austria. Their proposals and comments on various issues under consideration were submitted for discussion in an open and participatory manner alongside those of the experts.

III. The multi-stakeholder dialogue at the tenth session of the Forum

6. The active involvement of major groups in the multi-stakeholder dialogue is important in ensuring that discussions at the tenth session reflect a diverse range of views and concerns. The dialogue process encourages a balanced participation of stakeholders from different major groups and from different regions of the world; and has proved to be a unique opportunity for forest-relevant stakeholders to meaningfully contribute to the discussions on the Forum’s main themes; enriching the process through a diversity of perspectives provided through the case study experiences and lessons learned in the issues related to sustainable forest management, financing sustainable forest management, and implementation of the Non-legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests.

7. The current multi-stakeholder dialogue has been prepared in cooperation with network organizations of seven major groups, namely of: (i) Children and Youth; (ii) Non-Governmental Organizations; (iii) Indigenous Peoples; (iv) Scientific and Technical Communities; (v) Women; (vi) Farmers and Small Forest Landowners; and (vii) Forest Workers and Trade Union major groups. It should be noted that two other Agenda 21 major groups, namely (i) Business and Industry; and (ii) Local Authority, unfortunately are not available to participate in the current dialogue.

8. The participating major group focal points have decided to produce a single joint discussion paper, titled “Forests and Economic Development: Discussion Paper submitted by the major groups”, which is also the major theme of the tenth session. This is a unique and encouraging development and is expected to provide a much focused and stronger basis for an informed and engaging dialogue between the major groups, Member States and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) member organizations. In the past, the major groups presented separate discussion papers with individual group perspectives on issues related to the themes of the sessions. In 2011, for the first time, major groups decided to produce only three focused discussion papers related to different themes of the session. The single joint discussion paper will form the basis of the dialogue during the current session. The Dialogue will be held on the first week of the tenth session and will provide, inter alia, major group representatives the opportunity to present their priority areas and recommendations set out in their joint discussion paper on forests and economic development, and engage in an interactive policy dialogue with the representatives of Member States and CPF member organizations taking into account the interconnection of the discussions in the Forum with the ongoing discussions on the post 2015 UN development agenda and the outcome of the Rio+20 conference. The seven major groups representing different walks of society noted above will participate in the dialogue. The representatives of the major groups will also be invited to present their view and comments throughout the discussions during the Forum session.
IV. Concluding remarks

9. The Forum has an excellent tradition of open and transparent working modality providing ample opportunities for different stakeholders to participate actively and present their perspectives on different aspects of sustainable forest management policy and practices. The multi-stakeholder dialogue is one such vehicle for meaningful civil society participation. Other equally important means of active engagement of major groups include the close collaboration and consultation between the Forum Secretariat and the focal points of major groups; and participation of the representatives of major groups in the Forum-related intersessional activities. Considering that forests and human issues intersect at many levels, the multi-stakeholder dialogue and other activities should be maintained and enhanced in the future work of the Forum.

10. In this regard, the Forum may wish to consider approaches to strengthen the engagement and encourage the participation from all stakeholders, including those that are not currently actively engaged in the Forum process, in particular, major group forest-related organizations pertaining to business and industry; academia; and local authorities.