United Nations Forum on Forests
Fourth session
Geneva, 3 - 14 May - 2004
Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Common items for each session

Multi-stakeholder dialogue
Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum
Discussion paper contributed by the Small Forest Land Owners major group**
Family forest owners and community forest owners–social capacity and cultural identity as core elements for the implementation of sustainable forest management

Summary
Family forest owners and community forest owners are one of the most critical major groups for the implementation of sustainable forest management. Partnerships and genuine consultation with family forest owners on all levels from local to global will increasingly lead to a constructive implementation of international commitments on the ground.

Family forest owners and community forest owners form a core part of social and cultural networks in rural and semi-urban areas. The implementation of sustainable forest management is closely linked to their traditions and cultural identity that is as such highly diverse across the regions of the world.

There is not as yet enough understanding on the capacity of family forest owners and

(*) E/CN.18/2004/1.
(**) Prepared by the Confederation of European Forest Owners
community forest owners to address sustainable forest management based on their day-
to-day experience with nature. Neither is there a clear comprehension on the
significance that forests and sustainable forest management form a core part of the
welfare of family forest owners, community forest owners and their cultural identity
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I. Introduction


2. The many millions of family forest owners are generally at the receiving end of policies developed in global and national policy fora. However they are often the ones responsible for policy implementation on the ground and the translation of global and national agreements into practical action. They must face daily the complex challenges of balancing the often conflicting components of sustainable forest management.

3. This draft discussion paper aims to build the bridge from practice to policy and vice versa from policy to practice. It intends to highlight the need for partnerships on the ground with relevance to the substantive elements of the fourth session of the UNFF.

II. Background

A. The global commitment

4. Forests are at the basis for life on Earth. They perform a variety of functions and provide a diversity of goods and services to rural and urban societies.

5. The following principles of the Rio and the Johannesburg declarations must be at the core of all activities related to fostering sustainable forest management in all the regions of the world:

   **Rio Declaration**
   - “Human being are at the centre of concern for sustainable development” (Principle 1)
   - “... and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices.” (Principle 22)

   **Johannesburg Declaration**
   - “We[the ministers] commit ourselves to build a humane, equitable and caring global society cognisant of the need for human dignity for all”

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1 There is a broad estimate indicating that there are about 100 million family forests worldwide with some 200 to 400 million people making all or part of their living from their properties
• “... sustainable development requires long-term perspective and broad based participation in policy formulation, decision making and implementation at all levels. As social partners we [the ministers] will continue to work for stable partnerships with all major groups respecting the independent, important roles of each of these”

**Johannesburg Plan of implementation**

• “... as well as respect for cultural diversity, are essential for achieving sustainable development and ensuring that sustainable development benefits all.”

6. Johannesburg emphasised a partnership approach to policies that genuinely address the problems and concerns of those that depend for their livelihood on the goods and services of natural resources, and in particular, forests. On that basis all interested and involved parties face the challenge of developing sound and long-term strategies for a dynamic evolution of sustainable forest management.

7. 149 countries, representing 85% of the world’s forests are currently engaged in 9 regional forest policy processes. Their common goals are anchored in the forest principles agreed upon in Rio.

8. The forest policy processes\(^2\), which have taken up the political mandate from Rio, reinforced by the commitments from Johannesburg, give priority to democratic solutions that originate within the regions, involving in the first instance those who depend for their livelihood on the goods and services of forests.

**B. Family forest owners - social capacity and cultural identity as core elements for the implementation of sustainable forest management**

8. There are a great many variations of ownership structures across the forest regions of the world.

10. In Europe and the US more than 60% of forests are owned and managed by individual families. Australia, Canada and Costa Rica also have substantial forest areas in the hands of individual families. Australia is currently working towards using trees as environmental solutions and in this context, is integrating them into farm landscapes as well as in traditional “forest” blocks. There is also a substantial privately owned native timber resource which is being actively managed and sustainably harvested to achieve both commercial and environmental outcomes.

11. Local communities now legally own as private property of officially administer at least 22 per cent of all tropical forests, and this percentage is expected to increase. Local

\(^2\) e.g. the Helsinki process [now Ministerial Conference on the Protection of forests in Europe], the Montreal process, the Tarapoto process, the ITTO process, the Dry Zone Africa Process, the North Africa and Near East process, the ATO process, the Lepateriquè process
communities actively manage approximately two times the amount of tropical forest as in public protected areas globally.\(^3\)

12. Family forest owners have a genuine interest in a balanced approach to sustainable forest management knowing that the generations to follow will also depend on goods and services from their forests. The responsibility of family forest owners to maintain the forest on a long-term basis is firmly rooted. They associate a set of values with their forests that they do not want to put at risk. The bond between rural populations and forests and forest management in its many forms is something very special. The adoption of sylvan landscapes by communities can create concerns at the harvest as the age class of the resource is substantially changed. Communities attribute their own personal values to these landscapes and it is important that they are educated in the life cycles of the forest resource.

13. Generation-bridging experience in management of natural resources has led family forest owners to the establishment of a treasure of practical knowledge and know-how that has not received adequate recognition from policy and decision makers. Through their day-to-day work with the forests, family forest owners are in a unique position to continuously learn and understand about the complex dynamics of forest management. In a partnership approach they stand to gain access to regional, national and inter-national networks and new technologies as well as scientific, financial and political support for their joint or individual projects.

14. Family forest owners and community forest owners have been the first to realise that time has a different value and dimension when comparing planning horizons for urban and rural forest dependant communities.

15. Generally this is not an easy message to convey in our modern society of instant communications and split-second decisions. The average political mandate of 3 to 5 years is hardly more than a snapshot in the life of a forest or the societal relationships associated with family forest ownership that are developed over several generations.

16. Thus, policy and decision makers are challenged to look far beyond normal planning periods in developing policies and strategies for sustainable forest management. By contributing a holistic and inter-generational approach and perspective to sustainable forest management, family forest owners can make a significant contribution to the development of the long-term perspective needed for sustainable forest management.

C. The importance of secure property and land tenure rights

\(^3\) ITTO Council meeting, Yokohama, November 2003. Yati Bun, Spokesperson for the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) to ITTO
17. “Property rights are often the first step towards sustainable resource use.” [Note by the UNFF secretariat October 27th 2003, E/CN.18/AC.2/2003/2]. The basis for sustainable forest management is secure property and land tenure rights. Without secure property and land tenure rights neither a sense of responsibility nor an interest in managing forest in a way that they meet present and future needs can be developed.

18. Ownership\(^4\) creates values. Giving the right of ownership to a large number of people leads to the creation of a variety of values. The owner’s right to use and manage the multiple goods and benefits of forests contributes to a strong sense of responsibility for the conservation of this natural heritage\(^5\).

III. Implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action

A. Social and cultural aspects of forests

19. The history and development of mankind has from early times been influenced by nature and in particular forests. In many regions of the world the cultural identity of mankind is strongly linked with forests.

20. The social impacts of family forestry are diverse and multifaceted. For each individual member of the family, the family owned forest may be a place to live, a place for recreation, an independent source of firewood and food, an opportunity for sharing knowledge and commitment, an influence on plans for future residence and employment, a source of financial security.

21. Family forest and community ownership and stewardship is shared among a large group of small forest owners, distributing the benefits drawn from the forest widely in society. The wide distribution of responsibilities and benefits adds to the stable development of societies.

22. The financial security and income provided by forests have enabled the social development of the rural areas and the basis for investment in e.g. education, development of infrastructure or advanced production methods. Multiple products and benefits from forests together with family and community ownership have provided a diversified source of employment and income in rural areas where other options are scarce. This has made it easier for the rural societies to adapt to socio-economic changes and maintain social and cultural viability, thus easing the population pressures on urban areas.

\(^4\) Family forest ownership, community forest ownership

\(^5\) CIFOR: Forest and people. Research that makes a difference. In Africa and Asia villagers participating in the adaptive collaborative management (ACM) have said that ACM has increased their sense of ownership over forest resources and has given them the confidence to participate in processes that will affect their lives and their environment for the better. [Stripped down to its basics, ACM is about establishing institutional arrangements and processes that encourage local democracy and collaboration and provide the time and space for group reflection]
23. Demographic changes, in particular the galloping urbanisation are weakening the bond between humans and forests. Consequently the perception and understanding of urban societies for the concerns and priorities of rural societies, including family forest owners, are often virtual and simplistic.

24. Due to the lack of reliable socio-economic data it is not commonly known to what extent family forest owners depend for livelihood on the sustainable management of their forests. Management activities that are a natural part of the sustainability concept are from an urban perspective often put in the light of being antiquated and destructive, whereas in rural reality they form a core part of the welfare of family forest owners, community forest owners and their cultural identity.

25. Hunting and wildlife management is a good example of a social and cultural activity, strongly linked to forests, rural areas and its inhabitants. Over the last decades we have experienced a decrease in the understanding of hunting traditions, especially among the more and more urbanised society. For example the 8 million hunters in Europe are actually maintaining a very old tradition. The reality is that family forest owners often hunt together on a village level, in hunting clubs and associations with a lot of differing activities, also off season. While safeguarding a hunting language and terminology, hunting adds to the value of life, as it increases interest, knowledge, inspiration and motivation for the sustainable management of forests. Hunting is an essential part of game and biotope management as well as of the conservation of threatened fauna and flora.

26. It should be self-understood that those who own and manage the forests are equally directly benefiting from its utilization. However, society's perception often makes no difference between publicly and privately owned forests and thus considers the supply of non-marketable goods and services as free and thus taken for granted. There appears to be a trend worldwide to increasingly place pressure on family forest owners to provide even more societal services with a direct influence on the viability of the individual forest holding and little or no compensation.

**Promoting public participation**

27. Public participation, if correctly applied and implemented is certainly an asset in achieving sustainable forest management. However, if it is carried out without clear objectives, limits and responsibilities it can easily lead to anarchistic situations where everybody participates in everything and nobody wants to finally carry the responsibility for the decision. In this case family forest owners are in the situation to bear the responsibility for the implementation of a decision that others have taken for them. The family forest is were the “rubber hits the road”! The consequence in this instance is the impact on the viability and sustainability of family forest ownership.
28. Public participation has to follow clear and agreed ground rules that do not infringe on the property rights of family forest owners.

29. Many policy decisions that adversely impact family forest owners are the result of urban pressure, often taken without consultation of those most concerned, and supported by the electoral weight of urban populations. It is imperative that family forest owners, together with others who make their livelihood in rural areas, understand the nature of urban dwellers concerns, how “city-folk” view non-urban areas, and how centrally based decision makers are often influenced by small, but powerful urban-based pressure groups for their own political ends.

30. The primary issue is to ameliorate, through education, the negative effects of urban-based land use decision that impact both rural and urban/rural interface areas, decisions that are taken by people isolated, to a large extent, from the impact of such decisions, and whose prime motivation is to cater to the urban electorate.

31. The concept of public participation in forestry can be defined as various forms of direct public involvement where people, individually or through organised groups, can exchange information, express opinions and articulate interest, and have the potential to influence decisions or the outcome of specific forestry issues. Public participation in forestry is a process which is inclusive, with respect to the interests, voluntary with respect to participation, may be a complement to legal requirements, is fair and transparent to all participants, is based on participants acting in good faith, and does not guarantee – or predetermine – what the outcome will be [Public participation in forestry in Europe and North America ILO 2000 WP.163, ISBN 92-2-112268-9]

32. Public participation needs to respect that in decision-making local and regional levels should be favoured. Local decision-making enables more active and diversified participation of those most involved and concerned. Their experience and knowledge is benefiting the decision making process and is leading to true commitment of local actors.

33. Public participation processes may in principle be applied to all types of forest ownership. While public participation cannot go ahead without their acceptance, private forest owners, for example, may choose to take part in or initiate a participatory process as defined in the foregoing like any other owner or actor in the forestry sector. It is however, recognized that private ownership represents a different context for participation compared to public forests, with a different set of constraints and opportunities. These need to be taken into account in the design and implementation of a process [Public participation in forestry in Europe and North America ILO 2000 WP.163, ISBN 92-2-112268-9]

34. One of the best ways to ensure that private forest owners can articulate their positions and contribute to the broader forestry dialogue within society is through strong private forest owners’ associations, with broad private forest representation... This can be
promoted by enhancing their capacity to organise public participation processes themselves, as well as through other options such as partnerships, selective working groups, etc. To this end, institutional and technical support may be necessary, particularly in countries in transition where private forest ownership is new and growing [Public participation in forestry in Europe and North America ILO 2000 WP.163, ISBN 92-2-112268-9]

B. Traditional forest related knowledge

35. Family forest owners are the guardians of traditional forest related knowledge that has not yet found its way into forestry literature and research. This valuable pool of traditional forest related knowledge has grown and has been safeguarded from generation to generation over centuries. It survived because it still forms the basis for today’s concept of sustainable forest management.

36. There are practical ways to build in traditional forest related knowledge into modern management concepts and thus ensuring its continuity.

37. Experience in Europe shows that the degree of organisation of forest owners has a positive influence on their capacity building and training opportunities. On the local level forest owner associations offer a wide range of training and know how to the individual forest owner that allow him/her to take sound and responsible decision in the day to day management. In Australia there are also examples of this integration. More fundamentally is the identified need to educate the “non-forestry” local community of the role of forestry as both as contributor to the landscape and to the economic stability of the area.

38. It should be noted that traditional forest related knowledge can many times be very specific to a certain place or local condition. This traditional forest related knowledge does not only benefit the sustainable forest management practices but also relates to significant cultural and historical values which have to be safeguarded in forest management, planning and conservation.

C. Scientific forest related knowledge

39. There is an increasing awareness that the policy, science, practice interface has to be strengthened to develop long-term sustainable strategies in the forestry sector. To that end it is crucial that family forest owners contribute with their knowledge and know-how in the field to single- issue as well as multi-disciplinary research projects.

40. There is a need that in socio-economic policy related science the situation of family forest owners’ forms part of the research to establish a direct link and gain practical feedback to the subsequent implementation on the ground.
41. There are already a number of good examples aiming at the establishment of centres of competence that reach from scientific expertise to end-user expertise. It is only in close cooperation between the science, practice and policy that well-informed and sound decision can be taken.

D. Criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management

42. The 9 regional forest policy processes\(^6\) that grew out of the Earth Summit in Rio 1992 are engaged in the development of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management that reflect the variety of cultural, social, economic and ecological conditions for the implementation of sustainable forest management in each region.

43. Family forest owners in Europe are actively taking part in the discussion of the MCPFE (Ministerial Conference on the protection of forests in Europe). The process of the MCPFE has lead to the agreement on a number of criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of forests in the Pan-European region.

44. Family forest owners in Europe have been at the cradle of the creation of the PEFC. Since 1999 they are actively implementing the commitments taken by the MCPFE through the PEFC\(^7\) certification that is based on the MCPFE criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.

45. Within the MCPFE process governments, inter-governmental organisations and civil society representatives have and continue to follow a learning process in the understanding for each others' needs, concerns and challenges in dealing with sustainable forest management.

IV. Conclusion

46. Family forestry is the delivery point of many societal benefits of sustainable forest management and is based on a function of stable family forest ownership and a knowledge base built up over many generations.

47. Policy- and decision-makers are encouraged to look to family forest owners as partners in the implementation of consistent strategies for sustainable forest management.

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\(^6\) e.g. the Helsinki process [now Ministerial Conference on the Protection of forests in Europe], the Montreal process, the Tarapoto process, the ITTO process, the Dry Zone Africa Process, the North Africa and Near East process, the ATO process, the Lepateriqué process

\(^7\) Programme for the endorsement of forest certification schemes, [www.pefc.org](http://www.pefc.org)
48. There is an increasing awareness that sustainable forest management is not viable without being embedded in a larger sustainable development strategy that addresses positive and negative impacts on forests and forestry.

49. Family forest owners are committed to identify major challenges with view to the implementation of social and cultural aspects of sustainable forest management. They stand ready to make their knowledge and know how in these areas available in efforts to address and solve this challenges.

V. Proposed actions for policy and decision makers

Governments, regional and local authorities are requested to

50. Respect the right to sustainably use the forest resources and the traditional ways to benefit from the multiple products of forests.

51. Consider that forestry is a legitimate commercial pursuit and the human and financial capacity that family forest owners invest needs to be allowed to be accessed, or compensated in the event of exclusion from the resource.

52. Increase the involvement of family forest organisations in policy development and policy delivery with respect to sustainable forest management.

53. Improve the coordination of different polices and programmes to avoid that conflicting requirements are set to those who need to put the outcomes into practice.

54. Create a favourable environment and promote the establishment of forest owner organisations as means to support the forest owner's involvement and input in sustainable forest management.

55. Develop decision-making processes that involve all relevant stakeholders and give preference to local and regional decision making.

56. Clearly identify and broaden awareness within all sectors of society of sustainable forest management values due a stable, family owned forest

57. Invest in broad based education initiatives to educate both urban and rural sectors of the societal benefits from family forests.

58. Develop community education programs that assist the community in their understanding that trees are grown for a commercial return⁸.

⁸ These returns are intergenerational and there is an ongoing risk that the adoption of a sylvan landscape by the community could cause disharmony at the realisation of the asset. Encouragement of adoption of trees in the landscape must be coupled with a capacity for the community to understand the commercial imperatives of forestry.
59. Quantify the values of non-market benefits enjoyed by society due to the continuing presence of family forests

60. Quantify the socio-economic value of management activities that form a core part of the welfare of family forest owners and community forest owners and their cultural identity like e.g. hunting, NTFP (non-timber forest products)

61. Actively create a model to collect and incorporate traditional forest related knowledge in decision-making and assess the feasibility of traditional forest related knowledge management models.