

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General  
5 February 2007

Original: English

**United Nations Forum on Forests****Seventh Session**

New York, 16-27 April 2007

Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*

Multi-stakeholder dialogue

**Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Discussion Paper****Note by the Secretariat****Discussion Paper contributed by the Youth/Children Major Group\*\****Summary*

The Youth and Children Major Group welcomes the increasing attention on forest issues at the international level but is concerned by the relatively marginal impact this has on deforestation. Implementation of previous commitments with the international forest framework should be prioritized.

A greater emphasis needs to be placed on forest education and capacity building for young people in order to ensure sustainable forest management for future generations, and to increase the understanding of forests as a critical natural resource.

The world's youth and children collectively constitute a valuable human capacity, able to learn, innovate and create dynamic responses to what seem to be formidable challenges to sustainable development. In the context of forests and within the United Nations Forum on Forests process, youth and children should continue to be recognized as important actors for SFM.

---

\*E/CN.18/AC.3/2004/1

\*\*This discussion paper has been compiled by Youth/Children Major Group Focal Point team (*International Forestry Students Association, Global Youth Network and Initiatives-Jeunes*) with assistance of their network members.

## Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
<b>I.</b> Introduction.....	1 – 4	1
<b>II.</b> Priority Areas for Actions .....	5 – 14	2
<b>III.</b> Assessment of the UNFF process.....	15 – 16	5
<b>IV.</b> Recommendations for a Non-legally Binding Instrument on Forests.....	17 – 22	6
<b>V.</b> Recommendations for the Multi-year Programme of Work.....		8
<b>VI.</b> Conclusions and Recommendations.....	23 – 26	9

## **I. Introduction**

1. Youth/Children Major Group has been actively involved, over the past years, in the UNFF process – UNFF3, UNFF4, UNFF5, UNFF6 - particularly by submitting inputs addressing key issues for Youth and Children and voicing their priorities for Sustainable Forest Management.
2. The primary objective of Youth participation is to promote intergenerational equity in SFM through education and transfer of knowledge to the younger generations and access to natural resources. Specifically, the goals of the participation of youth and children representatives are to:
  - a) Use their capacity as a worldwide youth network to inform the policy dialogue debate from the Youth's perspective;
  - b) Demonstrate the potential of forest related education in the implementation of SFM and international forest policy processes;
  - c) Advocate means to use and increase this potential; and
  - d) Promote the need and opportunities for stronger integration of forest related education in the international forest policy dialogue at all levels.
3. With regard to UNFF7, we would like to review youth priorities and assess the way they have been addressed by decision-makers.

4. This discussion paper has been compiled by Youth/Children Major Group Focal Point team (*International Forestry Students Association, Global Youth Network and Initiatives-Jeunes*) with assistance of their network members.

## II. Priority Areas for Action

### A. Education and capacity building

5. Formal and Informal forest education has a multiplying effect on the development of young people and their communities. Primary education is important in ensuring that children are impacted at the most foundational stage in their lives, secondary education is important for raising environmental awareness amongst young people as well as educating about ecosystems; tertiary education is critical for ensuring the integrity of skills among foresters, the scientific community and other forest related stakeholders.

- a) [...] Access to education is often limited in developing countries, where many young people are not even able to attain a basic education. Yet even in wealthy countries, education concerning forest conservation is not always included in standard school curricula. This needs to be addressed, starting at the primary level, if students are to be aware of the value and benefits of forests. (UNFF4)

6. Member states are encouraged to set standards for quality forestry education by assessing and rearticulating current formal and informal environmental education

programmes at all levels. A strategy for filling the gaps in forestry curricula should be formulated out of such a process and in cooperation with other member states.

- a) Resolution 4/4, 9. [...] In order to ensure sustainable forest management across generations and to increase understanding of forests as a critical resource, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on education through the integration of social and cultural aspects of forests in kindergarten, school and university curricula. (UNFF4);

7. Member States should support informal forest education by enhancing the capacity of youth organizations to carry out educational programmes. Young people are often highly motivated to contribute to the development of society, having fresh ideas and innovative approaches. Youth as a demographic can effectively contribute to the implementation of sustainable development including SFM.

8. Education is the key to making wise decisions about the future of the world's forests, as it is central to enabling children and youth to understand and communicate the link between using up resources today and the need to access them in the future in order to sustain their livelihoods. Criteria and Indicators need to reflect the extent to which education has been integrated into national forest programmes and the national sustainable development agenda.

9. The Youth and Children Major Group believes that enhancing education and capacity building, especially among young people, raises awareness and knowledge about forests and should therefore constitute a crucial addition to state, public and private sector efforts.

## **B. Participation**

10. A great obstacle to youth and children action around forests is the obstacle experienced by youth and children NGO's in accessing the United Nations. Although UNEP and similar UN agencies host youth programmes, youth access to participate and influence official UN processes is minimal, due to lack of information, and stringent exclusive criteria with which to obtain ECOSOC status. There is however growing consensus that youth and children are important stakeholders in official UN processes, hence the inclusion of a Multi Stakeholder Dialogue within the UNFF.

11. Forest issues and their complexity often elude the uninformed young person concerned with the environment. It must be pointed out though, that these young people still have the capacity and basic knowledge with which to contribute greatly to meeting the objectives of the UNFF and implementing the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action.

12. Following on the above point, it must be recognized that Youth have only recently been included in the Multi-stakeholder process of the UNFF. Within the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, youth are not identified as stakeholders for implementation however this demographic group is accepted to be included under the grouping non-governmental organizations. It can be argued that the exclusion of Youth as a major group within the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action marginalized youth input and action toward implementing the

Proposals. It is strongly encouraged that any further processes include the youth and children demographic as responsible partners for implementation.

13. We regard the promotion of cross sector cooperation as a key element to effective stakeholder participation and seek to foster the involvement of teaching and research institutions in decision-making processes. This translates into member states fostering a national context that supports the growth of non-governmental organizations and collaboration.

14. Youth emphasize that forest policies can only be the result of governance and not just of government.

### **III. Assessment of UNFF Process**

15. We welcome the opportunity given to young people to have a voice in the United Nations Forum on Forests through Multi Stakeholder Dialogue. We are pleased by increasing attention on forest issues at the international level but at the same time concerned by the relatively marginal impact this has on deforestation. We would like to see a bigger political will to implement previous commitments and the NLBI.

16. We fear that while forests become increasingly distant to the urban youth, the linkages get weaker and the recognition of forests as a natural part of the living environment diminished. Young people's access to forests should be ensured and facilitated in order to avoid the loss of interest in and connection to nature. Overall recognition of forests as a natural part of society should be enhanced as well as the role of local communities in forest

management. The wellbeing of communities, fostered through ownership in forest management, directly influences the wellbeing of children and youth among them.

#### **IV. Recommendations for A Non-Legally Binding Instrument on Forests**

##### **A. Education**

17. Youth are convinced that we need to foster — through education — the values, behaviors and lifestyles required for a sustainable future. Education for sustainable development has come to be seen as a process of learning how to make decisions that consider the long-term future of the economy, ecology and equity of all communities. Building the capacity for such future-oriented thinking is a key task of education and a prerequisite for achieving intergenerational equity.

18. Education is the key to raising awareness among Children about the necessity of the sustainable use of forests and to provide basic knowledge of forest ecosystems.

a) Youth and children have much to contribute to the execution and evolution of scientific forest research, and their participation should be enabled through improved forest-related educational opportunities. (UNFF4: 29)

b) Some partnerships tend to exclude stakeholders, such as youth and women, and often become labelled as social gatherings rather than as effective catalysts for positive change. Lack of information access, education, communication

networks, as well as adequate human capacity and financial resources also hamper the ability of various stakeholders to become involved on an equal footing and in maintaining constant participation. (UNFF 4: 10, 28)

19. Member states should support capacity-building activities carried out by youth organizations such as educational programmes for sustainable forest management.

a) [...]Strengthening forest education and research and development through global, regional and sub-regional networks, as well as relevant organizations, institutions and centres of excellence in all regions of the world, particularly in developing countries, as well as countries with economies in transition; (Para 7(b), UNFF6)

20. In addition, integrating the support of youth organisations' work and activities by enhancing access to state, public and private sector funding and information is crucial to effective youth participation in SFM.

#### **B. Economic and social aspects**

21. As highlighted in previous UNFF sessions, especially at the AHEG on the NLBI, forest products sourced in developing countries are transported to be processed away from the source – sometimes illegally - with very little employment or income generation derived by local communities. This results in a no-win situation where local communities are stripped of both their forest resources as well as potential income from manufacturing and processing.

22. Laws that relate to the sourcing, logging, processing and trade in forest products need to favour the local community where the forest products were sourced.

a) Resolution 3/1 3. Calls upon countries to take immediate action on domestic forest law enforcement and illegal international trade in forest products, including in forest biological resources, with the support of the international community.

## **V. Recommendations for the Multi-Year Program of Work**

- ◆ **Assessment of the status of formal and informal environmental and, in particular, forestry education at the primary and secondary school level. The hosting of a national symposium on sustainable development education could assist in implementing this recommendation.**
- ◆ **Creating partnerships with local authorities and youth and children stakeholders; with a view to building the capacity of youth forest related organizations at the local level.**
- ◆ **Establishing Criteria and Indicators that reflect the status of education within national forest programmes; and the status of forestry within national education curricula.**

- ♦ **Including youth and children stakeholders and tertiary education stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of national forest programmes.**

## **VI. Conclusions and Recommendations**

23. As described, Youth believe they can, and will, contribute to Sustainable Forest Management through:

- ♦ **Facilitating capacity building activities of future policy makers through practical experience.**
- ♦ **Providing a global educational network of students as a resource for both views and future collaborations of Youth in implementation at the regional and sub-regional levels.**
- ♦ **Providing strong links to higher education institutions, as centres for both technological, scientific research and capacity building, around the world.**
- ♦ **Providing a source of innovative thinking, new ideas and a fresh perspective to the forest policy dialogue.**

24. Experiences from around the world have demonstrated that the role of major groups in general and youth in particular in forest management is crucial, both as a source of experiences worthy of upscaling and replication, and as ultimate beneficiaries of good practices.

25. Accordingly, Youth advocate for active involvement in partnership-related and capacity-building activities at all levels, including partnership fairs and learning centres<sup>1</sup>.

26. National and regional criteria and indicators frameworks for sustainable forest management must include indicators which reflect capacity building for education at all levels as well as the extent to which education has been integrated into national forest programmes.

Advance Unedited Version

---

<sup>1</sup> agreed language of the Commission on Sustainable Development