

**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 women major group*****Summary*

Current low levels of participation by women in forest management decision-making and governance are issues of major concern to the Major Group WOMEN. Obstacles and constraints faced by women include: degraded environments and poverty; low levels of awareness amongst policy makers and administrators on how gender issues affect forest management; limited numbers of women in decision making roles; limited implementation of policies and legislation for gender equity and women's inclusion; and insufficient female staff, mentors and networks in forestry institutions. More strategic concerted efforts and commitment by all actors engaged in Sustainable Forest Management are needed to strengthen women's role in the processes and implementation of the NLBFI of the UNFF.

In order to promote the adoption of action oriented policy decisions for the NLBI through 2015, the Major Group WOMEN proposes specific recommendations and activities as priority areas for action. These include initiatives for research, training, advocacy, policy inputs for gender mainstreaming, pilot projects that demonstrate collaboration between governments and Major Group WOMEN and media presentations showcasing successful initiatives in a few countries.

* E/CN.18/2007/4.4

** Presented by the Network for Women in Natural Resources Management

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction.....	1 – 4	1
II. Obstacles and Constraints.....	5 – 12	3
III. Plans and Proposed Actions.....	13 – 24	6
IV. General Recommendations for Women in SFM.....		10

Advance Unedited Version

I. Introduction

1. In response to the Non Legally Binding Instrument agreed to by member nations, and in support of the Four Global Objectives on Forests, the Major Group WOMEN would like to reiterate that these goals and objectives cannot be met without women's active engagement and leadership. As a group, women are an integral part of implementation and their participation in the process is required to ensure ownership of the outcomes and effective action; women leaders have an important role to play in creating focused priorities for future action. As stressed by Ms. Daniela Simioni, Office of the UN Secretary-General, in the Open-ended Ad Hoc Expert Group in New York in December, 2006, any new international instrument for sustainable forest management should consider the gender aspect, such as household needs of wood-fuel, employment and income opportunities for women and their involvement in reforestation and other conservation activities.

2. The Major Group WOMEN has, over the past several years, compiled priority areas for action and proposed achievable goals and targets in discussion papers submitted to the UNFF 3, 4 and 5. In preparation for the UNFF 7, the Major Group WOMEN has elicited perspectives of women engaged in forest-related work at the community, national and international levels through a list of questions on obstacles and opportunities. Based on inputs received from Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN), IUCN (Eastern Africa), Gender and Forestry Research Group of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), the Centre for

International Forest Research (CIFOR), and women in Nepal and South Africa, the MG WOMEN would like to re-emphasize the critical importance of women's contributions to the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests Proposal for Actions; and in achieving the various resolutions and decisions of the United Nations Forum on Forests; as well as the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the four Global Objectives agreed and negotiated during the Sixth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests held in 2006.

3. To date, the Major Group WOMEN has been successful at ensuring that the experiences and concerns of women have been voiced and tabled in the UNFF formal sessions and expert meetings to raise awareness on the barriers faced by women foresters, forestry students and community members, and to describe successful initiatives that have achieved SFM and women's empowerment. These have all pointed to the need for structural changes within forestry organizations to address gender equality.

4. Specifically the Women's Major Group is of the opinion that current levels of participation by women in forest management decision-making and governance are issues of major concern, and would like to see more strategic concerted efforts and commitment by governments, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and Sub-regional networks, as well as relevant multilateral environmental agreements, instruments, processes and United Nations bodies to strengthen women's role in these processes. The active engagement of women is imperative to ensure that the discussions at the UNFF7

include women's perspectives and concerns. As a group, women are an integral part of implementation and their participation in the process is required to ensure ownership of the outcomes and effective action; women leaders have an important responsibility in creating focused priorities for future action.

II. Obstacles and constraints

5. The following obstacles and constraints to women's involvement in SFM have been identified, based on responses received to the following questions: 1) what is the current situation of gender equity in your country in reference to forest management? Are women well represented in decision making roles in community level forest groups and in forestry institutions? Do women influence forest-related policies? and 2) what are the constraints to women's involvement in forest management at the community and institutional levels?

A. Degraded environments and poverty

6. The continuing degradation and pollution of the environment has far reaching effects on the livelihoods of communities, particularly of indigenous women and women living in poverty. Gender inequality, environmental deterioration, poor health and poverty are self reinforcing. Forest protection and conservation measures often add to the hardships of poor women by denying them access to the forest products they need for energy, food, medicine, livestock feed, etc. while

providing no alternatives for them to meet their families' basic needs, thus perpetuating the poverty cycle.

B. Lack of awareness

7. Lack of awareness of how gender issues affect forest management: while many policy recommendations link gender to the environment, development agencies and government departments have tended to overlook the roles of women in forestry and the effects of this on poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

C. Few women in decision making roles

8. The number of women in leadership positions in forestry institutions, especially at the international level, remains marginal; as well, the marginalization of women from decision on the governance of forest resources has resulted in their increased levels of poverty and hardship for those at consumption end of the scale with limited options. Women who do attain positions of responsibility are often disempowered by male actors, often influencing them to leave the forest sector.

D. Policies and legislation for gender equity and women's inclusion

9. Policies are not implemented despite the progress made in policies for gender equality over the last 20 years, implementation and action has been limited. Women influence policies only in significant ways when their participation and opinions are actively sought out by policy makers. Within government policy making, this is often carried out when funds and human resource capacity permit, but in general, the gender dimension is not actively or adequately considered.

There is a serious lack of political commitment on the part of forestry authorities to monitor and evaluate implementation of gender responsive actions, which is of major concern as remedial action does not take gender dynamics into sufficient account.

E. Insufficient personnel, mentors, networks

10. The number of women in forestry institutions is, to date, very low in most countries. There are many social and cultural reasons for this, and some governments are attempting to counteract these cultural and economic causes through innovative recruitment hiring and retention procedures. Still, women in these organizations are often marginalized and without networks and mentors that could strengthen their capacities and influence.

11. Major concerns and challenges faced by the Major Group WOMEN include:

- (a) Insufficient commitment to issues of gender equality amongst environment-related institutions and donor agencies;
- (b) Inadequate data and indicators for gender related aspects of forestry policies and programmes;
- (c) Paucity of women in forestry institutions who represent the interests of women within the global level processes;
- (d) Lack of capacities within forestry institutions to design gender responsive strategies.

To take on these concerns and challenges, the Major Group WOMEN wishes to suggest additional areas of need and concerted actions at national, regional and international levels:

- **policy and legislation**
- **capacity building for gender mainstreaming**
- **sustainable development activities for women in forest management**
- **research**
- **organizational change**
- **gender rights-based international cooperation in forestry**
- **recruitment of women in international forestry institutions.**

12. This next phase of the NLBI now requires that more significant attention and resources be devoted to gender issues and women's needs and contributions related to Sustainable Forest Management, poverty alleviation and related topics such as those of health so that such changes can be implemented. Towards this goal, Major Group WOMEN offers cooperation, skills, knowledge and networks of women throughout the world to forge new paths by engaging women as equal partners in sustainable forest management.

III. Plans and Proposed Actions

13. In order to promote the adoption of action oriented policy decisions for the NLBI through 2015, the Major Group WOMEN hereby proposes recommendations and activities as priority areas for action, based on response to two questions posed to women in forestry: 1) how can these

constraints be overcome, through opening up spaces for women and through attention to gender equity in institutions and implementation? And 2) how can we ensure equitable practices in forestry institutions, considering aspects of organizational structure and culture?

A. Research for change

14. A recent meeting of women forestry professionals of the IUFRO Working Group on Gender and Forestry Research endorsed a plan to assist FAO to extend the research already completed by FAO on gender and forestry in Europe and North America¹ to other regions, including Anglophone and Francophone Africa and Asia. This group has proposed a project that aims to analyze current knowledge and information gaps regarding gender roles, responsibilities, access and control over resources, challenges and opportunities among selected communities and professional organizations in Asian and African tropical forests; propose actions that promote gender sensitive development among selected communities; and document “best practices” or successful cases of promoting gender sensitive programs in forestry. In relation to the forestry profession, the study will also document the current knowledge and information gaps of gender representation in forestry institutions in selected Asian and African countries; analyse key challenges to the present status; recommend actions for improving gender balance; and disseminate information. Specific outputs will include recommendations for improved inclusion of women in forest management and poverty reduction programs and a framework for the creation of local, regional, national and international networks of women in forestry.

¹ *Time for Action: Changing the Gender Situation in Forestry*, FAO

15. Small amounts of funding have been provided to coordinators in Cameroon and Ghana to complete this joint research initiative of FAO/IUFRO/CIFOR entitled "Mainstreaming gender issues in forestry in Africa". Ten countries of Cameroon, DRC, Mali, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Kenya, Ethiopia, Zambia, Ghana, and Tanzania have been selected. Additional funds are now required to complete the work in Asia as well and to hold an international meeting to share results and recommendations.

16. The Major Group WOMEN will collaborate with these organizations and individuals to engage its network of women forestry professionals, and bring research results to the attention of UNFF member states at a formal session or informal side event sometime in 2007 or 2008.

B. Coordination of Side Events at CLI, Regional Meetings and UNFF Sessions

17. Major Group WOMEN will coordinate various side events and meetings in conjunction with other Major Groups at the Country-led Initiatives, regional meetings and regular sessions of the UNFF, and in collaboration with other organizations working on gender and forestry issues, such as CIFOR, IUFRO, Africa Forestry Forum, WOCAN partners and others. These will focus on raising awareness of women and gender related issues and discussions of how to integrate these issue areas into the objectives of the NLBI

C. Coordination of Women Participants at the World Forestry Congress

18. The Major Group WOMEN and the IUFRO Working Group on Gender and Forestry Research have proposed to the FAO organizers the themes of "Gender and Forests" or "Women, Men and Forest Livelihoods" for the XIII World Forestry Congress to be held in Buenos Aires,

Argentina, 2009. Major Group WOMEN will assure the maximum participation of women at this event; funds from member states and strategic partners are needed for this purpose.

D. Coordination of Women in SFM at CSD 2012/2013

19. The Commission on Sustainable Development reviews forest management and biodiversity in 2012 and 2013, including aspects of poverty eradication and gender equality. Major Group WOMEN will initiate planning for this significant global event in 2010 to assure maximum participation and impact by women; funds from member states and strategic partners are needed for this purpose.

E. Contribute expertise as a Major Group Member in the Committee of Experts

20. As proposed in the Expert Group Meeting of December 2006, to promote and facilitate the implementation of the NLBI.

F. Enhance collaboration and partnership between government and civil society to mainstream gender in forestry in specific countries

21. Some countries, such as Nepal, have achieved exemplary performances in project implementation through the effective collaboration between NGOs and government agencies to achieve maximum participation of women and other deprived groups of forest users in national forestry development programs. Nepal's Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MFSC) collaborated with a national NGO specializing on gender and forestry development, to bridge the gender gap by training and mentoring rural and professional women as group promoters and

gender focal persons from livestock and forestry departments. This has led to a policy shift whereas MFSC developed a national strategy for gender mainstreaming action plans until 2015.

22. As an activity of the Major Group WOMEN, WOCAN proposes to build on this unique effort and to strengthen linkages with the MFSC of Nepal by establishing a formal relationship for at least the next 3 years, to assess the effectiveness of NGO/ government partnership strategy; identify gaps in MFSC's efforts in gender mainstreaming in programs and organizational aspects; and make recommendations.

23. The outcome of this partnership will be a multimedia presentation that highlights the added value of gender mainstreaming to the SFM work of government forestry and related sector agencies. This will be presented at a UNFF session, and distributed to UNFF member states in the form of a CD Rom.

24. Similar partnerships between Major Group WOMEN and the governments of **South Africa** and **the Philippines** are under discussion.

25. In addition to these specific plans for implementation of the NLBI, the MG WOMEN has would like to make the following general recommendations.

IV. General Recommendations for Women in SFM:

- **capacity building for women's leadership is required at all levels, for community and professional women.**

- **multi-sectoral approaches are necessary to meet women's needs**
- **gender mainstreaming skills and expertise are lacking within all forest related institutions, including universities, international organizations, national forest departments and ministries.**
- **pilot projects and case studies are still needed to document the positive impacts of engaging women in poverty-addressing SFM initiatives.**
- **resources are needed to strengthen women's capacity-building initiatives. These programs are currently handicapped by grossly inadequate resources.**
- **a Gender Mainstreaming Support Group of the Major Group WOMEN should be established to provide technical support in gender mainstreaming in forestry to member states.**
- **the Secretariat's budget should have allocations specifically dealing with gender equality and women's participation to assure that policy directives are implemented,**
- **partnerships between governments and civil society and with regional and global organizations specialized in gender mainstreaming need to be developed so as to assure the implementation of gender sensitive SFM initiatives. Pilot projects and case studies are still needed to document the positive impacts of engaging women in poverty-addressing SFM initiatives.**