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Multi-stakeholder dialogue

**Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Discussion Paper****Note by the Secretariat****Discussion paper contributed by the Small Forest Landowners Major Group\*\****Summary*

The Major group SMALL FOREST LANDOWNERS is bringing the knowledge and know-how of family forest owners and community forest owners from across the globe to the international forest policy discussion.

There is an increasing recognition amongst policy and decision makers that property rights and secure land tenure are the first step towards sustainable resource use<sup>1</sup>.

Family forest owners and community forest owners have a genuine interest in a balanced approach to sustainable forest management, knowing that the generation to follow will also depend on goods and services from their forests. The responsibility to maintain the forest on a long-term basis is firmly rooted. The bond between rural populations, forest and forest management in its many forms is something very special.

Generation bridging experiences in management of natural resources has enabled family forest owners and community forest owners to acquire a wealth of practical knowledge and know-how that has not yet received adequate recognition from policy makers or decision makers. Through their day-to-day work with the forests, family forest owners and community forest owners are in a unique position to learn continuously and understand the complex dynamics of forest management.

\* E/CN.18/2007/1

\*\* Prepared jointly by the Global Alliance of Community Forestry and the Confederation of European Forest Owners

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Advance Unedited Version

## **I. Introduction**

1. The major group SMALL FOREST LANDOWNERS has, since 2002 been actively involved in the international forest policy debate. It submitted discussion papers compiling priority areas for action and proposed achievable goals and targets to UNFF 2, 3, 4 and 5. In preparation for UNFF 7 the major group, with inputs from the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF), the International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA) and the Global Alliance of Community Forestry (GACF) would like to re-emphasise the crucial role of secure property and land tenure rights and the individual commitment of family forest owners and community forest owners in achieving sustainable forest management as well as for the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for actions, the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the four Global Objectives agreed by the Economic and Social Council in 2006.

## **II. Priority Areas for Action**

### **A. Forestry and land tenure<sup>2</sup>**

2. Sustainability is by definition a question of long-term considerations. Sustainable forest management can only be achieved by a long-term approach to forest management. The commitment – in the long-term - to the forest is a precondition for this sustainable management. The ownership structure is a vital part of influencing this commitment.

3. A key factor in sustainable forest management is secure, stable and long-term property rights – or long-term tenure rights. This leads to management for the future and strong attachment to forestry, also to the benefit of local communities. In the case of community forestry, secure property rights give incentives to communities to plan long-term management, protect their lands from illegal logging, monitor forest fires and make sustainable use of other forest products important for their livelihoods. The way to sustainable management is to support the people that live by and in the forest.

4. As forest owners we have also learned that the same commitment to forest exists in other forms of forest tenure, where there are given possibilities to have a long lasting responsibility and commitment to the forest and to forest management. Community forestry, in different forms, leads to management based on similar values as family forestry with individual ownership. Communities living close to forests and in poverty conditions should gain ample opportunities to exercise their management and use rights on forest resources and to share the responsibilities to contribute to the well-being of their families, community and to environmental conservation.

5. While it appears that a shift towards privatization of forest ownership/tenure will continue, there is insufficient data at present to forecast the magnitude of the shift. Some scenarios suggest that in a few decades as much as one-third to one-half of global forests might be under private property/tenure.

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<sup>2</sup> Reflections provided to the e-discussion forum on forest ownership and land tenure

6. At the same time, this shift in forest ownership and tenure presents a challenge to be considered in forest policy at both national and international levels. Lessons learned indicate that irrespective of the ownership structure/model, it is important that ownership rights are clear and secure such that rights and responsibilities are clearly defined, duration of tenure documented, and that there are legal and institutional mechanisms for enforcement and dispute resolution. Transparency and accountability is essential in the process of gaining or transforming ownership and tenure rights.

7. The best ways of securing ownership and tenure rights is to create stable political and economic conditions. This means also supporting the creation and development of effective forest owners' organisations or organisations of community forestry. We have experienced a close connection between sustainable forestry and strong forest owners' organisations.

8. Strong political interest organisations for forest owners will most effectively function in collaboration with forest owners' economic cooperation and forest co-operatives. Co-operatives in the positive sense where the forest owners are the owners and the controlling forces in independent democratic co-operatives.

9. The forest owners' co-operatives will also secure an effective tool for conducting forestry in areas of dispersed ownership structures and small properties. The co-cooperatives can also provide services and counseling to assist owners to achieve knowledge-based management.

## **B. Forestry and poverty alleviation**

10. Policy and decision makers need to recognize the important link between forestry and poverty alleviation. The world's rural poor are in many ways dependent on forests and forestry. Access to forest resources needs to be complemented by the establishment of well-functioning markets to ensure that the rural poor are able to derive income from forests.

11. Another key element includes changing decision-makers perceptions and pre-conceived ideas that poor people are responsible for forest resource degradation and deforestation. Deforestation's causes are multiple and involve many actors, as well as economic forces of supply and demand. Many experiences around the world have demonstrated that in regions where communities were involved in the management or co-management of forests or natural protected areas, forests were better conserved. However, this is only possible when communities are able to fulfill their basic needs (food, housing, health). Making forests productive with adequate and sustainable planning will ensure its conservation in the long-term.

12. Another consideration to take into account is that in many developing countries with large areas of forest, such as Central America, the Amazon, the Congo Basin, and South Asia, governments usually do not have enough resources to protect their natural capital. Countries like Nepal who chose to hand over their forests to communities have succeeded in recovering large amounts of forests at the same time as securing basic needs of forest-dependant populations.

### **C. Forestry and climate change**

13. Climate change is a fact. The role of forests and forestry in addressing this global challenge is characterized by ambiguity.

14. So far most policy discussions focus on the role of forests in combating climate change due to their ability to capture CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. Less attention is paid to the adaptation of forest ecosystems to climate change. Research in Europe indicates that an average temperature increase of 2°C leads, under European conditions, to a shift of forest ecosystems of 400 km to the east and 400 km to the north. Consequently the current pattern of forest ecosystems will change dramatically with severe impacts on economic, social and environmental sustainability.

15. Policy and decision makers are challenged to “urgently agree on new international agreement on stronger emission caps for industrialized countries, incentives for developing countries to limit their emissions, and support for robust adaptation measures”<sup>3</sup>

### **III. Brief Assessment of how the United Nations Forum on Forests Process has addressed issues of priority**

16. From its initial participation in the UNFF process the Major Group SMALL FOREST LANDOWNERS has repeatedly pointed at the important link between secure property rights and land tenure and sustainable forest management. During the early sessions of UNFF there was hardly any recognition or awareness for small-scale private forest

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<sup>3</sup> February 2nd 2007 UNFCCC press release

ownership or community ownership. There has been a positive change demonstrated amongst others by the recent UNFF e-discussion forum on forest ownership. A background study commissioned by the UNFF secretariat that is expected to be ready for UNFF 7 intends to elaborate on the link between forest ownership and governance. It is important to recognize that many countries have initiated the process of transferring titles and tenure rights for some government-owned forest areas to local communities, indigenous groups, and private households. In developing countries, this transition has been due to, among other things, government recognition of the legal rights of indigenous communities to forest resources; and an increased awareness that local ownership may result in more effective protection, efficient use of resources, improved livelihoods, and in providing incentives for long-term investments in SFM. Similar shifts in countries with economies-in-transition have resulted in major increase in private ownership in Europe.

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

17. The diversity of the world's forests calls for a flexible and dynamic approach in the design of the NLBI. The Major group SMALL FOREST LANDOWNERS is supporting a NLBI that provides a general policy framework allowing the regional forest policy processes to contribute in their best possible way to the global forest policy dialogue. An important element will be the integration of Major Groups as equal partners in the formulation of the NLBI and its subsequent implementation. Since the initiation of a Multi Stakeholder Dialogue in 2002, Major Groups have continuously put their efforts in trust and partnership building with policy and decision makers.

18. Major Groups have a rich experience on the ground that should be used by policy and decision makers in designing the political framework conditions. The regional and local networks represented by Major Groups are well suited to communicate and translate the global forest policy deliberations on the ground and thus assist in addressing priorities for action.

19. So far the global forest policy discussions have neglected the impact of capacity building and knowledge transfer for the implementation of sustainable forest management. It would thus be recommendable if the NLBI had a special focus on capacity building, education and training on the local and regional levels.

#### V. Recommendations for the Multi-Year Program of Work (MYPOW)

20. Strengthening the regional component in the UNFF process up to 2015 offers a unique opportunity to highlight regional priorities whilst continuously addressing global priorities. The main global priorities for action are outlined under Chapter III of this discussion paper. Regional priorities can follow the ongoing discussion in the regional forest policy processes. The Ministerial Conference on the protection of forest in Europe (MCPFE)<sup>4</sup> has for example chosen “Forests and water” and “Forests, wood and energy” as its two main thematic areas for the upcoming 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in November 2007.

21. To date, the Major Groups had a passive role in the implementation of the MYPOW. It might be worthwhile to integrate their knowledge and know-how more actively in the development and implementation of the MYPOW. One approach could be to have specific

thematic sessions co-organised by Major Groups to directly link policy formulation to implementation on the ground. This could be one way to effectively integrate the rich experience of Major Groups in the implementation of sustainable forest management in the design and implementation of the MYPOW.

## VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

22. Policy and decision makers in the global forest policy dialogue need to realize that a partnership approach towards Major Groups offers a unique asset for a sound implementation of long-term strategies for sustainable forest management.

23. The Major group SMALL FOREST LANDOWNERS is committed to put the knowledge and know-how on sustainable forest management of their regional and local networks at the disposal of the UNFF process. In return member States and intergovernmental organizations are requested to focus on the most pressing issues as outlined under Chapter III to drive positive change for the sustainable development of the world's forests.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.mcpfe.org](http://www.mcpfe.org)