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Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

**Discussion Paper contributed by the Children and Youth Major Group**

**Summary**

Within the UNFF and its NLBI, Youth is advocating for education and intergenerational equity: Education as a tool to transfer knowledge from the one generation to the other and to learn how to e.g. sustainably deal with our forests. Intergenerational equity as a concept to emphasise the importance of the forests of today, with all the services and products it provides, which should also be available for future generations. Both of which we see well reflected in the NLBI. The importance of education and capacity building is stressed in 5 paragraphs. Sustainable forest management as a key factor for intergenerational equity is agreed on as a concept inter alia in the 4 global objectives.

This is an encouraging message. However, time is running short. Youth is concerned with the successful implementation of the NLBI. The variety of threats to forests is increasing rather than decreasing. Loss of forest cover and climate change make us worry about the future opportunities of a growing number of young people worldwide, in particular in rural areas of developing countries. Youth therefore calls for action. The content of the NLBI has a good potential, but its implementation has to take off. Therefore sufficient resources should be mobilized to actually make the agreement on forests start to work. To make this resources flow from investing to receiving countries, trust and transparency are needed. They both can only be achieved when a detailed monitoring and reporting plan is executed.
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I. Introduction
1. Since the Forum’s third session, the Children and Youth Major Group has been actively involved in the United Nations Forum on Forest processes, 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 sustainable forest management through education and the transfer of knowledge and the right to access natural resources to the younger generations. Specifically, the goals of the participation of the youth and children representatives are to:
   (a) Use their capacity as a worldwide youth network to inform the policy dialogue debate from young people’s perspective;
   (b) Demonstrate the potential of forest-related education in the implementation of sustainable forest management and international forest policy processes;
   (c) Advocate means of use to increase this potential;
   (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 the Forum’s eighth session, 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 the children and youth major group focal point team (International Forestry Students’ Association, Global Youth Network and Initiatives-Jeunes) with the assistance of their network members.

II. Priority areas for action
A. Education and capacity building
5. Education is a human right (Article 26, Resolution 217 A (III), Universal Declaration of Human Rights). 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 affected at the most foundational stage in their lives; secondary education is important for raising environmental awareness among young people and educating them about ecosystems; and tertiary education is critical for ensuring the integrity of skills among foresters, the scientific community and other forest-related stakeholders.
6. 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 sustainable forest management.
7. 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.
8. The children and youth 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.
To work towards this, member States are strongly encouraged to implement the promises committed in the NLBI on quality forestry education and capacity building:

**From NLBI National policies and measures**

- (u) Promote and encourage access to formal and informal education, extension and training programmes on the implementation of sustainable forest management;

- (v) Support education, training and extension programmes involving local and indigenous communities, forest workers and forest owners, in order to develop resource management approaches that will reduce the pressure on forests, particularly fragile ecosystems;

- (w) Promote active and effective participation by major groups, local communities, forest owners and other relevant stakeholders in the development, implementation and assessment of forest-related national policies, measures and programmes;

- (m) Establish or strengthen partnerships, including public-private partnerships, and joint programmes with stakeholders to advance the implementation of sustainable forest management;

**From NLBI International cooperation and means of implementation**

- (j) Strengthen the capacity of countries to address forest-related illegal practices, including wildlife poaching, in accordance with domestic legislation, through enhanced public awareness, education, institutional capacity-building,

Constructive intergenerational cooperation is what the basis of a common future is built upon. In order to frame this future sustainably, solution-oriented approaches are needed that require pragmatic gateways to participation for youth and children. Failing to implement the NLBI commitments means aborting the last chance to set these up.

This NLBI can only be taken serious with member states motivated to stick to their confirmations and coercing each other to do so, inter alia via mutual monitoring and reporting agreements.

**B. Climate change**

The substantial contribution of ongoing deforestation to climate change is a large concern. In the upcoming decades, the effects of climate change will be suffered in particular by rural communities in developing countries, where building up a sustainable future will become even harder and children will suffer the most.

**C. Stopping deforestation**

Ongoing deforestation and unsustainable use of forests leads to a growing number of people living in poverty or facing a poor future. In particular children are affected, as this often debars them from attending a school.

With the predicted increase in global population, the pressure on forests will merely increase, leading to more people living in poverty. This means that even more children will face an unsecure future.

**D. Participation**
15. Forest issues and their complexity often exclude the uninformed young person concerned with the environment. It must be pointed out, however, that these young people still have the capacity, the basic knowledge and the motivation to contribute constructively to meeting the objectives of the Forum.

16. We regard the promotion of cross-sector cooperation as a key element of 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 atmosphere that supports the growth of non-governmental organizations and collaboration.

III. Assessment of the United Nations Forum on Forests process

17. We welcome the opportunity given to young people to have a voice in the United Nations Forum on Forests through the 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 non-legally binding instrument.

18. 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 a loss of interest in and connection to nature. Overall recognition of forests as a natural part of society should be enhanced, as should the role of local communities in forest management. The well-being of communities, fostered through ownership in forest management, directly influences the well-being of their children and youth.

From the NLBI, National policies and measures:
(i) Promote and strengthen public understanding of the importance of, and the benefits provided by forests, and sustainable forest management, including through public awareness programmes and education;

IV. Recommendations on a financing mechanism/framework for sustainable forest management

19. Applying means of implementation, including financial resources, capacity-building and the transfer of environmentally sound technology; youth considers the following to be essential:
   a. The creation of partnerships with local authorities, youth, children and stakeholders with a view to building the capacity of youth forest-related organizations at the local level;
   b. The establishment of criteria and indicators that reflect the status of education within national forest programmes and the status of forestry within national education curricula;
   c. The inclusion of youth and children stakeholders and tertiary education stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of national forest programmes.

20. For a decision on a voluntary global financial mechanism, a portfolio approach and a forest financing framework, youth regards the following aspects as important:
   a. Finance has to be taken seriously by investing as receiving countries. This means that donating countries should mobilise resources to the extent necessary to make the defined goals and objectives of the NLBI (including the four global objectives on forests) a reality. For the countries that receive this donations to work on their programs, a clear and practical framework should be set up on indicators and monitoring.
b. Children and Youth are unable to provide financial resources, but they have repeatedly emphasized their value as ground staff in implementation if taken seriously as partners. We can provide a global educational network of students as a resource for both views and future collaborations of young people in implementation at the regional and sub regional levels as well as strong links to higher education institutions, as centres for both technological and scientific research and capacity-building, around the world.

c. Youth considers a portfolio approach to be a very concrete instrument to work forwards with, as it is a way to translate global negotiations into action on the spot. Youth however urges the subscribers of the NLBI to start to define what and who is included in the portfolio. This instrument can do its job only when clearly defined.

V. Forests in a Changing Environment

21. Talking about forests with respect to biodiversity conservation, including protected areas, youth considers the following to be essential:
   a. Forest conservation is closely linked to climate change adapted forest management practices. Beyond the question in how far vegetation will be capable to re-adjust to a changing climate in due time, diversity is a key prerequisite to provide forests with a broad reaction amplitude.
   b. Youth therefore stresses the need to preserve biodiversity and structural heterogeneity in forest ecosystems in accordance and association with the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD).

22. To reverse the loss of forest cover, prevent forest degradation in all types of forests and combat desertification, including in low forest cover countries, youth consider the following to be essential:
   a. People living in rural areas suffer the most. The lack of alternative sources of food, fodder, firewood and income accelerates trees being cut, creating conditions under which re-growth does not take place.
   b. The only answer to this is sustainable forest management. To efficiently use, systematically maintain and methodically regenerate forest resources, forest inventories as well as forest management and afforestation plans have to be developed and implemented together with the civil society in situ. Joint efforts have to result in a purposeful communication and an even handed sharing of benefits.
   c. The UNFCCC is often seen as a very successful instrument when it comes to political will and financial resources. They also include forests in their work and therefore could play an important future role in conserving forests. Youth wants to emphasize that forests have more functions than sequestrating carbon and that therefore a strong implementation of the NLBI is just as essential as a successful climate framework.

23. For achieving the four global objectives on forests and implementing the NLBI; enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination, and regional and sub-regional inputs youth emphasizes the importance of:
   a. Especially poor people in developing countries will suffer the effects of unsustainable forest use. Sustainably managed forests can offer long term sources of income and a sustainable future to this group, if they are given the legal right to use and tend forest resources.
   b. Forests are perhaps the most precious resource on our planet. They are in essential renewable and they offer numerous products and services to billions of people. People depend on these forests who have no future without these forests. Only worldwide sustainable management and
conservation of our forest resources will give future generations a chance to continue benefiting from this resource.

c. Linkages between regional meetings with the UNFF through regionally existing structures are an obvious way to further improve knowledge on forests and sustainable forest management as defined in the global objectives. They should promote bidirectional communication not only from decision taker to decision taker, but also form decision taker to the people working on the ground, on all levels.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

24. Forest areas worldwide are rather decreasing then increasing. This means that more and more people, who depend on forests for their livelihoods, in particular in developing countries, are facing an unsustainable future. Climate change (largely effected by deforestation) will even speed this process up. Education is under double pressure, as increasing poverty for a growing number of people truncates access to education every day while at the other hand education on how to use resources sustainably is a key factor for maintaining forests for future generations.

25. To make the UNFF and the NLBI work, we have the following recommendations
   a. Involve youth in implementing SFM
   b. Educate youth and children so they know how to carefully take care of their resources
   c. Create criteria and indicators for (forestry) education
   d. No to count on the UNFCCC when it comes to protection. Forests are more then carbon and will only face a sustainable future when also the forest forum is successful.
   e. Make sure that loss of forest cover is stopped by implementing SFM worldwide by:
      • Implementing the NLBI
      • Start to define the actors and scale of the portfolio approach
      • Build trust between investors and receivers by mobilising sufficient resources but on the same time implementing a good monitoring and reporting system.

26. Sustainable development means a development that does not compromise the options of future generations. It is our responsibility to use and tend the natural resources we have left in a way that does not deprive our children of their right to meet their own needs, neither now nor in the future.