United Nations Forum on Forests
Ninth session
New York, 24 January – 4 February 2011
Item 9 of the provisional agenda*
Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

Participation by major groups in Forum sessions and intersessional meetings as identified in Agenda 21 has been recognized as a key component in ensuring stakeholder involvement in sustainable forest management decision-making processes. At its seventh session, the Forum adopted the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the multi-year programme of work for the Forum for the period 2007-2015, both of which call for active and effective participation by major groups in the work of the Forum.

In 2011, the multi-stakeholder dialogue will be held during the first week of the session, where representatives of the major groups will share their perspectives on progress made on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and towards the achievement of the four Global Objectives on Forests. They will also present the outcome of the Major Group-Led Initiative in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests, held in July 2010 in Accra, Ghana.

The present note gives an account of relevant developments since the eighth session of the Forum and offers a number of measures the Forum may wish to consider in order to continue enhancing substantive contributions by major groups to its discussions.

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I. Introduction

1. The present note has been prepared to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogue at the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Three joint discussion papers prepared by the focal points of the major groups in consultation with their networks are contained in addenda to the present note.

2. Since its inception, the Forum has recognized the contributions of major groups as identified in Agenda 21 in implementing sustainable forest management, and made significant progress in enhancing stakeholder participation in its work. At its eighth session, the Forum adopted a resolution on enhanced cooperation and coordination. The Forum encouraged Member States to explore ways to increase the participation of stakeholders and civil society, including indigenous and other local and forest-dependent communities and other holders of traditional forest-related knowledge in future sessions of the Forum and requested the secretariat of the Forum to provide support to these actions.

3. Between 2009 and 2010, representatives of major groups actively participated in three country- and organization-led initiatives in support of the Forum, namely, Guilin, China (November 2009), Accra, Ghana (July 2010) and Oaxaca, Mexico (August/September 2010), and in the first meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on forest financing, Nairobi, Kenya (September 2010).

4. Pursuant to United Nations Forum on Forests resolution 7/1, a multi-stakeholder dialogue is held as an agenda item of every Forum session. The Forum secretariat facilitates consultations with the focal points of each group to plan and prepare for the multi-stakeholder dialogue. The format and content of the dialogue is proposed by the focal points, in consultation with the Forum secretariat, to the Bureau of the Forum for consideration.

5. The Forum secretariat works closely with major group focal points to enhance participation in accordance with the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

II. Enhancing stakeholder participation in the future work of the Forum

6. Effective participation of Major Groups is critical to the success of the international arrangement on forests. Major groups have convened several organization-led initiatives in the past to contribute substantively to discussions on varied issues such as traditional forest-related knowledge and gender and sustainable forest management. As part of enhancing stakeholder participation on the work of the Forum, major groups convened a major group initiative in support of the Forum focused on applying sustainable forest management to poverty reduction and strengthening the multi-stakeholder approach within the Forum. This was the first ever

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1 A complete list of the focal points of major groups is available at www.un.org/esa/forests/contacts-major_groups.html
initiative in support of Forum initiated by major groups and it provided an opportunity for major group representatives from thirty countries to actively develop their contributions and policy recommendations for the ninth session of the Forum. Close to 70 representatives from major groups, government and intergovernmental organizations participated in the initiative which took place from 26 to 30 July, 2010 in Accra, hosted by the Government of Ghana with the financial support from the governments of Norway, Finland, United Kingdom, Austria and Canada as well as by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO).

7. The major group initiative was designed to support the United Nations Forum on Forest process by enhancing the meaningful participation of Major Groups at the policy-making level. The main objectives of the initiative included developing concrete recommendation for the ninth session of the Forum; identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the multi-stakeholder dialogue process and creating specific recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder dialogue; identifying specific activities for major groups contribution’s to the International Year of Forests; and fostering alliances, partnerships and networking within the major groups and between them and other key players in the international arrangement on forests.

8. The major group initiative recognized efforts by Member States and other stakeholders to advance sustainable forest management through the Forum and to develop key recommendations linked to tenure rights, access and benefit sharing, traditional forest related knowledge, community-based forest enterprises, and leadership for sustainable forest management among women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups.

9. During the major group-led initiative the major groups decided to coordinate their contributions to the ninth session of the Forum and prepare three joint discussion papers on the three sub-themes for consideration by the Forum at its ninth session.

10. Representatives of major groups contributed significantly to the work of the first meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on forest financing convened from 13 to 17 September 2010, in Nairobi, Kenya. Their proposals and comments on various issues under consideration were submitted for discussion in an open and participatory manner alongside those of the experts.

III. The multi-stakeholder dialogue at the ninth session of the Forum

11. Pursuant to its resolution 7/1, the Forum holds a multi-stakeholder dialogue at every session. The Forum Secretariat facilitates consultations with the focal points of each major group to plan and prepare for the multi-stakeholder dialogue. The active involvement of major groups in the dialogue process is important in ensuring that discussions at the ninth session reflect a diverse range of views and concerns.

12. The multi-stakeholder dialogue will be held on the first week of UNFF9 and will provide, inter alia, major group representatives the opportunity to present the report of the Major Group Initiative held in Accra, Ghana from 26 to 30 July 2010. During the Dialogue, major group representatives will also present their priority areas and recommendations set out in their three discussion papers: Community-based forest management; Social development and indigenous and local communities, including
land tenure; and Forests and culture. Major group representatives will continue to be invited to present their view and comments throughout the discussions at the ninth session of the Forum.

IV. Conclusion

13. Member States and stakeholders may wish to consider approaches to a way forward in improving cooperation in areas where commonalities exist and continuing to work as a matter of priority in areas where divergence of views exist. They may wish to focus on the following areas for consideration and action:

(a) Continuing stakeholder involvement in intersessional activities of the Forum in an open and participatory manner and encouraging the consideration of major group perspectives in discussions at Forum sessions to strengthen international forest policy;

(b) Seeking further concrete steps to ensure meaningful participation from all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and women who are the primary groups involved in use and impacted by the management decisions (or lack of) of forests, and whose full participation is critical to improving sustainable forest management and sustained flow of benefits from forests.

(c) Seeking the active and meaningful participation of youth who provide a unique perspective and can act as “agents of change” through sustainable development education, shifting social and cultural values towards greater sustainability.

(d) Working together to develop effective policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to support community forestry and community based forest management based on identified experiences and best practices in community based forest management.

(e) Working together to support positive examples identified that form the framework for a set of guidelines for best practices in capacity development, with active involvement of women, youth, civil society, small forest owners, forest business and workers and the scientific community in meaningful improvements in tenure rights and the development of effective associations/unions.

(f) Supporting efforts to develop effective legal systems for the protection of intellectual property rights, traditional forest-related knowledge of local and indigenous communities which can inform and provide valuable scientific insight into the effects, impacts and coping strategies for climate change.

(g) Continuing to support the mainstreaming of traditional forest-related knowledge into national forest plans and programmes with the involvement of relevant stakeholders including local and indigenous communities, NGOs and the scientific community.
14. Member States may wish to:

(h) Support the major groups initiative on the roles of civil society actors and the means of their engagement with the Forum and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(i) Continue to examine ways to encourage participation of those major groups that have so far not been involved with the Forum’s work;

(j) Encourage and support joint initiatives by major groups on thematic issues of the Forum sessions for substantive input to the deliberations of the Forum.

(k) Continue re-evaluating the modalities of the multi-stakeholder dialogue and consider mainstreaming it into discussions at future sessions of the Forum, taking into account lessons learned by other forums and the outcome of the Major Group Initiative (26-30 July, Accra, Ghana).