

**United Nations Forum on Forests
Bureau of the Sixth Session (UNFF 6 Bureau)**

Minutes of the first meeting

Wednesday, 5 October 2005
10:00 AM – 01:00 PM *New York Time (EST)*

Participation

Bureau members: H.E. Prof. Judith Mbula Bahemuka; Mr. Majdi Ramadan and Mr. Franz Perrez. Mr. Tono Kruzic sent regrets and Ms. Irena Zubcevic from the Croatian Mission participated on his behalf.

UNFF Secretariat: Mr. Pekka Patosaari, Ms. Elisabeth Barsk-Rundquist, Mr. Mahendra Joshi, Mr. Jorge Illueca, Mr. Peter Csoka and Ms. Catalina Santamaria.

Secretary of the Forum: Ms. Vivian Pliner-Joseph

Others: Mr. Fredrick Matwang'a, Kenyan Mission

The agenda of the first meeting of the Bureau were the following:

1. General introduction
2. Bureau affairs - Chairmanship and representation from regional groups
3. General review of UNFF5 and preparations for UNFF 6
4. Schedule of bureau meetings in the future
5. Outcome of the meeting of Chairpersons of the functional commissions with ECOSOC
6. Other matters

1. General introduction

Mr. Pekka Patosaari, Director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat, welcomed the Bureau members, in the Secretariat for this first gathering and formal meeting of the Bureau. He informed the Bureau that Mr. Tono Kruzic, Bureau member from (Croatia) had expressed regrets for his inability to attend the meeting due to circumstance beyond control. He briefed the Bureau on the remaining nomination of a member from GRULAC and the Secretariat's efforts in the past to urge the Group to nominate a representative without success.

Mr. Patosaari took the opportunity to brief the Bureau on historical context of the international forest policy process leading to the establishment of the current international arrangement on forests and the role of the UN Forum on Forests in it. He also briefed the Bureau on the working modalities of the Bureau, its interaction with the Secretariat and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

2. Bureau affairs - Chairmanship and representation from Asia

As the Forum will formally elect the Chairman only at the opening day of its session on 13 February 2006 in New York, Mr. Patosaari requested the Bureau to consider nominating a Chairman from among the current members for guiding the deliberations of the Bureau. The Bureau members unanimously nominated Prof. Judith M. Bahemuka (Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, New York) to act as the Chair of the UNFF6 Bureau. Prof. Bahemuka accepted the invitation to chair the Bureau and thanked the Bureau members for their trust in her. She then chaired the rest of the meeting. The provisional agenda was adopted to proceed with the business of the meeting.

On the issue of the pending nomination from GRULAC, the Bureau members advised the Secretariat to continue following this matter up with the Group.

3. General review of UNFF5 and preparations for UNFF6

The Bureau discussed the outcome of the fifth session and the challenges for the sixth session in reaching to a consensus. The Bureau acknowledged that there is a need to keep Member States as well as other stakeholders engaged and interested in UNFF. In this regard, the Bureau decided to regularly meet and review preparations for UNFF6. It discussed about the need to brief the regional/negotiating groups by the Bureau Chair and about the possibility to convening informal consultations in the future. It would function on the principle of neutrality and transparency and focus mainly on procedural aspects of the preparations for UNFF6.

It expressed hope that the planned county-led initiative (CLI) titled, "Scoping for a future agreement on forests" on 16-18 November 2005 in Berlin would provide an opportunity for useful discussions on some of the issues that would be formally negotiated at UNFF6. However, it understood that the CLI should not be considered a pre-session negotiation.

Learning from the lessons of the fifth session regarding the logistic constraints, the Bureau requested the UN Secretariat to ensure suitable conference facilities for the sixth session. The Secretariat and the Forum Secretary briefed the bureau on the arrangements made for the sixth session.

4. Schedule of bureau meetings in the future

Considering the challenges ahead and limited available time, the Bureau agreed to a tentative schedule of future meetings and indicative targets. Such a schedule was expected to facilitate consultations and decision taking for the preparations of the session. The schedule also included other bureau activities, particularly the possible dates for briefing by the Chair to negotiating/regional groups and informal consultations. Main milestones of the schedule are the following:

- 1 November 2005: second meeting
- 28 November 2005: third meeting
- 29 November – December 2005: possible briefings to negotiating/regional groups in New York
- Early January 2006: fourth meeting
- Early January 2006: possibility of informal consultations
- 27-28 Jan 2006: fifth meeting

- 12 Feb 2006: sixth meeting
- 13-24 Feb 2006: daily meetings during the sixth session

The Bureau, as a principle, would meet in New York. It would use telephone or video links with the members who would not be able to attend a meeting in person. In addition, the Bureau will utilize any opportunity such as the CLI in Berlin to meet and consult among those members who would be present in such events.

5. Outcome of the meeting of Chairpersons of the functional commissions with ECOSOC

H.E. Prof. Bahemuka, who participated in the meeting on behalf of the Bureau, on 7 July 2005, briefed the members of its outcome. She informed that the main focus of the meeting was to consider a consolidated approach among the functional commissions in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major UN Conferences and Summits. She explained that her statement was well received and the significance of the Forum was acknowledged. She also believed that the event provided an opportunity to enhance the visibility of the Forum. The Bureau agreed for continuation of such activities and thanked H.E Prof. Bahemuka for her effort.

6. Other matters

The Bureau considered an additional issue. It was about the past practice of inviting the CPF Chair to bureau meetings. Given that the Bureau is focusing its work at this moment primarily on organizational and procedural issues, it decided to consider this matter in a later date.

Closing of the meeting

Ms. Bahemuka thanked the Bureau members and the Secretariat for their active participation in the meeting and adjourned the meeting at 1.20pm.