

UNFF2 Meeting Summary - 27-8 January 2002

Minutes of the third meeting of the UNFF2 Bureau

UNFF Secretariat, DC-2 Building, New York

The Bureau held its third meeting during Sunday 27 January and Monday 28 January 2002. The first session of the meeting was held on Sunday 27 January from 10 AM to 1 PM., followed by a joint Bureaux meeting with the WSSD Bureau from 3:30 to 4:20 PM the same afternoon. The Bureau met again on Sunday from 4:15 to 5:00 PM, and on Monday, 28 January from 6:00 to 7:00 PM.

Attendees

Bureau Members and Contact Persons: Mr. Knut Øistad (Chairman, Norway), Ms. Patricia Chaves (Vice Chair, Costa Rica), Mr. Hossein Moeini Meybodi (Vice Chair, Iran), Mr. Ositadinma Anaedu (Vice Chair, Nigeria) and Mr. Oleg Shamanov (Contact person, Russian Federation).

UNFF Secretariat: Jag Maini, Kyaw Kyaw Shane, Mahendra Joshi, Mia Soderlund and Abigail Sarmac

ECOSOC Secretariat: Vladimir Zelenov

The objectives of the meeting of the Bureau were to review:

1. The preparations for the second session
2. High-level ministerial segment including the ministerial dialogue with heads of member organizations of the CPF
3. Joint Bureaux meeting with WSSD Bureaux
4. Update of the preparations for the Multi-stakeholder dialogue
5. Establishment of expert groups
6. Division of work among the members of the Bureau
7. Briefing of the Permanent Missions and regional groups in New York
8. CPF activities
9. Other business

1. Preparations for UNFF2

Ms. Chaves informed the Bureau that due to unforeseen circumstances, the Government of Costa has regretfully decided to withdraw its offer to host the second session of UNFF in San Jose. The Bureau reviewed the availability of alternate venues and facilities in New York and Geneva (two UN cities), implications to the high-level Ministerial segment and proposed contributions to the WSSD process.

After considering the various options, the Bureau, at its resumed meeting on Monday, 29 January decided to convene the second session in New York during the pre-scheduled period, 4-15 March 2002. The Bureau noted the facts that the change in venue has to be approved by the Committee on Conference, and that change in venue in New York at the late stage could entail some difficulties in acquiring sufficient meeting rooms and other facilities. However, the Bureau felt confident that the delegations would understand the unusual situation and be flexible in organizing in New York, the large number of previously scheduled important side events. The important factors in choosing New York include maintaining the original schedule, and the minimum disruption to travel plans of the Ministers and other delegations, and synchronizing the submission of UNFF contribution to WSSD process at its third Prepcom in March.

Documentation: The Secretariat reported that all official documents including the six SG's reports and three Notes from the Secretariat are being translated in official UN languages. The copies of advanced unedited versions of those documents (in English only) are now available in the official website of UNFF.

2. High-level ministerial segment

The Bureau discussed matters related to the preparations for the high-level ministerial segment at UNFF2, in the context of the new development.

The Bureau was informed that the Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica would not be able to chair the Ministerial segment as previously planned. The Bureau started a process to identify a new chairperson for the Ministerial segment.

Regarding the dialogue between the ministers and heads of CPF member organizations, the Bureau reiterated its earlier selection of five critical issues, and that one Minister will be requested to make an opening statement on one particular critical issue. The heads from 2 - 3 CPF member organizations, to be decided by CPF, would then respond to that Minister's statement. This would set the stage for a more interactive dialogue among the ministers and CPF heads on that particular critical issue. The Bureau would explore with some Ministers to see their availability and willingness to make the opening statements for each of the critical issues.

The Bureau agreed that the output of the dialogue would be a Chairman's summary highlighting the key points of the dialogue.

Regarding ministerial deliberations the Bureau reflected on the draft Ministerial message sent in advance by Mr. Øistad. The Bureau found the draft as a useful basis for further refinement of the possible ministerial message. Suggestions were made to highlight the global environmental benefits of forests and the need for resource mobilization for capacity building in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Mr. Øistad would revise the draft and distribute it as an unofficial note with the intention to stimulate discussion on the context, strategic objectives and elements of a possible Ministerial Message from UNFF to WSSD.

The Bureau noted that the outcome of the Ministerial deliberation could be an endorsement of UNFF Plan of Action and political commitment towards its implementation; enhanced international cooperation including the role of CPF; repositioning of forests on the national and international political agenda; and a Ministerial message to WSSD and other fora.

3. Joint Bureaux meeting with WSSD Bureau

In addition to informing the WSSD Bureau of the new development in organizing the second session of UNFF, other key points for discussion would include possible ways for further cooperation between the two bureaux, show casing forest as a success story in post-Rio era at the Johannesburg Summit and synchronizing the submission of UNFF contribution to WSSD process.

At the joint meeting, held on the Sunday afternoon (27 January), the two bureaux exchanged information and views regarding cooperation and coordination between the two processes, implications of the new developments in scheduling of the submission of UNFF's inputs to the Johannesburg Summit.

4. Update on Multi-stakeholder dialogue

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the response from the major group to the invitation by the Secretariat for contributions and planned preparatory meeting, scheduled on Tuesday, 29 January 2002, was minimal. Only one major group, IUFRO, provided a written contribution to UNFF2, and one other major group, Confederation of European Forest Owners, yet to be accredited, showed willingness to attend the preparatory meeting. Accordingly, the meeting has been canceled.

Mr. Øistad informed the Bureau that he has communicated the Bureau's previous decision to a major group that the UNFF will follow the ECOSOC Rule of procedures and that the multi-stakeholder dialogue will be chaired by the Chairman of the Bureau.

5. Ad Hoc Expert Groups

The Bureau considered draft terms of reference for three ad hoc expert groups prepared by the Secretariat. The draft note from the Secretariat will be posted at the UNFF Secretariat web-site.

6. Division of work among the Bureau members

The Bureau agreed to a request by Mr. Øistad to share the responsibilities of chairing the working groups and rapporteur as follows:

- Mr. Hossein Moeini Meybodi: Chairman, Working Group 1
- Mr. Ositadinma Anaedu: Chairman, Working Group 2
- Ms. Patricia Chaves: Rapporteur

It is also decided that Mr. Øistad and Ms. Chaves would co-chair the informal consultations on ad hoc expert groups, to be held prior to the opening of the second session of UNFF.

7. Briefing to the Permanent Missions and regional groups

Consistent with the past practice, the Bureau decided to brief the Missions in New York about the preparations for UNFF2, including the recent developments, as soon as possible. It was also decided that in case Mr. Øistad could not travel to New York for the informal briefing, then other members present in New York would conduct the briefing.

The Secretariat would brief, regional and other groups of countries on the documentation and other issues related to UNFF2, when requested.

8. CPF activities

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau about the recent activities of CPF including the development of CPF framework and initiation of the CPF Network. The Bureau expressed its appreciation for the excellent support the Secretariat had received from CPF partners in preparing the official documentation for UNFF2. The Bureau also expressed the view that the CPF should work within the mandate it was provided by ECOSOC and the guidance provided by UNFF, and to keep its activities focused in support of UNFF functions and objectives.

9. Other business

a) The Secretariat briefed the Bureau about the recruitment process and staffing situation. The UN has already advertised the post of Coordinator and Head of the Secretariat (D-2). It is in the process of advertising three other professional posts.

b) FAO has recently seconded a senior staff member, Ms. Susan Braatz, to the Secretariat. Following the retirement of Mr. Jaime Hurtubia, UNEP is in the process of recruiting a senior staff member to be seconded to the Secretariat.

c) On travel support to the participating countries from developing countries, the members of the Bureau suggested that in light of the new developments, the deadline for submission of requests should be extended.

d) The Bureau decided to send a letter to chairmen of the regional groups informing the change in venue to New York for the second session of UNFF and requesting for the nomination of members for the Bureau of the third session of UNFF, to be elected at the conclusion of the second session. Mr. Øistad will send the letter as soon as possible.