

Summary of the joint meeting of the Bureaux of ECOSOC and the Sixth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF6)

UN Headquarters, Conference Room E, New York

17 February 2006

Introduction

A meeting between the Bureaux of ECOSOC and the United Nations forum on Forests (UNFF) was held on 17 February 2006 from 03:15 to 04:00 PM in New York under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Hajalmar W. Hannesson, Vice-President of the ECOSOC Bureau. The president and the other three Vice-Presidents of the Council Bureau were represented by members of their Missions.

From the Bureau of the Sixth session of the UN Forum on Forests, Chairman H.E. Ms. Judith Bahemuka and Vice-Chairmen, Mr. Franz Perrez, Mr. Jose Antonio Doig and Mr. Tono Kruzic, together with Secretary of the Forum and the Secretariats, participated in the meeting.

Agenda

1. Highlights of the critical issues of UNFF6
2. Institutional status of the Forum and related issues
3. ECOSOC reform: New mandates and their impact on methods of work of functional commissions
4. Any other issues

Meeting summary

H.E. Bahemuka, Chairman of the UNFF Bureau, briefed the ECOSOC Bureau on the uniqueness of the Forum, which is a relatively a new subsidiary body of ECOSOC with universal membership, has inclusive approach on policy deliberations with emphasis on the implementation of global agenda on sustainable forest management. The Forum is supported by the 14 member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), an innovative approach for actions on the ground. She also underscored that the Forum provides substantive support to the work of ECOSOC.

The UNFF Bureau highlighted the critical issues under discussion at its current Sixth session. The sixth session had a mandate to complete the task of review that begun at its fifth session in May 2005, and based on the draft Chairman's text forwarded to it from the previous session. Since the review process also had to consider and take decision on the future mandate and institutional position of the Forum as well as to reach a consensus on an instrument (legally binding or non-binding), this session was expected to be of high political sensitivity. It was observed that there seemed to be a willingness to proceed with a voluntary instrument at the moment, which also showed a similarity with the Law of the Sea process.

The meeting participants noted the significance of sustainable forest management on overall sustainable development, poverty eradication, environmental protection and in the achievement of overall global development agenda. In this regard, the meeting participants recognized the unique role of the Forum in enhancing international cooperation to combat

deforestation and promote sustainable forest management for the achievement of the broader development agenda.

On institutional status of the Forum, the Bureau of the Forum emphasized a strong need to strengthen the capacity of the Forum Secretariat in order to adequately respond to the development needs of forests. The meeting noted the relatively small size of the Secretariat and its limited resources. The meeting participants acknowledged the situation and also noted that budget issues are the prerogative of the General Assembly. However, it was also expressed that a resolution from ECOSOC in this regard would facilitate this issue substantially.

The meeting also considered the implications and opportunities provided by the ongoing UN reform process. The Forum Bureau urged the President to consider the Forum as a part and parcel of ECOSOC when considering the reform process.

With regard to the high-level and coordination segments of ECOSOC 2006 session, the outcome of the sixth session of the Forum was considered to be a significant input to those segments.

The meeting acknowledged the beneficial aspect of such joint bureau meetings, and concluded the meeting with a wish for successful conclusion of the Sixth session of the Forum.