

The statement by Forestry Agency of Japan
at the 1st meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad-Hoc Expert Group
(25th April 2016)

It is a great honor for me to have an opportunity to share with all the participants here the major outcomes of an informal Expert Panel meeting held in Tokyo, Japan last month, from March 7th to 11th at the very beginning of our substantive work on the IAF Strategic Plan as well as the quadrennial programme of work.

The Expert Panel meeting was organized by the Forestry Agency of Japan in cooperation with UNFF Secretariat for the purpose of providing an avenue for discussion on the possible contents and elements of the Strategic Plan.

The meeting was attended by 35 experts from member states of different regions, member organizations of CPF, major groups and other stakeholders. I am sure most of them are also present here at this AHEG meeting today.

All the participants attended the panel in their personal capacity, given the nature of the meeting, which is to promote free exchange of views on the strategic plan, however, the meeting was very productive, constructive and fruitful.

Following the presentation on the background paper by the two consultants, Ms. Stephanie Caswell and Mr. Ivan Tomaselli, as they have just explained their findings to us all, the discussion was moderated by Mr. Arvids Ozols. Unfortunately, he is not attending here, but allow me to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for his brilliant work as a moderator.

Through a week-long extensive work, the panel specifically considered and exchanged views on 3 basic things, (1) possible mission and vision statements, (2) a possible table of contents for strategic plan, (3) possible goals and targets and implementation framework of the strategic plan.

The moderator's summary is already distributed by the secretariat to all the participants here at AHEG and is already available at the UNFF website, so you might have gone through it. Here I would like to say a few words about the key points contained in the moderator's summary.

Firstly, the significance of the IAF strategic plan in guiding the IAF to translate its aspiration into action to achieve the IAF objectives as well as placing it in and

contributing to the broader context of sustainable development. In particular, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change were named as the most important global frameworks which IAF should leverage.

Secondly, the strategic plan should provide guidance to all IAF components, meaning not only UNFF and its member states but also the CPF, the G3FNet and the UNFF trust fund, to promote and facilitate the implementation of SFM at the global, regional, subregional and national levels. It was also emphasized, however, that introducing new obligations or “proposals for action” for countries, like the ones we saw in the IPF/IFF process, sometimes dubbed as a shopping list, should not be an option.

Thirdly, the strategic plan should identify priority areas and actions with possible time-bound targets linking actions to quantitative targets, as well as resources as its main component to achieve the IAF objectives, taking into account the goals and objectives in other relevant processes.

This led to the development of an illustrative matrix which is contained in Annex 3 of the Moderator’s summary.

The illustrative matrix is organized around 6 possible goals which are aligned with the 5 new objectives of the International Arrangement of Forests and which encompass the 4 Global Objectives on Forests, as well as SDG 15.2 and means of implementation.

For these 6 goals, the matrix displays examples of or options for potential associated targets based on the SDG targets, Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the GEF6 SFM Strategy, paragraph 14 of the UNFF11 Ministerial Declaration, and relevant aspects of the UNFF11 resolution, as well as on other ideas put forward by participants.

The matrix also shows, in a very preliminary way, how potential actions, actors, means of implementation and indicators related to the targets might be displayed, either in the strategic plan or in the quadrennial program of work.

Let me emphasize that the moderator’s summary, including the matrix, is not a negotiated text and does not necessarily reflect the views of all the participants. It does not reflect consensus and the matrix is an illustrative display only that attempts to gather together many of the views and inputs expressed during the meeting.

However, the moderator’ summary does provide a useful reference point for our discussions this week on two basic questions:

First: How do we align the GOFs, forest-related SDG targets, and other forest-related

commitments with the 5 objectives that constitute the new IAF mandate?

Second: What strategic information is needed and appropriate for 13-year strategic plan versus what operational information is more appropriate for the quadrennial program of work which, according to the UNFF11 resolution, will set out priority actions and resource needs.

There was a general view among the participants that the moderator's summary could serve as a useful input for the AHEG, so we are expecting that this could help facilitate our discussion.

During the course of the Expert Panel meeting, the Forestry Agency of Japan organized a half-day public seminar under the auspices of UNFF as well as the ministry of foreign affairs of Japan.

The primary objective of the public seminar was, in light of multi-functionality of forests, to exchange views and ideas on what actions need to be taken on the ground to achieve the global commitments, as articulated in SDGs, the Forest Instrument including the four global objectives on forests as well as the Paris Agreement.

In fact this was very much in line with what we were discussing at the Expert Panel meeting as well as what we are going to discuss at this AHEG meeting.

At the public seminar, we had a special guest from Sweden, His Excellency Sven-Eric Bucht, Minister for Rural Affairs. In addition to his highly suggestive speech, we had four presentations made by Mr. Manoel Sobral Filho, UNFF Director, Mr. Bin Che Yeom Freezailah, Chairman of Malaysian Timber Certification Council, Mr. Lambert Okrah, President and CEO of Major Groups, and Mr. Kazuhiro Goseki from Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA. Those presentations were followed by the panel discussion moderated by Mr. Takeshi Goto from ITTO.

The Seminar was open-ended and there was no official summary or conclusion, but let me introduce some of the views I found interesting and important.

- 1) Even if we have an international agreement, actions should be taken domestically and on the ground in achieving SFM.
- 2) A bottom-up decision making process in which all stakeholders participate is very important.
- 3) Potential values of forests, including their contribution to the mitigation of climate change as a major carbon sink as well as benefits derived from the use of wood as

substitute of fossil fuel should be fully realized.

- 4) Forest certification could be a very useful tool to achieve SFM on the ground, however, certification in tropical forests entails enormous challenges especially in terms of financing. A time-bound, step-wise approach should be considered.
- 5) Mechanism of monitoring, assessment and reporting of UNFF should be better utilized.

Also, from Japan's point of view, the involvement of JICA, Japan's bilateral technical assistance agency, in this kind of multilateral interaction made a big difference because they have a lot of knowledge and experience gained through a lot of projects in developing countries.

The role of bilateral cooperation agencies in promoting SFM should be better recognized and highlighted along with international organizations.

On the final day March 11th, an optional tour to an inland district of Fukushima was arranged to provide an opportunity to have a look at Japan's wood manufacturing industry and an electric power plant generating electricity from wood biomass.

Incidentally, March 11th was the memorial day of the Great East Japan Earthquake by which massive tsunami hit Japan and caused devastating damage just 5 years ago. In this context, the role of forests in disaster risk reduction including coastal forests' function to prevent the damage from tsunami was also highlighted.

While observing such private sector's efforts toward the sustainable management of forests through the supply chain of forest products as well as the expansion of wood-based renewable energy, we had very lively discussions with managers of these facilities.

Last but not least, it is our wish that the outcome of all those programmes will help make the process of IAF more attractive and raise awareness of all stakeholders in promoting SFM worldwide.

This concludes my presentation.

Thank you very much for your attention.