

Summary of discussion on 12 January 2015

Key messages from the opening statements

- We have an unprecedented and positive basis to shape a solid post-2015 IAF at UNFF11
- The intersessional activities also highlighted the fact that the commonalities among countries on the way forward for the post-2015 IAF are more than at any time before.
- The pace of developments at the international level has also never been as conducive as today to integrate forests into other major processes.
- A strong outcome of AHEG2, and solid outcomes of UNFF11 on the future IAF, would lead to higher placement of forests both in the post-2015 development agenda and post climate change agenda.
- It is of vital importance to keep in mind that the UNFF11 resolution should be the framework for concrete agreements on the design, function, and future direction of all components of the IAF.
- The actual consultation on agreeing on some details can be done in the intersessional period, after the September 2015 Summit, to ensure full coherence with the post-2015 development agenda outcome.
- The integration of forests in the SDGs is important, in particular for the role this defines for the forest sector and community in implementing sustainable development around the world.
- This Forum, as the only universal, intergovernmental policy forum on forests, is in a unique position to monitor progress in implementation of the post-2015 development agenda related to forests, and to ensure the achievement of forest-related goals and targets in the SDGs.

- Whatever form the future IAF takes, it should have a strengthened role in advancing implementation of SFM and in facilitating access to existing forest-related funds, in particular the Global Environment Facility SFM Strategy and the Green Climate Fund.

Interactive discussions on the IAF Report

- The team's task was to "think outside the box" which means the options reflect creative conceptual approaches to address needs and gaps. Based on what options – or elements within the options – resonate with countries, operational issues can be further explored.
- The team's premise was that there is fragmentation of forest institutional governance at the global level which is mirrored at the national level where different ministries and agencies have responsibilities for different aspects of forests.
- The team originally considered 10 options for the post-2015 IAF. The four options selected are all UN-DESA based and the most feasible and closest to the current arrangement. The other options require that another organization agrees on a mandate to pursue the option, which may not be realistic.
- Changing the Forum to the UN Forest Assembly would alter the nature of the Forum. The concept of "stewardship" means having the range of forest-related organizations and stakeholders working together under the umbrella of the IAF.
- The most difficult option to operationalize is option 2 which proposes establishing a new intergovernmental body modelled after, for example, IPCC and IPBES. Existing bodies and organizations will continue to have their own forest-related mandates.
- Option 1 has the least "barriers" to implementation. There are also precedents for the approaches reflected in options 3 and 4.
- Under option 3, the dual tracks would be expected to have the same objectives and a shared overall strategy or strategic plan. The three aspects of the "science-policy-implementation" interface would be the focus of individual committees under this option.

- The purpose of the Special Envoy is to strengthen political commitment, the profile of the future Forum within the UN, and coordination on forests within the UN system and with other partners. The Special Envoy would be an eminent and charismatic person.

Afternoon Session- Views and proposals on the IAF

Some general points raised about:

- The significance of financing implementation of SFM and the need for increased coordination with UN agencies and entities in this regard.
- Implementation relating to governance at multiple levels should be supportive of national actions.
- The need for the “form to follow function”.
- The role of the UNFF as a “multi-stakeholder forum”, versus being an intergovernmental forum, and the impacts on the participation of major groups and other stakeholders.

Some areas of emerging convergence:

- “Business as usual” is not a viable option – a mere extension of existing IAF arrangements as they are, and a commitment to meet in 2017, is not acceptable to UNFF member governments, and would put the existence of UNFF at risk, particularly in a competitive institutional atmosphere as the post-2015 UN arrangements take shape.
- The substance of the NLBI/GOFS remains relevant and should be reaffirmed (whether non-legally binding or legally binding). A few tweaks and updates may be needed, but there is no appetite to renegotiate the bulk of the substantive provisions.
- There is a strong potential role for the post-2015 UNFF with respect to the forest aspects of the SDGs. UNFF could position itself to be the body reviewing forest-related elements of the SDGs and providing the review outcomes to HLPF (as Mr. Gass suggested).
- CPF retains vitality, is a good idea, and a needed coordination and catalyzing institution. However, its modalities can use some improvements though.

- The interface of policy with science, research and practice is an area where UNFF could forge a very useful role, working with CPF
- Coordination and dialogue across proliferating UN and other international institutions dealing with forests is an important role for UNFF/IAF (although it would be good to stop pretending that UNFF directs and controls everyone else, since other forest-related institutions and processes in fact have their own political mandates and governing bodies).
- UNFF needs a strengthened Secretariat, based in New York, as part of DESA.
- UNFF needs a plan, whatever you want to call it (“strategic plan”, “MYPOW”, whatever). We need a roadmap of where we are going, why that is important to the wider world, and how we are going to get there.
- Forest finance remains important, although the focus is now focused on not only mobilizing new finance but also on improving the ability to access it, and ensuring that it flows to a complete range of forest needs (e.g., not just REDD+), along with ensuring that it is utilized effectively.
- The 4 options presented by the IA report represent a fair summary of universe of possible options and actions, and should circumscribe our discussions.

Areas where there seem to be differences of views at this stage:

- The future legal character of the post-2015 IAF (the LBI question)
- The desirable degree of regionalization and role assumed by regional organizations and processes
- The degree to which UNFF should focus on promoting, reviewing, or actually doing “implementation” versus focusing on policy dialogue and coordination.
- The types of concrete institutional changes that might be needed, including UNFA, “UN Forest”, a Special Envoy, and potential financial mechanisms.

