

Minutes of the First meeting of the UNFF3 Bureau

UNFF Secretariat, DC-2 Building, New York

9 May 2002

Started at 10:10 am

Ended at 12:30 pm

Attendees

Bureau Members: Mr. Gustavo Eduardo Ainchil (Argentina), Mr. Peter Csoka (Hungary), Mr. Hossein Moeini Meybodi (Iran), Ms. Conceição Ferreira (Portugal).

UNFF Secretariat: Jag Maini, Jorge Illueca, Kyaw Kyaw Shane, Mahendra Joshi, Susan Braatz and Mia Soderlund.

ECOSOC Secretariat: Ms. June Chesney

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

1. Identify the Chairman of the Bureau
2. Review of and follow-up to UNFF2 decisions
3. Preparations for UNFF3
4. Intersessional activities
5. Next Bureau meeting
6. Secretariat staffing and secondments from the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)
7. Coordination with ECOSOC and CSD Bureaux and other matters

Opening of the meeting

Jag Maini, Coordinator and Head of the UNFF Secretariat welcomed the UNFF3 Bureau members, on behalf of DESA. He informed the Bureau that H.E. Dr. Matia Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka, Bureau member from Africa (Uganda) has expressed his regrets for his inability to attend the meeting due to his involvement in the Special Session of GA on Children (8-10 May 2002). Dr. Hosny El-Lakany, Chairman of CPF, who participates in the UNFF Bureau meetings as observer, also sent his apologies for not being able to attend the meeting due to a prior commitment in FAO.

1. Chairmanship

Jag Maini, UNFF Secretariat, explained that the members and Chairperson of the new Bureau for the next session of the Forum are elected by convening a short session of the new session immediately after the closure of the current session. On 15 March 2002, immediately after the closure of UNFF2, a brief meeting of UNFF3 was convened, which elected the members of the Bureau. However, due to lack of time, the Forum could not elect the Chairman of the new Bureau. Maini requested the Bureau to consider identifying an interim Chairman for guiding deliberations of the Bureau.

The Bureau nominated Mr. Hossein Moeini Meybodi (Iran) to Chair the UNFF3 Bureau meetings. The Bureau chairman will be formally elected on the opening day of UNFF third session on 26 May 2003 in Geneva, Switzerland. The third session of UNFF will be held from 26 May to 6 June 2003. Mr. Meybodi accepted the invitation to chair the Bureau meetings and thanked the Bureau members for their confidence and support on him. He expressed his intention to work in close consultation with all Bureau members and the Secretariat.

Mr. Meybodi then chaired the meeting. The provisional agenda was adopted to proceed with the business of the meeting.

2. Review of and follow-up to UNFF2 decisions

The Bureau considered the status of negotiation on the establishment of ad hoc expert groups; together with the possible follow-up actions on the decisions of UNFF2 on: format of voluntary reporting to UNFF3; concepts, terminology and definitions; specific criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at the fifth session and the preparations for WSSD.

2.1. Status of negotiation on the establishment of ad hoc expert groups

UNFF2 deliberations on the establishment of ad hoc expert groups ended inconclusively in the form of a bracketed negotiation text. Accordingly, the Forum decided to further discuss the bracketed text from UNFF2 on the titles, composition, terms of reference, scheduling and reporting of the ad hoc expert groups at its third session (Decision 2/2). Considering the sensitivity of the issues involved, the Bureau noted that it did not have much flexibility to undertake any consultative activities prior to UNFF3. The Bureau was of the view that some country-led initiatives may facilitate the clarification of the issues to be considered by the Expert Groups as well as to provide opportunities for informal consultations among countries. The Bureau agreed to draw countries' attention to the possible role of such initiatives.

2.2. Format of voluntary reporting to UNFF3

UNFF2, by its Decision 2/1, requested the Secretariat to suggest a format to serve as a basis for countries to use and report on their implementation of the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action for UNFF3. Information from such country reporting should be important inputs in preparing official documents for UNFF3.

The Bureau advised the Secretariat to develop a simple and practical format taking into consideration the experiences of CSD, CBD and other CPF members, with a goal of having reports that are straightforward, concise and relevant to the substantive issues of the third session and subsequent sessions and considering, if feasible, the criteria for review in Resolution 2/3. It also encouraged the Secretariat to work closely with the CBD Secretariat to coordinate reporting on forests under UNFF and CBD, as has been called for by COP 6 of CBD.

2.3. Concepts, terminology and definitions

UNFF2, by its Resolution 2/2E, requested CPF members to expedite their work on concepts, terminology and definitions regarding low forest cover, and to submit a progress report at UNFF3 on their efforts to foster a common understanding of concepts, terminology, and definitions related to sustainable forest management (SFM) in general.

The Bureau noted the information, provided by the Secretariat, on a number of planned meetings, involving several CPF members, related to concepts, terminology and definitions. The Bureau looked forward to receiving the progress report to be presented by CPF at UNFF3.

2.4. Specific criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at the fifth session

In Resolution 2/3, UNFF invited the UNFF Secretariat, in cooperation with CPF and taking into account the work of the ad hoc expert groups, to gather baseline information relevant to the specific criteria and to identify and propose to the fourth session of the Forum a process to facilitate the carrying out of the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at the fifth session of UNFF. The resolution also invited countries, CPF and other processes as well as major groups to provide quantifiable benchmarks for review.

The Bureau advised the Secretariat to initiate preliminary work on this resolution. Considering the decision of UNFF2 noted in section 2.1 above, the Bureau advised that the work to be initiated by the Secretariat on the Resolution 2/3 should be preliminary in nature.

2.5. Preparations for WSSD

Considering the significance of the Johannesburg Summit and the UNFF input to it in the form of Ministerial Declaration from UNFF2, the Bureau noted the importance of the upcoming ministerial-level fourth Prepcom in Bali, Indonesia. Mr. Meybodi and Mr. Ainchil will be attending the PrepCom meeting and they will make efforts to provide appropriate visibility to "forest" aspects of sustainable development in the final text coming out of Bali.

The Bureau agreed to use its regional network to draw the attention of countries to the forthcoming Prepcom meeting.

3. Preparations for UNFF3

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that, with the help of CPF, it has to prepare number of official documents for the deliberations at UNFF3, based on the provisional agenda adopted for UNFF3. The Secretariat requested guidance from the Bureau on the appropriate number of official documents to be produced for UNFF2, learning from the experience of UNFF2.

The Bureau suggested that the documents for UNFF3 should be aimed to facilitate deliberations on the three substantive issues scheduled for UNFF3 as per the item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda for UNFF3. The means of implementation (agenda item 3 (a)) and common items (agenda item 4) should be incorporated, as appropriate, within the three substantive items. The Bureau also emphasized that the documents be concise so that the delegations are not overwhelmed with information. The Bureau advised on the need to particularly address the "trade" issues under the "economic aspects of forests".

The Secretariat will keep the Bureau informed of the status of developing the outlines for the documentations.

4. Intersessional activities

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of some planned and/or proposed country-led initiatives in support of UNFF in coming months. They include meetings on: criteria and indicators; role of the planted forests in sustainable forest management (SFM); monitoring, assessment and reporting; and devolution of forest management.

The Secretariat also informed the Bureau of its thinking to advance the understanding of some important issues relevant to UNFF. The Secretariat stated that in particular, it is considering gathering and analysing information on "technologies" relevant to SFM.

The Bureau expressed satisfaction with the information and noted that the outcomes of these initiatives will serve as background information to the intergovernmental process of UNFF.

5. Next meetings of the Bureau

The Bureau tentatively set the week of 16 September 2002 for the next Bureau meeting after the Johannesburg Summit. This meeting will consider, inter alia, the organization of work for UNFF3 in detail.

6. Secretariat staffing

The Secretariat informed the Bureau about the current status of staffing, including the interviews of the short-listed candidates for the position of Coordinator and Head (held on 8-9 May). A new senior staff, Dr. Jorge Illueca, has recently joined the Secretariat as secondment from UNEP.

The Bureau expressed its appreciation to UNEP and other CPF members for their support to the Secretariat, and also expressed satisfaction with the progress on the recruitment process for new positions from the regular budget.

7. Other matters

7.1. Coordination with ECOSOC and other functional commissions

The Bureau noted that it has been a practice of the UNFF Bureau to organize joint Bureau meetings with the Bureau of the CSD and ECOSOC. The Bureau agreed to continue the practice of such joint meetings and to further improve the horizontal (with CSD and other functional commissions) and vertical (with ECOSOC) coordination and cooperation.

The Secretariat also informed the Bureau of the planned panel discussion on gender mainstreaming, being organized by the Commission on the Advancement of Women scheduled in June 2002. The panel will be composed of chairmen of three functional commissions and heads of the respective secretariats. The Secretariat of the Commission has approached the UNFF Secretariat of the inquiring the willingness of the Chairman of the UNFF Bureau to participate in the panel discussion.

The Bureau welcomed the idea of panel discussion and showed its willingness to participate if invited in the panel discussion. The Secretariat will coordinate this matter with the concerned secretariat and keep the Mr. Meybody informed.

7.2. CPF activities

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau of the recent and planned activities of CPF. Two organizations, ICRAF and IUCN have recently accepted the invitations to join the CPF, bringing the number of members of CPF to 13.

CPF has initiated a "CPF Network" to engage more organizations in support to UNFF and CPF activities. Two meetings of CPF Network have been held since its establishment in March 2002.

CPF is organizing a side event during the Ministerial PrepCom of WSSD in Bali, Indonesia on 28 May 2002.

7.3. National focal points

The Secretariat requested the Bureau members to urge the countries within their regions to identify the national focal points with whom the Secretariat can maintain direct link in connection with UNFF work. So far, only a limited number of countries have nominated a national focal point.

The Bureau agreed to encourage countries to identify their national focal point as soon as possible. The Secretariat will provide the Bureau members the list of countries that have identified their focal points so far. The Bureau also stressed the need for effective coordination among the national focal points within a country for the various forest-related processes and instruments.

Closing of the meeting

The Bureau congratulated Dr. Jag Maini for his recent appointment by His Royal Highness Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands as an officer of the Golden Ark for his outstanding contribution in the field of forests, environment and nature conservation.

Mr. Meybodi expressed satisfaction with the issues considered by the Bureau and concluded the meeting.