Minutes of the

Tele-conference meeting of the UNFF 4 Bureau

UNFF Secretariat, New York

Thursday, 24 July 2003 (10:00 am – 11:00 am)

Background

At the suggestion of Mr. Xolisa Mabhongo, the bureau member from South Africa, a telephone conference among the bureau members was convened today. The conference was deemed necessary due to an inability to hold a face-to-face meeting in the near future due to a conflict of bureau members' schedules.

All four members (from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and WEOG) agreed to participate in the conference and provided their contact numbers[1]. The Secretariat circulated a tentative agenda to facilitate the discussion.

Among the bureau members, Mr. Yuriy N. Isakov (Russian Federation) participated from Geneva where he is currently attending ECOSOC session; Stephanie J. Caswell (USA) from Washington, DC; and Mr. Xolisa Mabhongo (South Africa) joined the Secretariat in New York. Unfortunately, in spite of continued efforts, Mr. I Gede Ngurah Swajaya (Indonesia) could not be contacted at the number (in Indonesia) he had provided.

From the UNFF Secretariat, Pekka Patosaari and Mahendra Joshi participated.

Welcome and introduction

Pekka Patosaari, Coordinator and Head of the UNFF Secretariat welcomed the UNFF 4 bureau members to the telephone conference.

1. Chairmanship

Maintaining the common practice to rotate the chairmanship among the five geographic regions, the Bureau members proposed Mr. Yuriy N. Isakov (Russian Federation) to be the Chair of the UNFF 4 Bureau. The Forum will formally endorse the appointment the chairman for UNFF's Fourth Session on the opening of the session on 3 May 2004 in Geneva, Switzerland. The fourth session of UNFF will be held from 3-14 May 2004. Mr. Isakov accepted the invitation to chair the Bureau and thanked the Bureau members for their confidence in, and support of, him. He expressed his intention to work in close consultation with all Bureau members and the Secretariat.

Mr. Isakov then chaired the telephone conference of the Bureau.

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[1] The Latin American and Caribbean region (GRULAC) has yet to nominate its representative to the Bureau.

On the issue of the pending nomination from GRULAC, Mr. Patosaari briefed the Bureau members on his two communications with the Chairpersons of GRULAC, the most recent one being earlier this week, with the Brazilian Permanent Representative who holds the chairmanship of the region for the month of July. The Bureau members suggested that the Coordinator and Head continue his efforts to encourage GRULAC to nominate their representative as soon as possible, and also to brief GRULAC on the outcome of today's meeting.

2.   General review of UNFF 3 and ECOSOC decisions, particularly regarding the ad hoc expert groups

Mr. Isakov briefed the Bureau members on the status of UNFF 3 report, which is currently being considered by the ECOSOC session in Geneva. The UNFF 3 submitted four resolutions and decisions for ECOSOC to adopt. The Council made no changes on the proposed date and venue as well as the provisional agenda for the fourth session of UNFF. On the draft resolution concerning the trust fund, the Council decided to forward it to the General Assembly (Fifth Committee) for decision. The Council also made a minor amendment on the text replacing the word "country-led initiatives" by "and other meetings aimed at supporting the work of the UNFF".

At the time of the telephone conference, the ECOSOC, in Geneva, was still working on the meeting dates of the three ad hoc expert groups, in particular, the date of the third group. There is a possibility that the Council may postpone the decision until its resumed session in September. It is realized that a delay in the formal establishment of the expert groups may have operational implications, for example, the governments are supposed to nominate and inform the Secretariat of the experts for the first two expert groups from each of the five regions, by 15 September 2003.

3. Preparations for UNFF 4 and ad hoc expert group meetings

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau members on the status of preparations for UNFF 4 and expert groups.   The Secretariat has already started the process of documentation for UNFF 4 and expert groups. Guidelines and outlines for the Secretary-General's reports for the session have been drafted and sent out to the CPF focal agencies for their comments. Plans for preparing official issue papers for the first two expert groups, which will meet by the end of 2003, have also been drawn. The Secretariat will keep the Bureau members informed of the process.

The Bureau expressed satisfaction with the progress on documentation.

4. Outcome of the meeting of Chairpersons of the functional commissions with ECOSOC on 17 July 2003

Mr. Isakov, who on behalf of the Bureau participated at the meeting on 17 July, briefed the members on its outcome. The main focus of the meeting was to improve coordination between the functional commissions themselves, as well as between the functional commissions and ECOSOC (horizontal and vertical coordination). Mr. Isakov opined that there are areas where UNFF can enhance coordination with other commissions on issues that are of common concerns. For example, the thematic issues of UNFF 4 such as TFRK and social and cultural aspects of forests could benefit from

consultation and coordination with the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Commission on Social Development, respectively.

The Bureau members supported the idea of seeking areas of enhanced coordination and cooperation with other functional commissions and with ECOSOC.

5. Bureau meeting

The Bureau members decided that the next Bureau meeting would be held on 29 September 2003 in New York.

Closing of the meeting

Mr. Isakov requested Pekka Patosaari to brief Mr. Swajaya of the discussion and decisions of the meeting.

Mr. Isakov expressed satisfaction with the discussion held at the meeting and thanked the members of the bureau for entrusting him with the chairmanship. He also thanked them and the Secretariat for the telephone conference, and concluded the meeting.