

INPUTS FOR THE FIRST QUADRENNIAL STRATEGIC PLAN

S & T MAJOR GROUP

The eleventh session of UNFF provided a platform for all stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF). The exercise was one of the most inclusive activities ever undertaken by the forum. Resolution 10/2 of UNFF 10 invited member states and all stakeholders to submit views and proposals on six key issues set out in paragraph 5 of the same resolution. Further analysis of the effectiveness of the IAF was carried out by Independent consultants, and through Country Led Initiatives and Major Groups Led Initiative and culminated in the release of UNFF 11 Resolution and Ministerial Declaration. The evolving context of forests vis-a-vis the SDGs presents challenges as well as opportunities for UNFF

The review enabled stakeholders to assess the viability of the current activities and structure and how to adjust and position UNFF for the future to increase its relevance .

The Strategic Plan is to serve as a framework for execution of UNFF objectives to achieve the best operational practices in critical areas such as policy dialogue, policy implementation, forest financing, communication and science-policy interface. I present below some specific areas for consideration in the developing the first quadrennial plan..

POLICY DIALOGUE

There are concerns amongst a segment of forest stakeholders (eg Indigenous and local communities, business and industry, forest workers, women) that the policy dialogue in UNFF does not address their needs. Greater efforts need to be made to solicit the views of these large segment of forest stakeholders on continuous basis in fashioning policies for SFM.

Voluntary efforts at SFM in many developing countries have not met our collective expectation. The discussion/policy dialogue on a Legally Binding Agreement needs to be revisited.

Most challenge to SFM come from activities outside the forest – agriculture , mining, infrastructure development, energy etc. There is an urgent need for interinstitutional, intersectoral and cross sectoral policy processes to reduce the adverse effect on forest from agriculture , mining and infrastructure development.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Currently there appears to be no clear mechanism to guide the implementation of decisions of the forum. A case in point is the implementation of the FI and the associated Global Objectives on Forests which remain the centrepiece of UNFF operations. The lack of targets

and indicators to track progress, missing competences and absence of compliance mechanism have made it difficult to track progress and achieve the desired results. *Targets 15.2 of the SDGs relates to implementation of SFM and are in consonance* with the FI and the associated GoFs and the strategic plan needs to clearly integrate and synchronise this target as well as the forest-water related targets (6.6 and 15.1) in the FI to help track progress in the implementation of the FI and GoFs.

Furthermore there is the need to develop an appropriate framework for Monitoring, Assessing and reporting of progress towards the achievement of the UNFI and the GoFs. The voluntary national reports sometimes do not present the true picture of what is on the ground. External commissioned review in collaboration with regional processes and major groups can help gain more objective view of problems. Establishment of regional liaison desk at the UNFF secretariat might be useful in this regard.

FOREST FINANCING

Financing SFM is by far the greatest challenge to the work of UNFF. A multisectoral approach to forest financing is required. Forest ODA is unevenly distributed . In 2009 member states adopted a decision on Means of Implementation at the special session in UNFF9. As yet not much progress has been made. The GFFFN set up at UNFF11 should be adequately resourced to effectively play the role given it. Indeed all avenues for mobilising financial resources for SFM should be considered. These should include National Forest fund from taxation on forest goods and services, national private sector, regional level funding,, PPP, CSR,, Bilateral, multilateral etc. This is in accord to SDG target 15.b which admonishes the global community to mobilise significantly resources from all sources and at all levels to finance SFM, and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance SFM, including for conservation and reforestation.

The proposal to set up a clearinghouse to assist developing countries to identify available sources of funding and improve linkages amongst forest related funds and processes (REDD+, Green Climate Fund, FLEG, GEF, PROFOR, Forest and Farm Facility etc needs to be clearly defined and implemented

Furthermore there is the need to build capacity of developing countries in grantsmanship and fund application processes and ensure that procedures for accessing funds are simplified by donor/grant agencies.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The low level of awareness of the importance of forests in many developing countries is a contributing factor for the high rates of deforestation and forest degradation. There is the need to heighten public and political awareness of the importance of forests and its

contribution to food security, human health, provision of clean air and water, and protection from climate change impacts. In this regard there is the need to develop appropriate valuation systems to properly account for forest contribution to economic development in order to avert adverse impact from competing land uses including agriculture, urbanization, and mineral exploration. The Major Groups can be facilitated to play active role in the awareness campaign through activities organised in conjunction with the celebration of the International Day of forests.

Also there is the need to strengthen Communication/information sharing mechanisms, support regional databases, information clearing houses and directories; facilitate efficient and effective cross-sectoral information flow between researchers, sectoral institutions, policy-makers, forestry practitioners and entrepreneurs. The Global Forest Information Services and its regional hubs eg Fornis for Africa ought to be supported.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Science & Technology is crucial for understanding the dynamics of forests and determining the full range of goods and services and their contribution to livelihoods and sustainable development. In order to make progress on SFM the Strategic Plan should bridge the gap between science and policy, science and economics . There should be a clear mechanism to promote science, technology, innovation and traditional knowledge in order to face forests main challenge: how to turn them productive without destroying them. In this regard the S&T Major groups make the following proposal

- Increase the visibility of relevant scientific research findings underpinning SFM on UNFF website
- Facilitate global scientific cooperation using international, regional and subregional networks as vehicles
- Commission scientific analysis of policy implementation with the aim of sharing good practices ;
- Strengthen scientists and research organizations in developing and economically disadvantaged countries to address issues relevant to global sustainability including land use, livelihoods and environmental issues.
- Invest in science-society communication, including the training on effective communication of research findings, to improve the impact of research to all beneficiaries and improve the link between research, policy and practice.
- Support local R & D institutions to develop appropriate valuation systems to properly account for forest contribution to economic development in order to avert adverse impact from competing land uses including agriculture, urbanization, and mineral exploration.
- Support local R & D institutions to develop a result-based M & E framework with indicators, targets for monitoring and reporting the implementation of the UNFI and progress towards the achievement of the GOFs

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The analyses above present some of the strategic priority areas and key challenges that have the potential of blocking UNFF from achieving its core objectives. The challenges can be addressed and are achievable under the following set of assumptions- political commitment to SFM, adequate financial streams from multi sources for SFM and genuine efforts of working together and effective partnerships of relevant stakeholders at all levels.

A detail implementation plan presenting the strategic actions, lead partner and collaborators, resources required, indicators suitable for monitoring progress towards targets and milestones will be needed. .

Enabling Conditions

Inclusive ownership of plan
Realistic strategic actions
Regular monitoring and evaluation
Operational financial support
Capacity building for effective national action.

Concluding Remark

Ultimately the vision will be defined by how we want UNFF to look like in terms of performance in core functions (policy dialogue, policy implementation, means of implementation) four years from now.