

Guidelines for Country-, Organization-, and Region-led Initiatives in Support of United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

I. Background on Country- and Organization-led Initiatives

One of the most notable characteristics of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and Intergovernmental Forum on Forest (IPF/IFF) process was the strong political will to reach consensus at the IPF and IFF sessions on many complex issues concerning international forest policy. Significant support to the IPF/IFF process derived from many international meetings held between IPF and IFF sessions.¹

During the IPF and the IFF, these country- and organization-led initiatives were co-sponsored by both developed and developing countries, as well as international organizations, including NGOs. Many of the complex and politically sensitive issues concerning forests were extensively discussed and analyzed in these meetings. They helped considerably the consensus building process at the IPF and the IFF sessions.

II. Country-, Organization- and Region-led Initiatives in Support of UNFF

In view of the significant contributions made by country- and organization-led initiatives in support of the IPF/IFF process, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) at its first session (E/2001/42/Rev.1) invited the timely convening of such initiatives to facilitate the work of the Forum. The activities of the Forum, including meetings, country-led initiatives and other inter-sessional work, facilitated and promoted the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, as outlined in Forum Resolution 1/1 on its multi-year programme of work.²

The Forum at its sixth session expanded the role of country- and organization-led initiatives in support of the UNFF. Specifically, Resolution 2006/49 recommended that country-led initiatives address issues identified in the 2007-2015 multi-year programme of work for a given cycle and stressed that the Forum should consider inputs from such Initiatives.³ Resolution 2006/49 also invited Member States to consider sponsoring country-led initiatives to contribute to the work of the Forum, emphasizing that such initiatives should be open to and facilitate participation by all members of the Forum, as well as members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and representatives of major groups.⁴ Further to this, the Forum at its seventh session recommended that the convening of country-, organization- and region-led initiatives in support of the work of the Forum, focus on topical issues of the 2007-2015 multi-year programme of work.⁵

Taking into account the additional guidance from the Forum at its sixth and seventh sessions, the secretariat reiterates the provisions of paragraph 12 of the Report of the First Session of the IFF (E/CN.17/IFF/1997/4), welcoming proposals made by Governments to organize expert meetings or to conduct studies in support of the Forum's work and welcoming, in particular, regional approaches. As presented in paragraph 12 (E/CN.17/IFF/1997/4), *“the Forum suggested that all countries and*

¹ During the IPF/IFF process there were 21 country- and international organization-led initiatives, in the form of international meetings, to support the work of the Panel and the Forum.

² E/2001/42/Rev.1 Plan of Action paragraph 4

³ E/2006/49 Working Modalities paragraph 13 and 15

⁴ E/2006/49 Non-legally Binding Instrument paragraph 30.

⁵ E/2007/42 Resolution 7/1: Multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2007-2015 B. Intersessional Activities of the Forum paragraph 5.

organizations planning or proposing to organize meetings or expert consultations relevant to the work of the Forum should be guided by the following principles:

- (a) Such meetings or expert consultations should be informal in nature;*
- (b) They should strive to be in full conformity with the tasks assigned to the Forum;*
- (c) They should be of an open-ended, transparent and participatory nature;*
- (d) They should strive for balanced representation from countries, reflecting a range of interests and views of all interested parties; particular attention should be paid to the participation of women experts;*
- (e) They should ensure that the timing and topic under consideration harmonize as far as possible with the schedule of work of the Forum;*
- (f) The organizers, in the course of their preparations, should consult with the Co-Chairpersons, the Bureau and the secretariat of the Forum, as appropriate;*
- (g) Such meetings or expert consultations should be invited to prepare a report to be presented to the Forum.*

The results of country-, organization-, and region-led initiatives provide valuable expert input to the work of the UNFF. Therefore, during periods between biennial sessions of the Forum, the Bureau and the Forum secretariat will coordinate to effectively prepare for Forum sessions, drawing on the outcomes of country-, organization-, and region-led initiatives on topics relevant to the upcoming Forum session⁶. These initiatives do not have official status as inter-sessional meetings, however, so any decisions on policy recommendations, made by these initiatives, would rest with the Forum itself.

III. Notification of Intent to Convene a Country-, Organization- or Region-led Initiative

Normally Governments announce, at a UNFF session, their intent to organize a country-led initiative in support of the Forum, although this is not always the case.

The secretariat kindly asks the organizer of a country-, organization-, or region-led initiative to send the secretariat a written proposal of their initiative, including a list of co-sponsors, the objectives of the meeting, the issues to be discussed, the venue and date, and estimated participation.

The secretariat requests that the proposals of a country-, organization-, or region-led initiative be submitted to:

The United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
One UN Plaza, Room DC1-1245
New York, N.Y. 10017, USA
Tel: (212) 963-3401
Fax: (917) 367-3186
E-mail: unff@un.org

⁶ E/2007/42 Resolution 7/1: Multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2007-2015 B. Intersessional Activities of the Forum paragraph 6(e).

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The secretariat is pleased to offer its technical advice and support in the planning of country-, organization-, or region-led initiatives, and to attend the meetings to lend whatever support requested by the organizers.

IV. Transmittal of the Final Report of the Initiative

The final report of a country-, organization-, or region-led initiative will become an official document of the UNFF session, if it is officially transmitted to the United Nations. The final report or summary report of the initiative should be officially transmitted to the Secretary General of the UN by the host country, through its Mission's Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

It is urged that the final report or summary report, including the transmittal letter from the Mission, be a maximum of 16 pages (7000 words) and submitted to the Secretary General's office at least two months prior to the UNFF session. The secretariat urges the host country and or organization to meet these requirements since the final reports must be translated into all six UN official languages for distribution at the UNFF sessions.