



5 December 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find attached New Zealand's submission to the UNFF on the International Arrangement on Forests as requested by the Secretariat in July 2013. Our sincere apologies that we did not quite meet the deadline of 30 November.

Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C Carson'.

Chris Carson
Director
Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand

New Zealand Submission to the UNFF on the International Arrangement on Forests (30 November 2013)

New Zealand welcomes the invitation to provide views to the UNFF as part of the UNFF's contribution to the review of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF). We see the review of the IAF, during intersessional processes and at the UNFF meeting in 2015, as an important opportunity to provide feedback on achievements to date and to guide international forest governance in a more consistent and effective direction that allows for achievement of the four global forestry objectives.

Responses to the questions posed by the UNFF Secretariat

The IAF

(A.1) Please select and explain preferred option for the IAF:

- A legally binding instrument on all types of forests*
- Strengthening the current IAF*
- Continuation of the current IAF*
- Other options*

In our view the International Arrangement on Forests should enable co-ordinated action and governance at international, regional and national levels, encourage consistency in the continuing refinement, understanding and application of Sustainable Forest Management, and encourage efficiency by avoiding unnecessary duplication of efforts.

While we remain open to discussion on a possible legally binding instrument we also consider this a step member countries may be cautious about given past difficulties and previous attempts at negotiation. We think that before choosing this option we should consider carefully what a legally binding instrument for forests will provide over and above current best practice. We are also conscious of the investment of time and resources required for such a negotiation, and that once completed ratification takes even more time.

At this stage New Zealand does not have a preference for one option over any other. We prefer to wait until the appointed consultants have undertaken their work so as to have credible and solid information on which to base any preference. We are also conscious that the development of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda will have a bearing on which option is preferable for the future of forests. We are also interested in a discussion about the inter-linkages and relationship between any future international forestry regime and the REDD+ mechanisms that have been established in the UNFCCC.

The UNFF

(B.1) Please explain if you consider the current UNFF structure and its biennial sessions as sufficient to take necessary actions and to provide advice and guidance on all issues related to all types of forests and at all levels:

We consider that the biennial sessions of the forum, combined with intersessional activities like ad-hoc expert groups, have provided a practical timeframe for UNFF meetings to date. We think the structure of the UNFF and its role providing policy advice can be improved, and there are opportunities to learn (without duplicating efforts) from the way in which other international environmental organisations are structured and have gone about their business.

Overall, we find that development of policy advice in the UNFF is divorced from the practical realities of sustainable forest management on the ground. For example, currently there is little scientific or technical input into policy advice developed by the UNFF. And while major groups attend the UNFF and have a chance to speak and interact with delegates, their insights and advice stand outside the deliberations of the working groups. Nor is there much sense of how the concerns of either different regions or different forest types impact on the nature of the policy advice that is produced.

The operation of the UNFF sessions could be improved by providing draft decisions on key recommendations prior to meetings to enable delegates to move ahead on more effectively on resolving key issues in the sessions.

We would recommend that agenda items, such as the multi-stakeholder dialogue (see further comment on the role of Major Groups), be given stronger emphasis and allocated more time in the sessions.

(B.2) Please describe the UNFF's performance and list its key achievements in implementing its principal functions, as stated in ECOSOC resolutions 2000/35 and 2006/49:

While the UNFF has undertaken a multi-year programme of work since the non-legally binding instrument on forests was agreed, we find it very difficult to isolate out the key achievements of the UNFF in relation to the principal functions stated in ECOSOC resolutions 2000/35 and 2006/49. In part this is due to the fragmented nature of international forestry governance – such that it is hard to ascribe particular outcomes to the actions of one organisation. We are aware of the extensive work that the UNFF has done in promoting forestry during the International Year of Forests and the work that it has undertaken (in conjunction with the FAO) on running pilot implementation projects on the non-legally binding agreement in some countries. But it is also clear that there are significant contributions to these outcomes from activities in relation to REDD-readiness in the climate change arena, and country level and regional level projects through the ITTO and FAO.

(B.3) Please provide your view on the future options for the UNFF:

As noted above in our answer to question A1, New Zealand does not have a preference for any of the options proposed for the IAF and would prefer to wait until the appointed consultants have undertaken their work so as to have credible and solid information on

which to base any preference. Obviously the choice of preferred option for the IAF will have an impact and bearing on future options for the UNFF. That said, we consider that a priority for any future governance body is that it will be structured to effectively fulfil the objectives set for it.

(B.4) Please describe the potential roles for UNFF in implementing the UN post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs:

The precise nature of the UN post-2015 development agenda and SDGs is yet to be decided, and given we do not know how forests will be reflected in these development goals we find it difficult to recommend a specific role for the UNFF in the process at this stage. The current mandate of the UNFF is to give forest policy advice. In that sense, it has a mandate (along with other international entities with responsibility for forests through the CPF) to provide advice on both the suitability and feasibility of a specific sustainable development goal for forests, and once the SDGs are agreed, providing advice on the key policy implications for global forest objectives in the post-2015 development agenda. Irrespective of how forests and forestry are dealt with in the SDGs we would see a key future role for the UNFF as the global forum for dialogue and direction on how forests and forestry continue to be integrated as a part of international development agendas.

(B.5) Please describe the role and impact of Country-Led Initiatives and ad hoc expert groups in the work of the UNFF:

We would firstly note that country led initiatives (CLI) and ad hoc expert groups (AHEG) have very different functions and roles in the context of the UNFF, and they should not be conflated together.

We consider CLIs a useful mechanism for the UNFF particularly in the context of the operational and financial difficulties that the UNFF has faced. They have allowed discussions on particular issues or topics to be advanced. The resulting papers/conclusions have provided useful insights. We are conscious that CLIs are a form of earmarked funding for particular projects and that this means that the most urgent or important issues are not necessarily addressed. Given the importance of the CLIs to advance work in the face of limited resources, we do have some concerns that the UNFF9 guidelines on CLIs have had a dampening effect.

Ad hoc expert groups (AHEG) have been well utilised in the UNFF to deal with the more difficult issues and to allow for more in-depth and robust discussion of these issues. New Zealand has actively participated in the AHEG on forest financing over recent years and will participate in the AHEG on the review of the IAF. They provide useful in-depth information (including through the contributions from NGOs, consultants and other interest and community organisations) and the reports produced are generally of high quality. If there is a weakness in the AHEG process it is that the work and the outputs of these AHEGs and the discussions they generate have not necessarily been effectively brought back into the UNFF session debates.

(B.6) Please indicate how effective you consider the engagement of major groups in the work of the UNFF and provide suggestions in their further engagement:

We consider the involvement of major groups an important part of the UNFF. New Zealand is concerned by the declining interest from some of the major groups in the work of the UNFF over a period of time, particularly the private sector. This was particularly noticeable at the last UNFF, where the theme was economic development. Major groups can play a key role and represent perspectives of important parts of society; therefore they should be encouraged to engage effectively with other UNFF members on forest issues. It would be useful to ascertain from the groups themselves the reasons they are not attending and related to that, what impact they believe their engagement has.

Consideration also needs to be given to how input by major groups and stakeholders is integrated into the UNFF sessions. For example, the panel discussion held at the last UNFF did not draw a large audience and came across as a side event rather than a serious input that would inform policy development.

(B.7) Please explain the role and impact of the International Year of Forests and the International Day of Forests in promoting greater awareness and strengthening the political and public commitment for forests:

The activities promoting forests for the International Year of Forests were useful in raising awareness about the importance of forests. It is difficult for New Zealand to assess the actual impact particularly in terms of either political or public commitment for forests. We have not seen any evaluation of the activities undertaken during the International Year of Forests and thus any evidence based assessment of the effect that these activities have. We are aware of the incidental reporting from individual countries that they found the activities helpful. Our perception is that the International Year of Forests has not made much difference to the how forests and their importance (or not) are considered within the UN system compared to other sectors or other issues. Going forward, we would emphasise the need to find ways to enduring political/public commitment for forests.

The NLBI and the GOFs

(C.1) Please indicate progress in the implementation of the forest instrument – adequate, inadequate or not sure.

It is unclear to New Zealand precisely how far we have come in implementing the forest instrument in its entirety either globally or nationally.

It would have been useful to have a more comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the NLBI at the global level in the papers of the last UNFF session, which summed up the country reports, but did not give a picture of whether the forest instrument is being implemented well overall or where there are gaps generally.

(C.2) Please provide suggestions on how to improve progress:

No comment.

(C.3) Please indicate progress in achieving the GOFs — adequate, inadequate or not sure.

On the basis of other information, most notably the work of the FAO on the global forest resource assessment and material supplied by C&I processes, it would appear that we are making some progress towards achieving the Global Objectives on Forests contained in the forest instrument but not enough and certainly not enough given some of the challenges that are facing forests into the future.

(C.4) Please provide suggestions on how to improve progress:

Achieving greater progress towards the Global Objectives on Forests has been the source of much discussion and debate at not just the UNFF but also at other international forestry meetings. We have available a wealth of decisions emanating from these bodies and a reasonable sense of what is necessary – land tenure reform and certainty, levelling the playing field in terms of economic incentives for different types of land use, eliminating illegal logging etc. And yet the evidence would suggest that we are either not making progress, or not making progress fast enough. It is one of the issues that needs to be considered as part of the independent evaluation of the IAF and underpins the discussion about the utility of a legally binding instrument for forests.

(C.5) Please explain how implementation of the forest instrument has contributed to the implementation of forest-related international conventions, and vice versa:

We are unable to provide this assessment. The overlapping and fragmented nature of the international forestry regime makes it difficult to isolate the implementation of the forest instrument from the implementation of other forest-related international conventions. For New Zealand, all of these instruments are consistent with current domestic policy settings for forests and forest related activities.

(C.6) Please describe how the forest instrument and the GOFs can contribute to the post-2015 UN development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals:

We think that making progress in sustainable management of forests will remain an important part of sustainable development efforts regardless of what is agreed for the SDGs and in post-2015 development agenda.

As noted under question B.4 the precise nature of the post-2015 development agenda is still under discussion. However given the importance of forests, their role in cross-sectoral approaches and contribution to development efforts more generally (for example including for food security, sustainable development, poverty reduction, climate change mitigation/adaptation), the principles and goals set out in the NLBI will continue to be highly relevant to the future direction of sustainable development

The UNFF Secretariat

(D.1) Please indicate if you consider the structure, human and financial resources of the compact Secretariat of the UNFF adequate to fulfil its mandates – adequate, inadequate or not sure.

New Zealand considers that the financial and human resources of the Secretariat appear to be inadequate for it to carry out much of the work requested, including funds which may be required to support the inter-sessional work of the forum.

We would also note that Members have not had the benefit of detailed reports on the function and resources of the UNFF Secretariat during UNFF sessions despite requests for these reports. It has been therefore difficult for delegates to the UNFF (as opposed to New York based country representatives) to have a discussion on the resourcing of the Secretariat. Providing such reports to the forum, for example during inter-sessional times, would be useful to help member countries better understand key actions or constraints in the activities undertaken and make well informed decisions on the future needs of the UNFF Secretariat. In other organisations such as, for example, the ITTO there is a Committee on Finance and Administration that provides such oversight and allows for a conversation about priorities.

(D.2) Please provide suggestion(s) on strengthening the Secretariat of the Forum to enable it to fulfill its functions more effectively:

The need for future resourcing and strengthening of the UNFF Secretariat will likely be determined by the outcome of the review of the IAF over the next two years, and options for the future of the UNFF post-2015. Until we have a better indication of the direction for the UNFF as a result of this process and therefore the scope of the Secretariat's functions in the future, it is difficult to comment in great detail on how it can be strengthened.

As noted above, improved transparency and reporting of the budgeting and work planning processes of a future Secretariat, including allocation of trust fund resources will be an important component.

(D.3) Please provide suggestion(s) on how the Forum Secretariat's role, as a CPF member and as CPF secretariat, should be strengthened:

As noted above under D.1, more frequent and detailed reports on the role of the Secretariat, including in the running of the CPF, would be valuable. At this point we are not clear on the practical function of the UNFF Secretariat within the CPF, the exact activities undertaken in this capacity or resources allocated to certain activities. There is usually a report back of CPF activities at UNFF sessions and we are aware that the summary minutes of the CPF meetings are available on the CPF website (but are not notified to countries as such). However, this has not provided much insight. The actions of the CPF and its discussion can best be described as opaque.

The CPF and members

(E.1) Please explain the impacts and sufficiency of the programs and actions taken by CPF and CPF member organizations in implementing resolutions and supporting the work of the UNFF since its inception:

It is not possible to respond to this question. As noted in D.3, what little reporting is available does not provide much insight. The slightly different mandates and priorities of each of the CPF members combined with the general lack of funding for forestry activities, would suggest that the CPF has had very little impact on supporting the work of the UNFF since its inception.

(E.2) Please describe how the CPF and its member organizations can further contribute to the work of the UNFF, and how to ensure availability of necessary resources for its activities in support of the work of the Forum:

The idea of a collaborative partnership of all international organisations involved in forestry issues is a practical and sensible response to what is currently a fragmented international regime.

New Zealand has no comments to make at this time on how the CPF and its member organisations can further contribute to the work of the UNFF. The review on the international arrangement on forests has a mandate to discuss this matter. Obviously the choice of preferred option for the IAF will have an impact and bearing on the future and operations of the CPF.

Financing options and strategies

(F.1) Please provide views on financing options and strategies, including the creation of a voluntary Global Forest Fund, to generate resources from all sources for sustainable management of all types of forests and trees outside forests:

We acknowledge that there are currently gaps in financing for sustainable forest management, and the need for financial resources for implementation of SFM.

We do not support the creation of a voluntary global forest fund under the UNFF. This has been a strongly debated issue. Among other reasons, the UNFF is currently a non-legally binding policy agency and not set up for implementing a fund.

We maintain the view that financing forests under one fund or convention has not been feasible in the past - and there is nothing to suggest that a single fund would be any easier to create and sustain now at the international scale, especially given the constraints caused by a difficult global financial situation.

We consider that finding an effective means of boosting funding for SFM and implementing the NLBI will not be easy. "Corralling" forests under one fund or convention has always been elusive and we do not consider that a single fund would offer a simpler or more accessible source for the complex demands of SFM.

In our view the following consistent findings from ad-hoc expert group meetings are vital considerations in the discussion of a way forward for forest financing:

- more funding is required to implement SFM globally;
- there are a number of ways the policies agreed to by the UNFF can and have been funded and implemented by organisations and countries in the past;
- the main way SFM implementation has been financed to date has been via a “portfolio approach” i.e. a range of programmes and projects operated by CPF partners, overseas development assistance programmes, bilateral programmes other than ODA, and investment;

The future success of funding SFM will rely strongly on how well SFM concepts become a mainstream element of economic and political development and of community appreciation and thereby attract funds

(F.2) Please suggest concrete steps that UNFF, CPF members and other organizations should undertake to develop financing options:

As noted there is no simple solution to funding. We consider that the dialogue at the UNFF ad hoc expert group meetings on forest finance generated very good progress in understanding how funding pathways could be sustained and enhanced. We emphasise that a single fund will not assist in enhancing and refining the funding pathways.

These discussions showed that the value of dialogue among key players in the various steps in funding SFM. These include recipients, donors, bankers, fund administrators and country institutions. We would strongly favour a continuation dialogue among these to identify and resolve the structural, political and technical issues that hamper the mobilisation of both existing and new funding for SFM.