

8th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development

Summary of key points on “Forests”

One of the main outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, was the agreement by Member States to launch a process to develop a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

While Rio+20 did not elaborate specific goals, it was stated that the SDGs should be limited in number, aspirational and easy to communicate. These goals should address all three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced way. They should also be coherent with and integrated into the UN development agenda beyond 2015. A 30-member Open Working Group (OWG) of the General Assembly was established in January 2013 to prepare a proposal on the SDGs.

The eighth, and final, session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals took place in New York from 3 to 7 February 2014 and addressed forests, oceans and seas, and biodiversity, among other issues.

Regarding forests, Member States emphasized the contribution of forests to all three pillars of sustainable development. They stressed the need to increase awareness on the multiple benefits of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), to eradicate poverty, hunger, malnutrition of millions of people who depend directly or indirectly on forests resource on for their livelihoods and employment.

The importance of forests for energy and water supply, food and nutrition security, biodiversity and carbon sequestration were also highlighted. Science oriented policy making, with due consideration given to governance, traditional knowledge, as well as to the rights of indigenous peoples, and land tenure, were seen as fundamental aspects of SFM.

Member States emphasized the importance of forests and the need to combat threats they face, including: the need to protect and sustainably manage forests; the need to reverse the loss of forest cover and increase the number of protected areas; the importance of forest law enforcement, tenure rights and the rule of law in combating illegal logging; and the need to address the drivers of deforestation, both direct and indirect.

The OWG8 discussions also highlighted the need for integration of forests in the SDGs and a wide range of proposals were put forward in this regard. Some countries highlighted the need for integration without specifying the associated steps. Other countries suggested integrating forests in the SDGs through a cross-

cutting/landscape/ecosystem/lifestyle/renewable natural resources SDG (that includes forests). There were also proposals for setting up specific targets on forests which could be integrated under any eventual SDG. Many countries emphasized that any new target on forests should be built on, supportive to, and reinforce, existing goals, objectives and targets such as the four Global Objectives on Forests and Aichi Targets.

The role played by UN Forum on Forests in the promotion of SFM was highlighted, as well as its many accomplishments, such as the recognition of multiple benefits of all types of forests and trees outside forests, the adoption of the Forest Instrument and the Global Objectives on Forests, and the Forum's role in addressing forest-related issues in a holistic and integrated manner, among others. Moreover, the importance of the decisions to be made at the upcoming eleventh session of the UNFF (UNFF11) and current review process of the international arrangement on forests (IAF) was also emphasized. Several countries called for the SDG process to coordinate with the UNFF review of the IAF when it addresses forests.

A number of Member States stressed the need for international cooperation and means of implementation for SFM, particularly with regards to transfer of technology, capacity building and financing. There were calls for a multi-sectorial enabling environment so as to bring together public and private sources of forest financing, as well as for the creation of a Global Forest Fund.

Finally, countries spoke of the need to integrate implementation of SFM across sectors, so as to enhance the contributions of forests to human well-being and help combat the threats that forests face every day. It was noted that the various entities that deal with forests within national and subnational governments, such as authorities in charge of water, biodiversity, land use, among others, should better coordinate their efforts with a view to promote a true sustainable management of forests.

More information on the Eighth Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals can be found at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1680>