

United Nations Forum on Forests
First Meeting of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the
International Arrangement on Forests
Agenda Item 4: Progress Report by Mr. Hans Hoogeveen,
IAF Independent Assessment Team Co-Facilitator
Monday 24 February 2014

Overview: Independent Assessment of the IAF

- The mandate to carry out an independent assessment originated in Resolution 2 of UNFF10. According to this resolution, the Independent Assessment is a critical input which complements other relevant inputs to the AHEG.
- The objective of the Independent Assessment of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) is to assist and inform the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the IAF (AHEG) in preparing for the eleventh session of the UNFF (UNFF11).
- The Assessment is to analyze the achievements, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the IAF since 2000. It is also to assess the impact of the UNFF's work and the sustainability of actions and makes recommendations to the AHEG for a future arrangement.
- The terms of reference for the assessment were finalized by the Bureau in June 2013. These terms of reference include the scope of and framework for the assessment, its objectives, the deliverables and a substantive context for the work of the consultants and the co-facilitators.
- The IAF Team should provide input on the following elements which I summarize for brevity reasons:
- The Independent Assessment Team is comprised of five consultants, one each from the UN geographic regions, and two Co-Facilitators, one from the North, one from the South, appointed by the UNFF11 Bureau to act on its behalf to facilitate the consultants to consolidate their inputs to the report, and to facilitate the production of a single consolidated report for submission to the AHEG.
- The five consultants are: Juergen Blaser, Switzerland, from the Western European and Others Group; Mafa Evaristus Chipeta, Malawi, from the African Group; Maxim Lobovikov, Russian Federation, from the Eastern European Group; Jorge Illueca, Panama, from the Latin American and Caribbean Group; and Ricardo Martinez Umali, the Philippines, from the Asia-Pacific Group. Ambassador Saiful Abdullah, Malaysia, from the South, and I co-facilitate the work of the consultants.

- The Team aims to provide an evidence-based analysis of the achievements with regard to the objectives, strengths and shortcomings of the past and current work within the framework of the IAF.
- The IAF team will base its findings, conclusions and recommendations on evidence collected through a combination of tools and information sources. The assessment will be based on mixed methods of inquiry both qualitative and quantitative, which enable the team to acquire an in-depth understanding of results, user groups and implementation dynamics, while getting a sense of representativeness regarding outputs and outcome by the IAF. The IAF team will review documents and collect facts and opinions from countries and a sample of relevant stakeholders, seeking to acquire from UNFF partners.
- The IAF team will do its work in three phases:
 - The *inception phase*, ending with the inception report, consisting of developing a common understanding amongst team members of the issues relating to its tasks and of gathering more in-depth data and information regarding various aspects of the work of the IAF through background research, in order to scope the review work more accurately (October 2013 - January 2014);
 - The *inquiry phase* immediately following the inception phase, which will include reviewing the past performance of the UNFF and its processes since 2000, including ad hoc expert groups, regional and
 - The *conclusion and recommendation phase*, which will start after AHEG 1 and include assembling findings, preliminary conclusions and recommendations. This phase includes the assessment of full range of options, including a legally binding instrument on all types of forests, strengthening of the current arrangement, continuation of the current arrangement, as well as financing SFM at national, regional and global level. The IAF team sees it as a challenge to come forward with creative and innovative options and approaches. The final report shall be delivered to the UNFF 11 Bureau latest by mid September 2014.
- The IAF team will work through a matrix approach, under which each regional consultant works on inputs from his particular region as well on a main theme. A safety feature is also taken into consideration: to have each thematic topic lead by one consultant, and in each case to also designate an 'alternate'. The main themes are: reviewing UNFF and its processes since year 2000; assessment of the forest instrument; Forum's Secretariat and review of CPF; review of financing, full range of financing options and strategies; the UNFF in the context of UN Sustainable Development framework/Intersectoral context. The IAF team will consider a full range of options on all thematic topics.

- The final report of the Independent Assessment will be prepared prior to the second meeting of the AHEG and will be presented as an input to AHEG, which will then review the report along with other inputs.
- Against this background, allow me to highlight some progress on the work of the Independent Assessment. The IAF Team formally began its work in conjunction with the UNFF Facilitative Dialogue Workshop on the IAF, which was held in Vienna, Austria, in October 2013. The IAF Team joined the UNFF11 Bureau meeting in Vienna and received guidance from the Bureau on its work. The Team also participated actively in the discussions and deliberations of the Vienna workshop on the IAF.
- This workshop was extremely useful in informing the participants on the main intersessional activities of the IAF, as agreed by UNFF10, the key milestones of the process and their timelines.
- The discussion was also very enlightening, especially in regard to the interlinkages of the IAF with the deliberations on the SDG and post-2015 development agenda.
- The Vienna workshop helped the IAF Team to develop a common understanding amongst its members on the issues relating to its task, to agree on a division of work, to establish a clear communication network amongst themselves and to develop a concrete workplan for preparation and finalization of the IAF independent assessment.
- In Vienna, the IAF Team also discussed how to gather more in-depth data and information regarding various aspects of the work of the IAF in order to scope the review work more accurately.
- After the Vienna workshop, the consultants also participated in a number of forest-related international meetings and met with various stakeholders. They used every single opportunity to talk and to collect views on the issues that are relevant to their terms of reference.
- I will now turn to Ambassador Abdullah, my fellow co-facilitator, to inform you about the rest of the progress in the work of the IAF Team.

**Progress Report by Ambassador Saiful Abdullah
IAF Independent Assessment Team Co-Facilitator**

- As my colleague Mr. Hoogeveen highlighted, the task before the IAF Team is overwhelming and daunting in terms of the sheer amount of information and complexity of issues to be assessed. However, despite its challenging task, the Team has made tireless efforts over the past four months and has made firm progress to date.
- The second series of meetings of the IAF Team were organized from 7 to 11 January 2014 in New York.
- These meetings were held in conjunction with the seventh session of the Open Working Group (OWG7) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This provided the IAF Team with ample opportunity to meet and discuss issues related to the IAF independent assessment with many of the participants in the OWG7.
- On the margins of the OWG7, the Team met with representatives of several countries. The Independent Assessment Team also conducted a series of interviews with Member States and various stakeholders.
- The IAF Team also met with the UNFF Major Group Focal Points, who were also meeting amongst themselves during that period in New York.
- The Team also met with: Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs; Mr. Thomas Gass, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA); Mr. Ivan Koulov, Executive Officer in UN DESA; and the UNFF Secretariat staff.
- The Team also conducted interviews with a number of CPF member organizations, including the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the World Bank.
- In these meetings, the Team asked a range of questions aimed at assessing the effectiveness and success of the IAF, including achievements, constraints and shortcomings of the current arrangement and how to address them in the future IAF.
- The IAF Team also received the views and proposals of countries and stakeholders on the IAF that were provided in response to the survey prepared by the UNFF Secretariat.
- These views were particularly helpful for the IAF Team to better understand and capture the issues of interest to countries and other stakeholders, particularly for the development of the assessment framework.

The way forward

- All members of the Team are working very hard and as a team across five time zones. Based on current progress, we are confident that the Team will deliver the result on time.
- All members of the IAF Team are present in AHEG1 and will be part of all interactions and discussions amongst experts on different elements of the programme of work of AHEG1.
- AHEG1 is the last opportunity for the IAF Team to listen to your views on the issues related to their terms of reference, as they have to submit their final output well in advance of the second meeting of the AHEG.
- In addition to the engagement of the IAF Team in all deliberations for AHEG1, each team member will also meet with the representatives from his respective region to gather further information related to their work.
- During this week, the IAF Team will also interview with a number of other CPF member organizations.
- The IAF Team will still be in the information collection phase until after AHEG1. Immediately following the conclusion of the first meeting of the AHEG, the Team will start to begin preliminary analysis by assembling their findings and developing initial conclusions.
- The final report of the IAF Team shall be submitted by mid-September 2014. During the period between now and mid-September, the IAF Team will hold a number of meetings among themselves and will consult closely with the UNFF11 Bureau.
- The IAF Team stands ready to respond to any question, and I would like to invite all participants to contact the Team if you have any views regarding the issues related to their work.
