

## UNFF17 Highlights Wednesday, 11 May 2022

The 17<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF17) spent its third day in informal consultations discussing the provisions of the draft omnibus resolution proposed by the UNFF Bureau.

### **Informal consultation on draft omnibus resolution**

The draft resolution featured sections on:

- Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF);
- Means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network;
- Monitoring, assessment, and reporting; and
- Preparations for the midterm review (MTR) in 2024 of the effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF).

An annex detailed proposed actions in preparation for the MTR prepared by an expert group convened in 2021.

Differing views on the inclusion of references to the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) such as the three Rio Conventions dominated the discussion. Several delegations noted the fact that many members of the Forum have not endorsed the Declaration and voiced caution about picking and choosing elements of the Declaration for inclusion in this resolution. Others stressed that the Declaration has galvanized international attention to forests and as such warrants citing in the resolution to raise ambition. Still others expressed flexibility on this issue, with several options presented to find a compromise on the inclusion of a reference to the Declaration and MEAs.

References to "national circumstances" were also divisive, with some delegates concerned that such references were not line with Global Forest Goal 1 (GFG-1, reverse the loss of forest cover). Others emphasized the need to acknowledge challenges faced by developing countries, particularly due to the pandemic.

Concerning references to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, several delegates emphasized the need to look forward to post-pandemic recovery, rather than continuing to conduct assessments on the impact of the pandemic on the forest sector.

A proposal to include language on Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women and girls in this section enjoyed broad support.

Different perspectives emerged in the discussion about the roles of international public finance, and private and philanthropic sources of financing. Certain delegates emphasized the need for stronger language on the obligation to mobilize additional and new resources, particularly for developing countries, to implement GFGs, while others stressed that financing should

come from all sources, including domestic finances. Proposals were also introduced to include language on innovative financial mechanisms such as payment for environmental services, but several delegates opposed this reference.

Regarding the proposed changes to the national reporting format, some delegates sought to have the Secretariat bring the proposals to the Forum for approval before initiating a pilot phase. One sought to explicitly link the global core set of indicators to the new format to encourage greater use of the indicators.

On a proposed global workshop on reporting on progress towards the GFGs and targets, one delegation sought to make it subject to voluntary funding. Several others emphasized the need to ensure "geographic balance" in workshop participation.

Discussion on the section regarding preparations for the MTR focused on the need to support developing country participation in preparations for the MTR and ensure the transparency and independence of the review. Delegates proposed amendments to the annex to strengthen interlinkages between the UNFF and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. They also discussed whether to reference all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or just "forest-related" SDGs. One delegate noted that a recent report showed that forests and sustainable forest management have an impact on most of the SDGs.

### **In the Corridors**

Transparency was an important theme of the day, as Wednesday's session started with an intervention by an informal caucus, supported by a regional grouping of countries, objecting to the closed nature of the UNFF's "informal consultations" on the draft omnibus resolution, particularly its exclusion of the CPF, which is referenced several times in the draft resolution. They proposed that CPF be allowed to sit in as observers. After a brief consultation, the Bureau agreed to permit CPF representatives into the room.

While the decision to include the CPF was welcomed by delegates and the CPF, Major Groups were still excluded from the informal consultations. In the coffee shop beyond the closed doors of Conference Room 4, the representative of a regional organization remarked. "I'm not surprised, though. They keep saying they want us as partners and want us to actively promote implementation of the UNSPF, but in practice do little to actually involve us." During the discussions on the MTR, several delegates strongly underscored the importance of engaging relevant stakeholders such as the CPF and Major Groups in a transparent and open manner. It remains to be seen whether the final omnibus resolution and the MTR will answer this call for transparency, openness and accountability.