

Summary Record of the Meeting of the CPF Advisory Group on Finance (AGF)
UN Headquarters
New York
18 December 2007

At the request of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat, a number of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) members with interest in the finance for sustainable forest management (SFM) issue participated in a meeting on 18 December 2007 to discuss preparations for this issue and the lead-up to UNFF8. On 17 December the UN General Assembly had celebrated a high level special event commemorating the adoption of the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (NLBI). Several speakers at this historic event again highlighted the importance of the finance issue in the implementation of the NLBI. UNFF7 had also recognized this, and decided to convene an Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) meeting to develop proposals for the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework prior to UNFF8, in order for UNFF8 to consider this matter.

The Director, Mr. Pekka Patosaari, hosted the CPF Advisory Group on Finance (CPF AGF) meeting and introduced the agenda. Key agenda items included a (i) briefing on the proposed Country-led Initiative (CLI) on finance, and (ii) update on the preparations for the UNFF Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) on finance.

The CPF members present included Mr. Michael Martin and Ms. Tiina Vahanen of FAO, Mr. Gerhard Dieterle of the World Bank, and Mr. Mark Zimsky of the GEF Secretariat. Ms. Maria Sanz-Sanchez of the UNFCCC Secretariat joined by telephone. It was understood that despite the intention to participate in the meeting, the ITTO representative could not attend the meeting due to unavoidable circumstances. The UNFF Secretariat contingent included Ms. Ghazal Badiozamani, Mr. Peter Csoka, Mr. Mahendra Joshi and Mr. Ralph Schmidt. Ms. Stephanie Caswell of the US State Department and Mr. Hans Hoogeveen of the Netherlands led their respective teams during the first agenda item of the meeting. Ms. Kathy Carr from the US State Department participated in the meeting for most of the time. Members of the UNFF8 Bureau, namely Mr. Boen Purnama, Mr. Arvids Ozols, Mr. Abdellah Benmellouk and Mr. Glen Kile also participated in the meeting.

This first item considered the Governments of the USA and Netherlands presentation of plans for the CLI on finance. The sponsors envisage this meeting as a more informal setting where leading experts on the issues can discuss and develop a better technical understanding of the fundamentals that will underlie the decisions. Although no definite decision was taken, there was a suggestion of holding this meeting around September 2008, before convening the meeting of the AHEG. The sponsors expressed every interest in working in close consultation with the UNFF Secretariat and the CPF AGF members present at this meeting on the preparation and conduct of the CLI. However, they also conveyed that the countries involved will take an active role in this.

After an introduction from the Director, the UNFF Secretariat participants presented an overview of the preparatory work on finance issues that will be necessary over the coming 16 months. In summary, UNFF7 mandated an Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on finance to be held before the UNFF8 discussion of the issue. The Secretariat would have to prepare official documents (e.g., Reports/Notes by the Secretary-General and/or Secretariat) on the issues to facilitate discussions and decisions. These documents need to be finalized a minimum of 10 weeks before the meetings. UNFF8 will commence 20 April 2009. Considering several logistical matters, including conference service facilities, it was suggested that the AHEG meeting might take place in December 2008. However this matter is within the Bureau's purview, which is expected to take a decision on this soon. Nevertheless, it was realized that time is very limited and that preparations for the documents needed to begin immediately.

The UNFF Secretariat briefed the meeting that it has already taken several actions for the planning for the AHEG by mobilizing the necessary technical staff and resources. Everyone involved realizes that this is a complex, politically sensitive and controversial subject.

The Secretariat proposed to work in very close cooperation with the CPF AGF members (including ITTO and the UNFCCC Secretariat) on preparing documents and conducting the AHEG meeting. The CPF AGF participants expressed their readiness to proceed with the work in this way. Accordingly, it was agreed that the AGF members would support the Secretariat in its preparation of documents by contributing their technical expertise, relevant information and experiences. Due to substantive programmes of CPF members in aspects of financing forest projects and programmes in countries, the CPF AGF constitutes an excellent source of information and expertise in the matter.

There was a considerable preliminary discussion of the technical issues involved. This included presentation of a preliminary list of important intergovernmental references on forest finance issues, which clearly shows that a significant body of work on this already exists. The UNFCCC participant briefed the meeting on developments regarding forests at the recent COP-13 held in Bali. There was also discussion of a suggestion to analyze the national and international measures, specified in the NLBI, as the building blocks for identifying areas for which financing mechanisms/approach/framework should be considered. Such an analysis could contribute to the background paper or papers to be prepared for the AHEG.

It was agreed that the Secretariat will develop and share a draft outline for the AHEG document as a next step. It was decided to explore the possibility of dedicating some time (possible an extra day) during the planned CPF strategy meeting, to be held in Nairobi in February 2008, for the AGF to discuss this and further work on the paper. In the meantime, the AGF members would provide to the Secretariat information on their respective programme activities relevant to the financing for SFM.

The Director of the Secretariat thanked all participants for their extremely helpful and cooperative approach to the preparations for the AHEG meeting on finance.