



The United Nations Forum on Forests: the history

Twenty two years ago the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) the forest issue was among the most controversial, polarizing developing and developed countries.

Since UNCED, significant progress has been made. In the last decade, the main focus within the United Nations has been to develop coherent policies to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.



the history continues.....

In October 2000, ECOSOC, through Resolution E/2000/35, established the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) as a subsidiary body with the main objective of promoting the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

In complimenting the ECOSOC Resolution, there is a further need that the international arrangement on forests need to support and enhance the contribution of forests in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the JPOI, particularly with respect to poverty eradication and environmental sustainability.

The UNFF succeeded a five-year period (1995 to 2000) of forest policy dialogue facilitated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF).

The NLBI

The purpose of the NLBI is:

- (a) To strengthen political commitment and action at all



Achievements of the UNFF

The UNFF is the only global forum for comprehensive intergovernmental policy deliberation.

Plays an important role in increasing the contribution of forests towards the achievement of internationally agreed development targets;

Encourage and assist countries, especially developing countries, to develop and implement strategies to conserve and restore forests and degraded lands;

Encourage interaction between the Forum and regional organizations to facilitate cooperation and the implementation of sustainable forest management and to contribute to the work of the Forum;

Over the years, the Forum has played a major role in the development of partnerships and has assisted with the creation of dialogue platform.



Raising awareness

Role of Country Led Initiatives-allowing for in depth discussions on various important issues. A total of 30 CLIs arranged from 2000;

Acknowledging the important role of Major Groups, through the creation of the multi-stakeholder dialogue, a regular feature of the UNFF sessions;

Multi Partner Dialogues provides an opportunity for discussions between member States and Major Groups on issues relevant to UNFF sessions.

Important dates and raising the awareness

2011, the International Year of Forests played an important role in raising the awareness on the value of forests and assisted in the promotion of forest conservation, the creation of rehabilitation strategies, the increase of area of forests under sustainable management and the reduction of forest degradation and the loss of forest cover.

21 March International Day of Forests-important milestone in raising the international profile of forests;





Reaching the objectives

Taking the GO into consideration, the Forum has managed to assist with a significant decrease in deforestation in the last decade-need to capitalise on this by ensuring that the forestry profile is afforded the necessary political profile in the post 2015 development agenda;

UNFF has over the years incrementally elevated the role and contribution of forests-in this respect one need to look at the 3 Rio Conventions;

Forests provide subsistence income to approximately 350 million people living in or close to forests;

Close to 1.6 million people depend on forests for their livelihood.

Forestry industry employs approximately 1 million people

NLBI impacting on the profile of forests?



Despite progress, the 2007-2015 MYPOW needs urgent revision- the deforestation and forest degradation remains a serious problem for many countries;

Contribution of forests still low on political agenda-is this because of the NLBI or because forests are often being part of a bigger portfolio?

Recognising the value of forests to increase financial contribution of forests at a national level;

Does the NLB status of the UNFF influence access international financial mechanisms?

NLBI impacting on the profile of forests?

Access for all to the GEF?

GEF 6 explicitly incorporated climate change mitigation and will be providing a separate funding envelope of specific donor support. What about LFCCs?

Forests are long term investments and the contribution of forests to the national budget not fully reflected, leading to an under evaluation of the contribution and value of forests as well as financial resources being made available for this sector ;

Global or regional forest fund?





Crystal Ball

We all agree that forests need to become politically more relevant if we want to reap the benefits- especially in developing countries;

Does this translate into changing the status of the NLBI or leaving it to counties to improve the status of forests at a national level?

How does the membership of the three Rio Conventions which are all legally binding instruments, impact on the NLBI?



The Crystal Ball: Looking to the future

Before looking towards 2015 and the UN development agenda we need to go back to Agenda 21, the Rio principles, especially CBDR as well as the JPOI before agreeing on anything new;

The integration of forests in the post 2015 development agenda in the context of the current legal status of the Forum or move on;

The four Global objectives on forests can be used as a basis for the formulation of a SDG on forests (as a first priority);

Devils advocate

If the SDGs are meant to be taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development (CBDR) , how would universally fit into the picture?

The availability of resources ?



