

RESUMED SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF 2000

2000/35. Report on the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its decision 1995/226 of 1 June 1995, approving the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended Intergovernmental Panel on Forests to pursue consensus and to formulate coordinated proposals for action towards the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests,

Recalling also its resolution 1997/65 of 25 July 1997, approving the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended Intergovernmental Forum on Forests to continue the intergovernmental policy dialogue on forests and to promote and facilitate the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests,

Taking into account decision 8/2 adopted on 5 May 2000 by the Commission on Sustainable Development,¹²⁰ in which the Commission welcomed the report of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests on its fourth session¹²¹ and endorsed the conclusions and proposals for action contained therein, in particular regarding an international arrangement on forests,

1. *Decides* that the main objective of the international arrangement on forests is to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end. The purpose of such an international arrangement is to promote the implementation of internationally agreed actions on forests, at the national, regional and global levels, to provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global framework for policy implementation, coordination and development, and to carry out principal functions, based on the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,¹²² the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (Forest Principles),¹²³ chapter 11 of Agenda 21¹²⁴ and the outcomes of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests process, in a manner consistent with and complementary to existing international legally binding instruments relevant to forests;

2. *Also decides* that, to achieve the objective, the international arrangement on forests shall perform the following principal functions:

(a) Facilitate and promote the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action as well as other actions which may be agreed upon, including through national forest programmes and other integrated programmes relevant to forests, catalyse, mobilize and generate financial resources, and mobilize and channel technical and scientific resources to this end, including by taking steps towards the broadening and development of mechanisms and/or further initiatives to enhance international cooperation;

(b) Provide a forum for continued policy development and dialogue among Governments, which would involve international organizations and other interested parties, including major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, to foster a common understanding on sustainable forest management and to address forest-related issues and emerging areas of priority concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner;

(c) Enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues among relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, as well as contribute to synergies among them, including coordination among donors;

(d) Foster international cooperation, including North-South and public-private partnerships, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation at the national, regional and global levels;

(e) Monitor and assess progress at the national, regional and global levels through reporting by Governments, as well as by international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, and on this basis consider future actions needed;

(f) Strengthen political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests through ministerial engagement, the development of ways to liaise with the governing bodies of international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, and the promotion of action-oriented dialogue and policy formulation related to forests;

3. *Further decides*, in order to achieve the objective and to carry out the functions outlined above:

(a) To establish an intergovernmental body called the United Nations Forum on Forests;

(b) To invite the executive heads of relevant organizations of the United Nations system and heads of other relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments to form a collaborative partnership on forests to support the work of the Forum and to enhance cooperation and

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, Supplement No. 9 (E/2000/29), chap. I, sect. B.

¹²¹ E/CN.17/2000/14.

¹²² *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex I.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, annex III.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, annex II.

coordination among participants, and to call upon their governing bodies and their heads to support the activities of the collaborative partnership on forests to achieve the goals of the Forum;

(c) That the Forum shall, inter alia:

(i) Within five years, on the basis of the assessment referred to in paragraph 2 (e) above, consider, with a view to recommending to the Council, and through it to the General Assembly, the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests. This process could develop the financial provisions to implement any future agreed legal framework. The process could also consider recommendations made by the expert groups referred to in paragraph 4 (k) below on the establishment of mechanisms on finance, technology transfer and trade;

(ii) Take steps to devise approaches towards appropriate financial and technology transfer support to enable the implementation of sustainable forest management, as recommended under the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests process;

4. *Decides* to establish the Forum as a subsidiary body of the Council composed of all States Members of the United Nations and States members of the specialized agencies with full and equal participation, including voting rights, with the following working modalities:

(a) The Forum should be open to all States and should operate in a transparent and participatory manner. Relevant international and regional organizations, including regional economic integration organizations, institutions and instruments, as well as major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, should also be involved;

(b) The Forum shall operate under the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council, provided that this is not in contradiction with the present paragraph;

(c) The supplementary arrangements established by the Council for the Commission on Sustainable Development in Council decisions 1993/215 of 12 February 1993 and 1995/201 of 8 February 1995 shall also apply to the Forum. Within the rules of procedure, the work of the Forum should build upon the transparent and participatory practices established by the Commission, the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests;

(d) The Bureau of the Forum shall consist of one Chairperson and four Vice-Chairpersons, one of whom shall also act as Rapporteur, in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution;

(e) The Forum shall report to the Council and through it to the General Assembly;

(f) The Forum shall seek ways and means of strengthening synergies and coordination in policy development and implementation of forest-related activities, inter alia, by making the reports of its sessions available to relevant United Nations bodies and other international forest-related organizations, instruments and intergovernmental processes;

(g) The Forum shall work on the basis of a multi-year programme of work, drawing on the elements reflected in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Forest Principles, chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action;

(h) The Forum should maintain close links with the Commission on Sustainable Development, inter alia, through the convening of joint bureau meetings, taking particular account of the importance of ensuring the coherence of its activities with the broader sustainable development agenda carried out by the Commission;

(i) The Forum may hold its sessions at venues other than United Nations Headquarters in accordance with established United Nations rules and practices;

(j) The Forum shall initially meet once a year for a period of up to two weeks, subject to the review referred to below. The Forum shall hold a high-level ministerial segment for two to three days, as required. The high-level segment could include a one-day policy dialogue with the heads of organizations participating in the collaborative partnership on forests, as well as other forest-related international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments. The Forum should ensure the opportunity to receive and consider inputs from representatives of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, in particular through the organization of multi-stakeholder dialogues;

(k) The Forum may recommend, as appropriate, the convening of ad hoc expert groups of limited duration, involving experts from developed and developing countries, to provide scientific and technical advice as well as to consider mechanisms and strategies for the financing and transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and may encourage country-sponsored initiatives, such as international expert meetings;

5. *Recommends* that the General Assembly, taking into account its resolution 1798 (XVII) of 11 December 1962, make the necessary provisions so that travel expenses for one representative of each of those member States of the Forum that is also a member State of the Commission on Sustainable Development and is participating in a session of the Forum are paid from the regular budget of the United Nations;

6. *Invites* voluntary extrabudgetary contributions in support of the participation of representatives of developing countries that are not members of the Commission on Sustainable Development in sessions of the Forum and its subsidiary bodies;

7. *Decides* that the Forum shall:

(a) Hold a short organizational meeting, as soon as possible, for the purpose of electing its officers, determining the duration of their terms of office and considering all proposals and options on the location of the secretariat, in conjunction with four days of informal consultations regarding the draft multi-year programme of work;

(b) Hold its first substantive session in 2001 with the following provisional agenda:

1. Adoption of the multi-year programme of work.

2. Development of a plan of action for the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action, which will address financial provisions.

3. Initiation of the work of the Forum with the collaborative partnership on forests.

4. Provisional agenda, date and venue for the second substantive session of the Forum in 2002.

5. Proposed venues of future sessions of the Forum;

8. *Recommends* that the collaborative partnership on forests build on a high-level, informal group, such as the Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests,¹²⁵ which would receive guidance from the Forum, facilitate and promote coordinated and cooperative action, including joint programming and submission of coordinated proposals to their respective governing bodies, and facilitate donor coordination. Such a partnership would submit coordinated inputs and progress reports to the Forum, operate in an open, transparent and flexible manner, and undertake periodic reviews of its effectiveness;

9. *Also recommends* that the Forum complete its consideration of the issues noted in paragraph 3 (c) (ii) above as a matter of priority in the context of the multi-year programme of work;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to establish a compact secretariat, comprised of highly qualified staff, constituted in accordance with established rules and procedures of the United Nations and strengthened through staff from secretariats of international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, to support the work described above. The secretariat should service the Forum and support the

collaborative partnership on forests. It should also coordinate its activities with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development;

11. *Decides*, bearing in mind paragraph 10 above and unless otherwise decided at the intergovernmental level, that it would be preferable to have the secretariat located at United Nations Headquarters in New York. A recommendation for a final decision on this matter should be made at the first organizational meeting of the Forum, in early 2001, taking into consideration all proposals;

12. *Encourages* the executive heads of relevant organizations of the United Nations system and heads of other relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments to support the secretariat of the Forum, including by seconding staff, as done during the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests process;

13. *Recommends* that the funding for the functioning of the Forum and its secretariat be provided from the regular budget of the United Nations, within existing resources, resources of organizations participating in the partnership and extrabudgetary resources provided by interested donors. Specific modalities shall be determined by relevant bodies of the United Nations and the governing bodies of the other organizations concerned;

14. *Also recommends* that the General Assembly decide on the funding for the functioning of the Forum and its secretariat in accordance with the budget procedures established by the Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in proposing future United Nations programme budgets, to include provisions for the Forum and its secretariat;

16. *Calls upon* interested donor Governments, financial institutions and other organizations to make voluntary financial contributions to a trust fund to be established in order to facilitate, in particular, an early start of the work of the Forum and its secretariat;

17. *Decides* that the international arrangement on forests shall be dynamic and shall adapt to evolving conditions and that the effectiveness of this arrangement shall be reviewed in five years, and also decides that the five-year review of this arrangement shall also address the institutional framework of the Forum, including its position within the United Nations system;

18. *Also decides* that the establishment of the United Nations Forum on Forests shall not be construed as constituting a precedent.

¹²⁵ At present, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests is composed of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Center for International Forestry Research, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Tropical Timber Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Bank, and is chaired by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.