

Forest Cover

A Global Forest Coalition Newsletter on International Forest Policy

Issue no. 1: January 2001

About Forest Cover

Welcome to the first issue of Forest Cover, the newsletter of the Global Forest Coalition. This coalition was established by a group of NGOs and Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) to facilitate the informed participation of NGOs and IPOs in intergovernmental meetings related to forests. The Global Forest Coalition will also promote the implementation of the results of these intergovernmental meetings and coherence between the various instruments and institutions. Forest Cover will be published four times a year. It will feature reports on important intergovernmental meetings by different NGOs and IPOs and a calendar of future meetings. The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Global Forest Coalition, its founding members or the editors.

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A Dash for Cash

By Miguel Lovera, Coordinator, Global Forest Coalition

For a long time now, NGOs and IPOs have suspected that the main underlying interest around climate change was financial. On one hand, companies and governments don't want to give up to their vested interests. On the other, a new band of speculators gets ready to make big profits. The main stimulator for negotiators and lobbyists (including some NGOs and IPOs) was greed: get more from the crisis -- the planet can handle it!

These fears were confirmed in November at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Industrial countries' governments disregarded the acuteness of the crisis and tried to foster their petty vested interests over any reasonable chance of negotiating sensible policy to cope with the situation. Consulting firms and consultants, indifferent to reality, pushed various envelopes in order to get nuclear energy, fossil fuels and plantations accepted as the key solutions for climatic disturbances.

NGOs and IPOs, in objecting to these maneuvers, were seen by many to be "exaggerating" again. Yet the evidence speaks for itself. Consider the following quotation from a Weyerhaeuser executive: "What are some of the things that the industry is doing?...Weyerhaeuser currently has over 33 billion acres of timberlands in the United States, Canada, New Zealand and South

America.... we are planting almost a quarter of a million acres in Uruguay that has been bare ground, never populated by trees. God normally puts trees where they grow well, but in some places in the world he missed... you can grow a Loblolly Pine in Uruguay in two-thirds the time that it would reach maturity in the American south. So the economics there are very compelling, but there is a new carbon sink underway in Uruguay" (*statement by John W. Creighton, Jr., Senior Advisor, Retired President and CEO Emeritus, Weyerhaeuser Company, at Climate Change 1998.Session III: Strategy, Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Evanston, Ill.*).

Indigenous Peoples always have to bear the brunt of such schemes. "Modern" societies are now trumpeting how much carbon Indigenous Peoples` forests contain, while downplaying or misunderstanding the many other values of these forests and the peoples that rely on them. Indigenous Peoples, cultures and cosmovisions are on the verge of being reduced to mere carbon deposits. No wonder many of the IPO representatives attending the climate talks have been utterly offended.

Oh . . . another very smart move of the conservative gang consists of right-wing think-tanks warning that alerts about dangerous climate change by thousands of scientists (mainly from industrial nations) are pointless. They say that everything is OK, that the climate changes anyway and that's even good: who likes cold winters any way? This kind of madness, unfortunately, is standard issue with the staff of the new US government. Get your coats, folks!

So, what about us -- NGOs and IPOs? What's to be done? Who knows exactly? The logical thing now is to denounce attempts to minimize the seriousness of the situation and to try to steer public opinion towards rejecting current efforts at "climate profiteering". Equally, the public should be helped to identify the validity of genuine efforts, those based on rational social and

environmental rationality and not on misleading financial scams.

Disagreement over Forests Helps Derail Climate Talks

By Ian Fry, Pacific Bioweb, Australia

One of the main sticking points causing the climate talks at The Hague to founder last November was forestry. The issue was to what extent industrialized countries could get out of their obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by using trees and land to soak up and store carbon from the atmosphere. Should such activities replace greenhouse gas emission reductions or should they merely supplement them?

The Definition of "Forest"

One of the arenas where the battle was fought was the discussion over how to define forests. Most governments wanted to use the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) definition, which gives countries huge leeway in deciding how much of their land counts as "carbon-absorbing". On afforestation, reforestation and deforestation most Parties seemed comfortable with the IPCC definition, though the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) had concerns about perverse incentives created by the definition of deforestation that may allow a Party to clear a natural forest and then replant it and not get a debit from the emissions caused by the clearing.

The bloc of Southern countries gathered under the heading "G-77/China" argued that "carbon sink" activities should not be used as a justification for postponing other action on global warming. They also emphasized that countries should not be allowed to award themselves "windfall" credits for carbon naturally stored or accumulating in their forests and other carbon stocks.

The EU sought to include an additional principle about conserving and sustainably managing biological diversity -- a move which would have considerably weakened

earlier draft agreements which cited the need to be compatible with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

"Additional Activities"

In a desperate attempt to bring governments to agreement on the night before The Hague meeting was officially to close, Jan Pronk, the President of the talks, proposed that "additional activities" like cropland management and forest management be made eligible for carbon credits --a possibility which had been opened up by article 3.4 of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

Rough calculations by some NGOs in The Hague suggest that if the US receive substantial carbon credits with these additional activities. This would mean that they could account for a significant proportion of their commitment in the first commitment period under sinks. What they are basically wanting is a very broad definition of forest management so that any human-based activity could be included under this definition. In effect they could fly over all their forests and drop a few grains of fertilizer and call this forest management. They could simply buy a fire fighting aeroplane, calculate its range and say that all forests within that range are "managed". Subsequently any growth in the trees in these forests could be measured and the sequestered carbon accounted in their favour.

The EU and the G-77/China remained opposed. It became apparent, however, that some EU governments wanted to discuss how "additional activities" might be accounted for, and I suspect the EU may well not maintain its previous opposition to the inclusion of additional activities in what is called the "first commitment period" of the Kyoto Protocol.

Land and Forests under the Clean Development Mechanism

Governments are split over whether or not industrialized countries should be allowed to

claim credit for "carbon sink" projects they finance or undertake in the South using the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) posited by Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol.

The EU, China and AOSIS are opposed to the idea of allowing "sink" activities in the CDM, as are some African countries. But most of Latin America has joined the Umbrella Group in supporting sinks in the CDM. (A Colombian proposal for an accounting system that would grant temporary credits for "sinks" activities has softened Brazil's and Peru's original opposition.)

Jan Pronk, in his last-ditch effort to achieve agreement in The Hague, published a Note on the night before the talks were to end, which proposes that:

- Afforestation and reforestation be included under the CDM
- Preventing deforestation and land degradation are not included
- Article 3.3 definitions may need to be modified
- The issues of non-permanence, social and environmental effects, leakage, additionality and uncertainty need to be addressed
- Parties will establish a process under SBSTA to develop rules and modalities

Pronk's Note again seems to follow the language of the Umbrella Group. Pronk's proposal to include only afforestation and reforestation, not forest conservation, under the CDM -- an idea he appears to have picked up from Brazil -- creates dilemmas for some governments. Meanwhile, an earlier suggestion that "sinks" activities must be made compatible with other environmental conventions, as well as conventions relating to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, has disappeared from the most recent text of the negotiations' Co-Chairs.

Conclusion

Last-minute efforts to save The Hague negotiations, including the Note by President Pronk, did very little to resolve the land and forest issues at the heart of the disagreements. The simplicity of Pronk's language, in fact, probably helped inflame the issues further. It is now difficult to see how these issues will be resolved in a way that will suit all parties to the negotiations. When the talks resume, probably in July in Bonn, governments may need to limit their expectations of what they can get out of sinks activities.

Bonn Meeting Discusses Future of United Nations Forum on Forests

By Tom Griffiths, Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), UK

What should be the agenda for the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), a new organization which, on 12 February, officially replaces the eight-year-old, inertia-ridden Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF)?

That was the question at a meeting convened in Bonn on 27 November - 1 December 2000 by an eight-country initiative headquartered in Germany. The meeting was organized as a prelude to the UNFF's first session on 11-22 June 2001, at which the body's multi-year programme of work will be officially laid down. The UN itself has already set out the outlines of the agenda of the new organization, which is to be a subsidiary body to the UN's Economic and Social Council. According to a UN resolution, the UNFF is to join other organisations of the UN system and other international and regional organisations in:

- Making sure old IFF proposals for action are implemented
- Monitoring progress

- Providing a forum for discussing forest issues
- Helping coordinate forest policies and programmes
- Fostering North-South and public-private cooperation
- Strengthening political commitment to sustainable forest management.

Most non-government organizations (NGOs) at the Bonn meeting, fearful that the UNFF would follow the pattern of its predecessor, said that the UNFF should make bottom-up action on old proposals its main priority, backed by strong monitoring and reporting from governments, forest-related agencies and independent groups.

But many government participants saw continued policy dialogue as the main function of UNFF. They stressed that the UNFF should help harmonise criteria and indicators of forest change, as well as definitions for sustainable forest management. Japan and Germany said that FAO-supported national forest programs should play a central role.

NGOs' emphasis on responsible monitoring, moreover, while gaining support from more progressive government representatives like those of the UK and Australia, was objected to by other governments. Some participants also rejected NGO proposals for setting up a monitoring sub-committee to receive and review implementation reports, though no other innovative suggestions were put forward.

Brazil and African countries were keen that the UNFF channel new funds through an International Forest Fund. Southern participants also urged the UNFF to address trade issues. Russia and Canada, meanwhile, pointed out that the UN resolution which brought the UNFF into being calls for studies on a "legal framework" for a Forest Convention and proposed that such a

convention be on the agenda for ministerial-level meetings of the UNFF. But most participants remained opposed to a Forest Convention.

NGOs and indigenous people's organizations were not overjoyed at the Bonn meeting's outcome, but welcomed its attempt to ensure that many government, international agency, private sector, NGO and IPO points of view were represented. They also applauded the way that the draft discussion document which issued from the meeting captured the variety of concerns expressed.

It is unclear whether or how this document will influence the first UNFF session. But NGOs are already warning that the UNFF shows signs of merely following in the footsteps of the IFF, with its focus on dialogue and definitions rather than action.

Participating or "Enriching the Discussion?"

By Simone Lovera, Sobrevivencia/ Friends of the Earth-Paraguay

The resolution establishing the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) says that the organization "should ensure the opportunity to receive and consider inputs from representatives of major groups as identified in Agenda 21, in particular through the organisation of multi-stakeholder dialogues".

But will it be able to do this? No serious proposals were put forward by governments during the meeting in Bonn (see article above) which would make a genuinely participatory process possible. Without such proposals, the rigid UN rules which govern subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council like UNFF are likely to keep many potential voices out of the discussion.

The Bonn meeting's Nigerian co-chair said that NGOs would be allowed only to "enrich the discussion" at UNFF meetings, and participants were frequently reminded that all decisions will be taken by governments.

The attitude toward Indigenous Peoples' participation was even worse. NGOs were asked at one point to choose between their demands for Indigenous Peoples organizations' participation and their demands for the participation of major groups in general. During the night-long session of the drafting committee to compile the final report, an IPO representative was even personally insulted by the Nigerian diplomat.

Other governments also failed to show clear support for Indigenous and other forest people's participation in UNFF meetings. Despite clear progress in other UN fora, the foresters dominating UN forestry discussions still choose to neglect the basic right of Indigenous Peoples to participate in decision-making affecting their lands, as well as other human rights of Indigenous Peoples as laid down in the draft declaration of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, ILO Convention 169 and other human rights instruments.

Finally Forests ! – The CBD starts work on forest biodiversity

By Gudrun Henne, Greenpeace International, the Netherlands

Forest biodiversity will be the main theme for discussion and negotiations at the next meeting of the 179 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in April 2002. The sixth Conference of the Parties (COP 6) will decide on a forest work programme for 2002 - 2010. The current work programme on forests, adopted at the 4th Conference of the Parties (COP 4), focuses mainly on research and has made little contribution to long-term conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity.

But expectations are considerably higher for COP 6, where participants will "consider expanding the work programme from research to practical action". If it gets the support of NGOs and Indigenous Peoples, this move could mark a turnaround for the so far spineless international forest regime.

In order to help prepare for a science-based programme of work in 2002, the 5th Conference of the Parties (COP 5) established in May 2000 an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Forest Biodiversity. This group was set up at the urging of NGOs attending the meeting over the objections of Canada, Japan and others. Its job is to provide peer reviewed scientific and technical advice to the SBSTTA (Subsidiary Body of Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice), which in turn will recommend to the COP elements for a programme on forest biodiversity.

The technical experts group - the first of its kind in CBD history -- met for the first time from 27 November to 1 December 2000 in Montreal. Its next meeting will be from 23 to 26 April 2001 in Edinburgh. In line with the rules of procedure of the SBSTTA (Decision I/1 and IV/16), the group is supposed to consist of 15 experts nominated by governments, and should be regionally and gender balanced. Its mandate, as decided by COP 5 (Annex of Decision V/4), is:

- To review the status of, trends in, and major threats to, forest biodiversity.
- To identify information gaps.
- To suggest ways of conserving and sustainably using forest biodiversity and identify the relevant actors.
- To advise on the development and transfer of technologies and know-how regarding the assessment, planning, valuation, conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity.

The first meeting of the group was chaired by Ian Thompson, the expert from the host country, Canada. Other experts came from the UK, Mexico, Cuba, Japan, the EU, Poland, Estonia, Malaysia and Cameroon. Experts from India, Russia, China, Mozambique, Mali and Brazil as well as two indigenous experts were invited but did not attend. Reportedly, Canada, who hosted the meeting, provided funding only three weeks beforehand, which

made it difficult for some participants to sort out their visa arrangements in time. Attending as observers were CIFOR, the UNFF Secretariat, FAO, GEF, Greenpeace and IUCN. Participants had been selected by the Secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of the SBSTTA.

At its meeting, the group discussed a background paper by the CBD Secretariat and decided to produce two documents for consideration at the 7th meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 7) (12 - 16 November 2001):

- An elaboration and revision of the secretariat's background paper on status, trends and threats to forest biological diversity and information gaps. Work on the chapters of this paper is to be coordinated by experts in the group, with contributions due back to the Secretariat in January 2001. The document will then be posted on the Web for public review in February before going to the second experts group meeting in April for final revision.
- A 3-4 page summary of the background document's key points, together with 7-10 pages outlining options and priorities for action on conservation and sustainable use. This paper will be posted on the Web for peer review sometime in June or July 2001.

After discussing the two documents, SBSTTA 7 will recommend an outlining work programme to COP 6 of the CBD. The stronger the recommendations of SBSTTA 7, the stronger the work programme adopted at COP 6 in April 2002 is likely to be.

A strong work programme could help turn the CBD into something which the UNFF and its predecessor, the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, have so far failed to become during the ten years of their existence: an effective means for forest conservation and sustainable use. An added advantage of the CBD is that it

provides not only provisions to protect and encourage traditional lifestyles but also a dynamic process for participation of indigenous peoples in the Working Group on Article 8 (j) and related Articles, together with a comprehensive work programme.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR: The revised CBD background paper will be posted on the Web in February 2001, and the second paper on the options for conservation and sustainable use most likely in June or July 2001.

It is important that NGOs and Indigenous Peoples provide as much scientific and technological input as possible during the review process for the two draft papers - not only to criticize them, but also to provide examples of people's conservation and sustainable use efforts. We have to make sure that the expert group forwards options that have the support of NGOs and Indigenous Peoples. As soon as the draft paper is on the Web, I will circulate the information widely.

Report on Other Forest-Related Meetings

Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants Agreed

Governments concluded an agreement on 10 December 2000 to control production, import, export, disposal and use of 12 of the world's most toxic pollutants.

The legally-binding Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) covers an initial list of eight pesticides together with various polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and dioxin.

POPs are amongst the most dangerous of human pollutants, causing death, disease and birth defects among humans and animals. Due to their persistence, even people and animals in remote areas, such as indigenous forest communities living on fish and other freshwater resources, are affected by them. Measures to control other chemicals may be added later.

The Convention will be formally adopted and signed in Stockholm on 22 and 23 May 2001.

For more information please visit: <http://www.chem.unep.ch/pops/>

Governments at Desertification Talks Call for GEF Support

The progress of national efforts to fight desertification is being severely hampered by lack of funds, said negotiators at the 4th Conference of the Parties of the Convention to Combat Desertification held 11-22 December 2000 in Bonn, Germany.

The meeting called on the Global Environment Facility to open a special funding window to supplement the resources countries were already devoting to agroforestry, forest-related policies and other measures.

Some 150 national reports on desertification have been submitted over the last two years demonstrating the commitments countries have made to slowing desertification. At the Bonn meeting, 23 of them were reviewed by the desertification convention's *ad hoc* working group on implementation.

Despite clear signs that action was being taken at the national level, the conference ended without major progress being made on the need for additional financial resources and other contentious issues.

For more information please visit: <http://www.unccd.int>

Calendar of Forest-Related Meetings 2001

(see also www.iisd.ca/linkages)

- UN Forum on Forests Organizational Session and informal consultations on the Multi-Year Work Program of UNFF, 12-16 February 2001, New York, US. This meeting will start elaborating the structure, mandate, and workprogram of this new UN body, including a possible Plan of

Action. See also the articles by Tom Griffiths and Simone Lovera.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/forests.htm>

- Commission on Sustainable Development Second Energy Expert Group Meeting, 26 February - 2 March 2001, and Intersessionals, 5 – 16 March 2001, New York, US. This meeting will finalize preparations for the discussions of the Commission on Sustainable Development on energy, including energy from fuelwood and other sources of biomass.

For more information please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev.htm>

- **Sixth meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Panel of Experts on Access and Benefit Sharing, 12-22 March 2001, Montreal, Canada. This meeting will discuss the relationship between climate change and biodiversity. There will also be a progress report on the workprogram on forest biodiversity of the Convention.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.biodiv.org>

- 9th and 10th Sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), 16 April - 2 May 2001, New York, US. As stated above, this CSD meeting will discuss energy and sustainable development, including energy from fuelwood and other biomass. It will also discuss the preparations for the Rio plus 10 Summit that will take place in June 2002 in Johannesburg.

For more information please visit <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev.htm> and <http://www.un.org/rio+10>.

- Meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies to the UN Framework Convention on Climate

Change and Conference of the Parties 6 bis, July 2001, Bonn, Germany. This meeting will try to come to an agreement on the many outstanding issues under the Kyoto Protocol, including the role of Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry activities. See also the articles by Ian Fry and Miguel Lovera.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unfccc.int>

- Convention to Combat Desertification Intersessionals, to be determined but likely second quarter 2001. This meeting will review national reports on the implementation of the Desertification Convention. See also the summary report on the 4th Conference of the Parties above.

For more information please visit: <http://www.unccd.int>

- **First Substantive Session of the UN Forum on Forests, 11 – 15 (or 22) June, 2001, New York, US. This meeting will have to agree upon a multi-year workprogram for the UNFF and the structure and modalities of work of this forum.

For information please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/forests>.

*(** meetings to which GFC can probably facilitate Southern NGO/IPO participation)*

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