

COMMUNIQUÉ

United Nations Forum on Forests and Convention on Biological Diversity Enter into Partnership

Copenhagen, 15 December 2009 – Amidst the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) today signed an agreement to closely collaborate over the coming two years. “This agreement will help strengthen our joint actions to ensure that forests are sustainably managed for all their diverse values and functions. If we act together as partners, from all walks of life, all kinds of forests, all types of economies, we can decisively achieve sustainable forest management in a way we have never come close to achieving before”, said Ms. Jan McAlpine, Director of the UNFF secretariat on the occasion of the signature.

Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, added: “Forests are the most important terrestrial reservoir of biodiversity. The health and vitality of forests, and their capacity to adapt to climate change, depends on the diversity of genes, species, and ecosystems. Our partnership will enable our two processes and its stakeholders to strengthen the resilience of forests, and to maintain the support forests can provide to societies, in particular the world’s rural poor, as we face climate change impacts.”

The Memorandum of Understanding is based on a request that both secretariats received from their respective governing bodies. The UNFF, which has universal membership of all 192 member countries of the United Nations, adopted a decision (resolution 8/1) in May 2009, which requested the UNFF secretariat to “*explore with the secretariats of the Rio Conventions a format and opportunities for collaboration and cooperation and to develop targeted joint activities related to sustainable forest management, the four global objectives on forests and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests.*” In this context, the UNFF8 resolution specifically mentioned opportunities for collaboration in celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 and the International Year of Forests in 2011.

The 193 Parties to the CBD requested the Executive Secretary in May 2008, in decision IX/5, to explore options for a “*work plan with targeted joint activities between the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Forum on Forests*”.

“Through this partnership, we are honouring the requests made by national governments. Our joint activities will enable us to provide better service in support of forests and biodiversity”, Ms McAlpine and Mr. Djoghlaif agreed.

The agreement is set to expire in December 2011, but can be extended if mutually agreed. The agreement is for a programme of work to address biodiversity in forests, and also foresees the secondment of a temporary staff position, based in New York at the UNFF secretariat, to carry out joint activities. The UNFF and CBD secretariats are currently working towards securing funding for this staff position. “We are confident that our donors will recognize the value of the synergies we can achieve through this collaboration, to better support national governments, especially in developing countries, in their great efforts to implement our multilateral agreements at national level,” stated Mr. Djoghlaif.

The United Nations General Assembly has declared the year 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, and the year 2011 as the International Year of Forests. The collaboration between the

secretariats will include a joint ceremony in December 2010 to ensure a smooth transition between both International Years. Japan is the host Government of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD, in Nagoya, from 18 to 29 October 2010.

Forests are home to more than two thirds of all terrestrial species, and the great diversity of forest ecosystems, from tropical wetlands to savannah forests, provide more than 1.6 billion people with daily subsistence needs, and support the livelihoods of many more. “Forests are crucial to our global development, they are an integral part of our lives”, Ms. McAlpine explains. “When we lose forest biodiversity, we lose important economic assets, but perhaps more importantly, we also lose an essential part of our cultural and spiritual heritage. We must act together, in the true spirit of partnership to ensure that all their functions and values are maintained, for present and future generations.”

This communiqué has been posted on the website of the CBD and on the website of the UNFF today – further information on the CBD and the UNFF is available at:

www.cbd.int

www.un.org/esa/forests/

The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was established in 2000, with the main objective to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end. The UNFF is the only functional commission of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) which has universal membership of all 192 members of the United Nations. In 2007, the Forum adopted the landmark Non-Legally Binding Agreement on All Types of Forests which provides a platform for international cooperation and national action to reduce deforestation, prevent forest degradation, promote sustainable livelihoods and reduce poverty for all forest-dependent peoples. Substantive support for UNFF deliberations are provided by the UNFF Secretariat, which also serves as the UN focal point on all forest policy issues. The Secretariat of the UN Forum on Forests is located in UN Headquarters in New York.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the CBD has near-universal participation among countries committed to preserving life on Earth. The CBD seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The headquarters of the secretariat of the Convention are located in Montreal.

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Or visit the following websites:

www.cbd.int (For general information on the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.)

www.un.org/esa/forests/ (For general information on the United Nations Forum on Forests)