



A report prepared for the project

Lessons Learnt on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa

OBSERVATIONS ON PARTICIPATION OF AFRICA IN INTERNATIONAL FORESTRY PROCESSES

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***Observations on participation of Africa in
international forestry processes***

by

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Evolution of the international forestry processes*

Interest in forests and forestry increased considerably in the 1970s and 1980s, in response to reports on rapid deforestation and forest degradation in the tropics. That interest led to the development of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) in the mid-1980s. It also politicised the issue of forestry and made it contentious at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 in Rio.

UNCED was a watershed for forestry. For the first time, forest issues became a priority on the international policy and political agenda. Attempts were made to reach agreement on a forest convention, but to no avail. Instead, the ‘Non-Legally Binding Forest Principles’ were agreed upon and the discussion also changed focus from “tropical forests” to “all types of forests”. However, many countries were not happy with this outcome and were further frustrated by the failure by the Commission on Sustainable Development¹ (CSD) to reach an agreement on forestry.

Three years after UNCED, a review on the implementation of the forest principles showed little progress. However, significant progress was made in bridging the gap between tropical forest countries and non-tropical forest countries. To further close the gap, the idea of partnerships between developed and developing countries, and between tropical and non-tropical forest countries emerged, e.g. the Indo-UK, Malaysia-Canada and Brazil-US partnerships. These partnership arrangements minimised the international focus on deforestation in tropical countries and addressed issues in all types of forests. It is notable that there was no African country involved in these early partnership arrangements.

By 1995, it was felt that the world was ready to take forest issues head on to reach consensus on sustainable forest management (SFM) and possibly agree on a legally binding instrument. FAO decided to hold the first ever Ministerial Conference on Forests at COFO in 1995. A ministerial statement (declaration) advocated for the initiation of an intergovernmental dialogue on forests. Brazil, Malaysia, Indonesia and India led the negotiations on behalf of tropical countries. Once again, Africa was not a major player. Consequently, CSD3 recommended to ECOSOC to establish an “Intergovernmental Panel on Forests” (IPF) to continue the dialogue for two years on forest issues considered to be of global concern.

Five issues were identified and agreed on at IPF1 in New York in 1995. The question is who decided what the five issues were, and why they were global priorities. It seems that, behind the scene, the aforementioned partnership arrangements, the Forest Advisory Group and the Pan-European Forestry Conference were instrumental in pushing these issues through. Africa, again, was not a major player in any of these western-dominated and influential bodies. A small compact Secretariat was established to service the IPF process. Ironically, prior to the establishment of the Secretariat the focal points of three UN agencies (FAO, DESA and UNEP) were Africans who tried to push the African interest in the process. This did not go down well with some vested interests, and consequently they were slowly sidelined. In due course, the IPF Secretariat ended up with one African staff member sharing her time between UNDP and the IPF Secretariat.

The IPF process started in 1995 and held four sessions and with eight government-led initiatives in support thereof. At its first session in New York, Uganda and Gabon were the only African countries that sent participants from their capitals. The few other African representatives came from their Permanent Missions in New York. As a result, the IPF Secretariat integrated those participants into the process. Consequently, those New York-based African participants became a permanent fixture in the process, rather than expertise from the home offices of technical ministries and civil services.

During the IPF process, there had been a lot of lobbying by developed countries for support of issues of paramount interest to them, e.g. by through sponsoring “inter-sessionals”, whose agenda were set by the developed countries. Issues addressed at these inter-sessionals were not necessarily priority issues for Africa, although African countries were requested to be co-sponsors. As such, they often had limited leverage to influence issues to be discussed. South Africa, Senegal and Uganda, for example, became co-sponsors of specific meetings. Most of them contributed little more than legitimacy to the process, and they had limited influence on the choice of the “topic” for the inter-sessional.

It is also observed that during the entire process, Africa was given a back seat in the Bureau, which was the most important structure in the process, and the trend continued up to UNFF3². The Chair and Co-Chair of IPF and

¹ CSD is a UN Commission for follow up of UNCED.

² Sudan did chair the general UNFF 0 and 1 meetings

IFF (see below) rotated to all the regions of the world except Africa. Issues to be considered as global priorities emanate from the Bureau. The point here is that if Africa had been given the opportunity to Co-Chair the Bureau then issues of priority for Africa may have found their way into the agenda. Cases in point are the issues of agroforestry and forest plantations, which are important to Africa. Uganda and Zimbabwe had to frantically manoeuvre to get these two issues included in the text using a “British Commonwealth” connection to co-sponsor a motion during a plenary. All other means failed.

IPF deliberated for two years 1995-1997 with no substantial input from Africa³. The five issues deliberated in this process included:

1. Implementing the forest-related decisions of UNCED at the national and international levels;
2. International cooperation in financial assistance and technology transfer;
3. Scientific research, forest assessment and development of criteria and indicators (C&I) for SFM;
4. Trade and environment in relation to forest products and services; and,
5. International organisations and multilateral institutions and instruments, including appropriate legal mechanisms.

One item (2) above is a top priority for Africa. For African countries to implement any of the IPF proposals for action to address priority issues, they need financial assistance and technology transfer. However, it came out loud and clear in IPF4 that new and additional financial resource is a NO - USA and Japan being the main opponents of this, while the European Union played it neutral for as long as Africa supported the idea of a “forest convention”. Even when Africa offered support, all it got from Europe was that “dialogue on the issue of finance should continue”.

The International Forum on Forests (IFF), the successor to IPF, was no different. Lessons were not learnt that would enable Africa to participate more actively. The bureau was established, and once again Africa was sidelined. Most Africans who had participated and followed the IPF felt that IFF was a waste of time and resources and a tactic to keep people talking to avoid taking bold actions. The IFF deliberations were aimed at resolving several issues on which IPF had not reached consensus, such as financial resources, transfer of environmentally sound technologies and deliberations on international arrangements and mechanisms on forests. IFF's programme included the following:

- Facilitating the implementation of the proposals for action of the IPF and reviewing, monitoring and reporting on promotion of the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests;
- Considering matters left pending and other issues arising from the programme of the IPF process; and,
- International arrangements and mechanisms to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

The structure of the negotiations did not give room for African experts to fully participate. Negotiations take place within and by regional groups - EU, JUSCAN, and G77 and China, where African countries belong. Moreover, the lead negotiator for G77 and China is always the Chairman of G77 and China from the New York Permanent Missions to the UN. These people are expert negotiators on text, but often not on substance. African experts from the capitals ended up as spectators⁴. Even when they intervened substantively, their views never made it to the negotiated text. Although this situation was obviously frustrating, African experts continued to participate in the process and their numbers in fact increased.

Increased participation of African experts in IFF can be attributed to the financial sponsorship to attend, interest in the issues and expected benefits to Africa. In fact, IFF4 had the highest number of African experts from the capitals. This was mainly due to the financial support provided by UNEP for their participation but also growing awareness of the IPF/IFF process in Africa. Their contribution to the debate was of the highest quality because of the state of preparedness as a result of a workshop organised by UNEP/AAS for the Africans to be informed of what was at stake.

IFF deliberated for three years, 1997-2000, and there were four sessions and about nine inter-sessionals. South Africa and Uganda were co-sponsors of two inter-sessionals. In the end, additional proposals for action, which

³ Gabon, Uganda and Zimbabwe (often one-man delegations) were active in plenaries

⁴ This was true also for many foresters from Europe

brought the total to over 270 IPF/IFF proposals for actions, were adopted. There are no financial mechanisms for the implementation of all these IPF/IFF proposals for action, neither at national levels nor at international level.

A UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) was established in 2001 to continue the international dialogue until 2005, building on the IPF and IFF processes. It has a small Secretariat in New York. UNFF1 adopted the UNFF Plan of Action (PoA) and the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW). These are products of the UNFF Secretariat and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), which is the successor of the Interagency Task Force on Forests (ITFF). The ITFF/CPF members made sure that issues of interest to their agencies were integrated into the global priority issues. Africa was not part of the process leading to the POA and the MYPOW⁵. Africa only became involved in the approval process, just as was the case at IPF1 and IFF 1. At the UNFF 5 session in May 2005, a decision to initiate a negotiation process for a forest convention was supposed to be made⁶. Proponents of a forest convention considered this outcome a great success, while others perceived that the convention issue was simply removed from the international debate for 5 years. The final wording was so cryptic that everybody could interpret it the way they liked.

An important task for UNFF is to facilitate implementation of the 270 proposals for action agreed in the IPF/IFF process. As before, however, UNFF has no funds for implementation. International organisations are expected to cooperate within the CPF⁷. UNFF2 was held in March 2002, UNFF3 in May 2003, UNFF4 in May 2004 and UNFF5, finally, in May 2005.

Forest issues have also been discussed in negotiations of other conventions, like the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCDD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and others. For instance, a forest protocol has been proposed within CBD. Forest issues are further handled, as before, by FAO and the World Bank. Forest issues related to trade will come up in negotiations within the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Also important in this context are the different processes going on to develop Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for SFM. In Europe, intensive work has been going on within the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe (the Helsinki Process or MCPFE). For industrial countries outside Europe, corresponding work is going on within the so-called Montreal process. Most developing countries are also involved in different regional processes to develop C&I for SFM. It is also worth mentioning the different certification systems that are under discussion, of which the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Pan European Forest Certification (PEFC) systems are the best known. There are also many attempts with national certification systems.

1.2 *Salient issues, objectives and methodology*

The climate of the debate is said to have improved considerably in the past few years. There is possibly no longer a pronounced North-South conflict, although the debate continues to be heavily coloured by the agenda of the North. However, many developing countries do not take part. One can actually ask how legitimate agreements such as those in UNFF are as it is becoming difficult to ascertain what can be achieved in practice by international negotiations since, after all, important decisions are taken at national level in any case. For some, “international dialogue” has meant “sustainable talking” and an excuse for inaction and it remains to be seen if substantial achievements can be made. There is now a desperate demand for “implementation” and action. The hope was that UNFF would be instrumental in this.

In addition to the frustration accompanying the foregoing, some participants involved in the dialogue have observed that much of the discussion appears to be primarily between the USA, EU, JUSCANZ, the G77 Chair, and some important NIC countries (e.g. Brazil and Malaysia). In fact, it has been argued that the intergovernmental dialogue has not benefited at all from African experts or inputs, and vice versa, Africa has not benefited from the dialogue at all. Relatively few African countries are present and active in the meetings. It is also an opinion among many participants that African interest in the forestry processes has generally decreased since IPF. It is important to ascertain whether this feeling really represents the actual situation. The main thrust of this study revolves more around identifying important questions than about providing answers, as the latter

⁵ In UNFF0 Nigeria chaired G77. Nigeria and South Africa was very active in UNFF1

⁶ At the time of final editing of this report (June 2005) it is already known that such a decision was not taken; actually the whole UNFF process came to a standstill.

⁷ Among the members are FAO, WB, ITTO, CIFOR, ICRAF, UNEP, IUFRO, IUCN and UNDP, plus some of the Secretariats for various environmental conventions.

depend mainly on perceptions. In addition, there is a paucity of empirical data to support definitive answers, and available data are often anecdotal and arguably merely suggestive (see *Annexe I*).

This report attempts to analyse the presence and participation of African countries in the international forestry processes and also if any changes have occurred in their presence and interest. The question whether the opinions expressed about decreased interest reflects reality is considered as well as the causes of this. Finally, suggestions are made on how the situation could be improved.

The report is one of several commissioned by the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA), the African Forest Research Network (AFORNET) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), in a project entitled "Lessons Learnt on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa". The report was the basis for a discussion of "Participation of Africa in International Forestry Processes" at the workshop in Nairobi 9-13 February, 2004.

As a first step, the country participation lists in the official reports from the different meetings were analysed. These were then compared with the "Provisional lists of participants" produced for the same meetings. Often there were large discrepancies between lists for the same meeting. Normally, however, the number of countries in different lists is in the same order of magnitude. Perhaps one should be aware that there may be mistakes in details. To obtain more information, other relevant sources (primarily the Earth Negotiation Bulletin from the International Institute for Sustainable Development) were looked at in addition.

2 AFRICAN PARTICIPATION

2.1 *Participation in IPF, IFF and UNFF*

About 10 African countries participated in IPF2-4, 15 in IFF3-4 and 20 in UNFF2-3 (*Table 1*). Five African countries participated in UNFF3 while the official report says 17. Countries actually seen at UNFF3 were 10. The number of countries that are reported present has actually increased from IPF to UNFF. Of course, the number of participating countries does not necessarily reflect the interest of Africa in UNFF. Participation is often by an ambassador who may sit in a meeting for few hours. What would be interesting to know is the number of countries that have forestry specialists coming from the capitals. However, the lists available rarely show origin of participants. The lists from IPF only give names of participants.

Table 1. Sub-Saharan African presence in IPF/IFF/UNFF.

Meeting No.	IPF				IFF				UNFF			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3
No. of countries ⁸	..	10	8	10	5	5	17	15	..	13	22	17
No. countries in IISD ⁹	2	7	8	10	..	5	7	10 ¹⁰	7	7	8	7
No. of statements ¹¹	8	44	47	33	..	29	22	17	5 ¹²	13	23	29

After IFF4 a summary list was prepared showing presence in IFF2 to IFF4. At least 15 countries had, at some stage, a specialist from the capital in the delegation (of 24 countries)¹³. During IFF2, seven African countries were present according to the unofficial mailing list. All had some specialist in the team. During IFF3, 15 countries were present according to the same list. At least 10 seem to have had participants coming from the capital.

⁸ According to participant lists in the official reports

⁹ No of countries that has made statements according to IISD-reports

¹⁰ Including Nigeria for G77

¹¹ The number of African statements ("ideas") according to IISD-reports

¹² Incomplete report

¹³ This summary list for IFF is conflicting with some other lists.

For UNFF the attendance lists in the official reports give only names of countries. The provisional list of participants gives the names of the participants and occasionally the address of the Permanent Representative. There is often a big difference between the preliminary lists and the list given in the reports of the meeting. Countries may often inform the UN that at least their Permanent Representative will attend. Often, however, these do not show up but the organisers do not know this. Generally, it is very difficult to conclude much about the presence of countries in different meetings by analysing the official and unofficial lists.

The Earth Negotiating Bulletin (www.iisd.ca) summarises what different delegations have been saying during the IPF/IFF/UNFF meetings. They are certainly not complete or fully comparable over time. For instance, there is rarely information about what has been said on the last Friday of respective meetings. What has been said during plenary sessions is also often incomplete. Reports from more informal negotiations or contact groups do not give information either about which country said what, yet major decisions are made through this mechanism. Some reports (especially from plenaries) do try to summarise the statements of different delegations. However, sometimes the reports seem to give information about the ideas presented by different countries. This means that one statement from a country may lead to that country being mentioned several times in the IISD report. It is possible that the summaries roughly show which countries have been active during a meeting, although a country being very active in the corridors or in contact groups will not be reflected. *Table 2* summarises the different processes. The planning meetings in New York are a little special and are excluded.

Table 2. Summary of activities by countries (IISD).

Meetings	No. of countries		No. of statements
	Taking part at least once	Making statements	
IPF 2-4	22	12	124
IFF 2-4	24	12	68
UNFF 1-3	32	17	65

The table indicates that about the same number of countries took part in IPF and IFF. In UNFF, more countries seem to have participated but apparently African countries were more active during IPF than during IFF and UNFF, at least more statements were made. It must be pointed out that there are most likely many errors in the table. A country reported as not present may actually have been present. A country reported as not making a statement may very well have made one. However, the table still gives the big picture.

There are 49 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Of those, 37 have been present at least once. Nine countries have very small forests (and limited potential) and it is to be expected that they cannot get much out of the IFPs. Five of these have, however, been present at least once. Of the 40 "forest countries", 32 have been present at least once¹⁴. *Table 3* shows a detailed country breakdown of the summary information in *Table 2*. In all, there have been 12 meetings (at the time of writing the report) and *no African country has participated in all of them*. One can see that 37 countries have participated at least once. Two have participated in at least 10 meetings. Eleven countries have participated more than 5 times. Twenty countries have participated more than twice.

Some 24 countries made statements. Eight made more than ten statements. Diplomats that read one statement sent from the capital, or intervene in some formality do many statements. To try to assess the number of, and which, countries were really active those that made at least three statements during a meeting have been considered. It turns out that around 15 countries have, at least once, made three or more statements at one meeting (see list below and *Annexe 2*).

Table 3. African participation in the international forestry process – country details (Source - IISD).

Country	IPF				IFF				UNFF			
	1 ¹⁵	2	3	4	1 ¹⁶	2	3	4	0	1	2	3

¹⁴ Note that only 10 African countries are members of ITTO. That is mainly export countries in the rainforest zone

Angola								0 ¹⁷			1	
Benin				0			3	1			2	
Burkina Faso			0							1	0	
Cameroon			3	0		3	0			0		0
Congo				4								7
Ethiopia												1
Gabon	1	8	9	12	0	14	3	2	2	1	0	
Ghana		3	0	0			1	5	1	4	5	
Kenya		5	2									0
Lesotho											0	2
Malawi		0									1	
Mali		0	5			0	0	1			0	
Mauritius								0			1	
Namibia							5	1				0
Niger				1		5		1			0	0
Nigeria					0		7	1	1	13	2	0
SA		2	5				1	0		8	7	3
Senegal			4	4		1	2	2			5	11
Sudan			0	0			0	0		1	0	0
Tanzania		5	0		0						0	
Togo		0	0	0							0	4
Uganda	7	11	10	8	0		0		1	1	0	0
Zambia			0				0	2				
Zimbabwe		10	9	4	0	6		1		0	0	1

Ranking on the basis of number of statements at various meetings

IPF1	Uganda
IPF2	Uganda, Zimbabwe, Gabon, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana
IPF3	Uganda, Gabon, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mali, Senegal, Cameroon
IPF4	Gabon, Uganda, Congo, Senegal
IFF2	Gabon, Zimbabwe, Niger, Cameroon
IFF3	Nigeria, Namibia, Gabon
IFF4	Ghana

¹⁵ No list of participating countries has been found. According to the report 44 countries in all took part

¹⁶ No summary of statements found. This was a planning meeting for the coming IFF meetings. Very much formalities and politics

¹⁷ 0 shows countries that has been participating in the meeting according to the official report but not taken part in the discussion according to IISD

UNFF1	Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana
UNFF2	South Africa, Senegal, Ghana
UNFF3	Senegal, Congo, Togo, South Africa

Gabon, Ghana, Uganda, Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe have been quite active in the process. Gabon seems to have been active throughout. Uganda and Zimbabwe were very active during IPF but their activities have afterwards gone down. During later periods the activities of Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa have increased. At least 20 countries have been rather passive and around 12 have never been present. The number of actually active countries stands at around ten, but they are not active at the same time. It seems that a Head of a Forestry Department sometimes gets travel money and is very active during one meeting and then “disappears” (Congo, Mali, Namibia, Tanzania and Togo). It can be because of travel money, but it can also be because such Head finds the meeting a waste of time or that a Head does not give priority to international meetings. Many important forest countries are not seen at all, or only at scattered occasions.

It may be difficult to really prove that Africa is less visible in UNFF compared to IPF. But in IPF, 11 countries were active at some meeting. During IFF it was 7 and during UNFF so far it has been 6. The number of statements given also seems to have gone down. However, one cannot conclude much just based on the number of statements done at different meetings. The meetings are different and so is the reporting of IISD. The total number of statements varies very much between meetings. An attempt has therefore been made to see if the proportion of African statements to the total has changed over time (*Table 4*).

Table 4. Number of statements on a regional basis.

Meetings	IPF				IFF			UNFF			
	1	2	3	4	2	3	4	0	1	2	3
Statements¹⁸	204	414	504	572	805	615	341	100	638	269	484
US	24	22	36	105	111	77	41	8	118	32	61
EU-chair	20	21	38	51	104	74	26	10	117	22	56
EU-countries	27	59	61	3	7	6	0	0	0	21	20
JUSCAN	44	91	121	130	181	176	109	28	172	55	140
Sum OECD	115	193	256	289	403	333	176	46	407	130	277
% of total¹⁹	56	47	51	51	50	54	52	46	64	48	57
G77-Chair	33	17	40	78	107	57	14	14	113	24	72
Africa	8	44	47	33	29	22	17	5	13	23	29
% total²⁰	3.9	10.6	9.3	5.8	3.6	3.6	5.0	5.0	2.0	8.6	6.0

The dominance of US, other JUSCAN countries and EU is clear. These countries normally make more than half of all statements. Their dominance may actually have increased in UNFF. It is interesting to note that the activities of EU-countries in IFF and UNFF have been reduced very much compared to IPF. EU is represented by its Presidency. Few member countries make individual statements (they are actually not expected to). The G-77 Chair is often about as active as EU and US. G-77, however, often has difficulties getting started the first days. Often there are no strong statements on technical matters during the first plenaries. Instead, G77 is active during negotiations. The G77 Chair is normally a diplomat, which means that forestry issues can be lost. One can possibly conclude that African countries were more active in IPF than in IFF and UNFF. During IPF 2 and 3,

¹⁸ IISD has used different methods for reporting (sometimes number of statements, sometimes more ideas in the statement). It is therefore difficult to report when there is negotiation of text taking place

¹⁹ The number of “statements” from US, EU and JUSCAN in relation to all statements

²⁰ The number of statements by African countries in relation to all statements

Africa made more statements than USA and close to as many as the EU-countries. African countries made about 10 % of statements. In IFF it went down to 4-5%. The result depends, however, very much on individual countries. Without Senegal and Congo, Africa would hardly have been visible at all in UNFF3.

2.2 *African participation in other international forestry meetings*

There are other global forestry meetings that take place regularly. IUFRO, for example, arranges many meetings where participants have to arrange for their own funding (sometimes the organisers have limited funds available for participants from developing countries). Quite a number of Africans took part in the recent World Forestry Congress in Quebec. Africa was clearly visible but special funds were then available. The meetings that are most similar to UNFF are certain FAO meetings.

Comparison of the attendance at UNFF with those of FAO's African Forest and Wildlife Commission (AFWC) and the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) are given in *Tables 5* and *6*. The attendance at AFWC meetings (held every second to third year) varies but it seems that normally 10-20 countries take part. The attendance has possibly been going down, which is somewhat surprising. One explanation may be that AFWC is a mixture of forestry and wildlife. It may be that the programme is so mixed that it becomes of limited interest for both foresters and wildlife people.

Table 5. Participation in AFWC meetings²¹.

Year	1989	1992	1995	1998	2000	2002
All countries ²²	18	13	15	24	11	13
Participation from capital ²³	18	13	15	24	11	13
Director level ²⁴	12	7	10	13	3	6

Table 6. Participation in COFO²⁵.

Year	1988	1990	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003
Total No. of countries	26	24	24	35 ²⁶	24	26	23	27
Participation from capital	19	17	13	25	12	14	13	15
"Directors" from capital	19	17	13	21	10	12	13	15

COFO, which meets every second year, has for long been the main global forestry meeting (complemented by the WFC) and IPF, IFF and UNFF do not seem to have changed this. About 25 countries seem to take part at each meeting of which about 15 are represented from the capitals. The participants from the capitals are normally at the top management level. FAO do normally not pay for attendance to COFO. Countries come of their own interest. Thus, it appears as if the low attendance at UNFF cannot only be blamed on lack of funds²⁷.

²¹ Not so often DG participating. Often people from Wildlife Departments attend and not from forestry. There are 41 SSA member countries in AFWC.

²² Number of countries participating

²³ Number of countries with participants from the capital

²⁴ Delegations with participation of "Directors" or "high level foresters" from the capital. Rather difficult to judge, often it is people from other departments than forestry.

²⁵ 29 African countries reported to be members of COFO. Others can take part as observers.

²⁶ Ministerial meeting in 1995.

²⁷ There are actually some funds available for paying for travels to UNFF (at least for countries being members of CSD). UN has had some problems to pay *per diem*.

3 DISCUSSIONS AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION

3.1 *Issues of concern to Africa during IPF/IFF/UNFF*

There is a pertinent question regarding what the main issues brought up by African countries are, whenever they manage to be present. Needless to say, if the statements do not influence the decisions, it would be natural if the African countries lost interest. Most statements can be classified as technical. If NTFPs, trade or underlying causes of deforestation are being discussed, it is natural that the statements primarily contain technical comments and suggestions. It may be difficult to see if these statements have really influenced the Proposals for Action finally coming out. There are also a number of statements concerning formalities and IPF/IFF/UNFF internal matters.

Some issues are frequently brought up in the statements. These include *capacity building*, *ODA assistance for forestry*, *trade*, *legally binding instrument* and *technology transfer*. These are “hot” issues discussed in the international forestry process. It can possibly be said that African countries have been reactive rather than proactive in this regard. Some developed countries have intensively pushed for their own hobby-horses. These are, for example, *C&I* (Finland), *National Forestry Programmes* (Germany) and *plantations* (New Zealand). One can also mention Iran that really has managed to put *Low Forest Cover Countries* (LFCC) on the agenda. These countries have certainly succeeded to influence the text in many Proposals for Action, but one can ask what they really have achieved? In which way has Iran (or any other LFCC) benefited by the frequent mentioning of their problems in the text? What should African countries have had as their main message to IPF/IFF? What should be the main message to UNFF?²⁸

3.2 *Information*

The statistics available do not really make it possible to quantify with certainty how participation and interest in Africa for the international forestry process have developed. Available information is not comprehensive and is incomplete. Therefore, it can only form a good base for a discussion but really not for conclusions. Despite this, one can still say that 15-20 African countries are now in some way taking part at each meeting of UNFF. Possibly five to ten delegations have professionals coming from the capital. Around five countries are active at each meeting. Considering that UNFF now should be the main meeting place for world forestry this can hardly be called a success. Quite evidently, many “forest” countries do not find it meaningful to send professionals from the capitals, or even to order the local ambassador to take part in the meetings. Many important forestry countries do not really take active part at all.

One should, of course, point out that IPF, IFF and UNFF are/were, after all, discussions of *forestry* issues, and may therefore not be of great interest to all Africa’s 49 countries, many of which do not have any forests at all. Still, there ought to be at least 20-25 countries forming a “natural” African group participating in the meetings. The international forestry process is now very much a discussion between EU and USA. G77 is quite active when discussing text. Good diplomats are then in the lead. It is unclear, however, how much Africa influences G77.

3.3 *Interest and benefits*

One may conclude that the interest in SSA for the international forestry process seems surprisingly low and it is relevant to ask why? Is UNFF of limited interest to African countries? Is something wrong with the process? If so, how could it be improved? Actually, interest seems to be higher for COFO, despite the fact that countries also have to pay for travel to take part in COFO-meetings (as is the case of UNFF). There is no evident reduction in the number of African countries participating in the process. There actually rather seem to be an increase. Judging from the number of statements made, one may possibly conclude that African countries showed greater interest for IPF than UNFF.

Africa’s participation is important as there are potential benefits of this, such as exposure to new concepts and approaches to forest management and making contacts with top-notch professionals within the global forestry fraternity. This helps the continent to understand the global dynamics of the sector and to shape its own destiny

²⁸ We have got the comment that Africa should have made “their case” in the same way as LFCC.

in respect thereof. Contacts with the rest of the world would also help Africa to get information on technical and financial opportunities, develop its own professionals and systems, and to use the contacts to leverage technical assistance. One may certainly also say that others countries would benefit from a greater African presence, not least because African delegations often bring more realism to the meetings.

The number of countries officially participating has evidently not dropped. Ambassadors do often take part. Rather few countries seem to have specialists coming from the capitals. It is not clear, however, if there is much of a difference between IPF and UNFF. Lack of travel money is often given as a reason for the low attendance of specialists from the capitals. But if the African countries had found UNFF of great value they probably could have found money or desperately tried to search for it – the UNFF Secretariat, for example, has some travel money for developing countries. So far, the UN has not been able to pay for *per diems*, which has been a major problem (because international forestry meetings are invariably held in the most expensive cities in the world, New York and Geneva). It has possibly been more difficult to get hold of travel money during the UNFF process than it was during IPF, when donor countries still had faith in the process. Many participants got travel money as part of donor projects. During UNFF, many donors obviously lost some faith in the international forestry process and decreased their funding for participation of developing countries.

In the case of COFO, the presence of African countries is much more evident than in UNFF. Is it because COFO is of greater interest to African countries than UNFF, or because it is easier to get travel money for taking part in COFO? FAO does, however, not give funds for the participation in COFO. Donors, or projects, may possibly find it more meaningful to give travel funds for COFO than for UNFF. FAO evidently also sometimes manages to arrange parallel activities to COFO and pay for travel for some delegates.

In deliberations at international forestry meetings during the last decade there has been much talk about deforestation/forest degradation, sustainable forest management (SFM), participation, national forest programs, biodiversity, trade, financing of SFM and lessons learning. The agenda in UNFF is the result of discussions in IPF/IFF. Primarily, it is a compromise reached between different strong actors at UNFF1. No one was perhaps fully satisfied but no one refused to take part in coming meetings. UNFF is a mixture of technical and political matters, which makes it difficult to determine the right type of participation. One must ask if the present agenda is of much interest to African countries. What would be the content of the agenda if African countries were to make choices?

3.4 *Structure of the process*

UNFF is still very much dominated by diplomats. They easily take over and dominate sessions and foresters may have difficulties to make their voices heard (especially in text-negotiations). Forestry discussions in the diplomatic UN-world often ends up in papers. Much effort is laid into discussing words. Many papers have been produced but do these really lead to any action?

African countries belong to the G77 (Group 77 and China). A diplomat from the G77 is making statements on behalf of over 100 countries (including the 49 African countries). Some African countries express frustration with the G77 way of working (“it is another UN minus developed countries”). It is often difficult to get African forestry priority issues included in G77 statements. The result depends very much on what country happens to chair the G77 at a particular meeting or session. Sometimes, dissatisfaction is also expressed with the Bureau and the Secretariat where it often is difficult to get an understanding for African forestry issues. Latin America, Asia, Europe and North America have been more successful in bringing their issues into the agenda of the IFPs. It seems to be a fact that the present process has difficulties in raising any interest in African countries. Can a global process be of interest to Africa? In which way could it be improved? Would a regional process have advantages?

3.5 *Financing SFM*

There is, so far, no money in the process. UNFF has primarily been a lot of talk. Discussions about a *forest fund*, for example, have taken place but no decisions have been taken about this so far. Developed countries argue that there is no shortage of money in forestry in developing countries but that governments are not collecting the royalties they should. It is also difficult to establish a new fund for each new hot issue identified in the various UN environmental and natural resources processes. Many have been established and after a while they are empty. It also means that prioritisation is done by donors.

Lack of funds (possibly in combination with an agenda that is not perceived as relevant) may be one reason for the low African interest in UNFF. Cooperation with FAO may not give much money but sooner or later it

normally produces some tangible benefits, e.g. resource inventories, plans, training and capacity building of forest staff, etc. Interest in meetings of the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) also seems higher than in the UNFF. Most African members of ITTO come with strong delegations and ITTO member countries can, of course, get funds for projects. The agenda may also be relevant for participating countries.

So some kind of fund attached to UNFF could possibly increase the interest. But if interest in UNFF has to be paid for with projects or money one may ask if the meetings are of value. If they were really considered valuable many countries would turn up even without funds. If participation in UNFF has to be paid for one may legitimately ask whether it is meaningful to continue with UNFF in the present form.

3.6 *Communication to the capital*

“Communication to the countries’ capitals is poor. Once the CSD (or UNFF) communicates to the Permanent Representative Mission (PRM), they then think the PRM will do the needful, which is not the case. CSD also often uses its website but internet is not available in many forestry offices in Africa. Many organisations also tend to be very formal and an invitation picked from a website will not carry weight as an invitation communicated through, for example, the local UNDP or FAO offices. So, specialists in capitals get invitations quite late and cannot beat the bureaucracies of applying funding in time.”²⁹

There is a severe lack of flow of information from UNFF participants back to their constituencies and colleagues at home. Often, communication is totally lacking and once the individual delegates return to their countries, no discussion or dissemination of results takes place. Not surprisingly, the UNFF and other IFPs are not very well known in the capitals, not even among forestry departments.

3.7 *Institutional memory*

The situation described above obviously also result in a serious lack of institutional memory. The PRM to the UN are under-staffed, change positions often and have limited interest and knowledge of forestry issues. If specialists attend from the capital the PRM often do not take part at all. In the case of some countries, specialists sometimes come from the capital, but the persons often change and no institutional memory or experience is built up.

3.8 *Pushing for own agenda*

Brazil, Finland, Germany, Iran and New Zealand have all pushed for special issues they consider important. To really influence decisions it is not enough to just talk in the UNFF sessional meetings, one also need to organise and/or be active in inter-sessional meetings where specific agendas are pursued and decisions *de facto* are made for later “rubber stamping” at UNFF plenary sessions. African countries certainly have many issues they would like to bring up but they do not have funds to arrange inter-sessionals by themselves. They, therefore, have difficulties to really bring their own issues into the IFP agenda.

3.9 *Role of African political groupings*

The many African political and economic groupings (e.g. SADC, EAC, ECOWAS and AU) are so far playing no role in the global forestry dialogue and, yet, they could justifiably be seen as equivalent to, say, the EU. Forest goods and services are transboundary in nature and herein rest their attribute as “global commons”. The global dialogue on forestry hinges on this. Although the thinking is necessarily global, action eventually has to be local. Thus, to make the global dialogue relevant to local action, the two should be linked in a chain of tiered geographical and sequential functional relationships.

For example, it would be good if UNFF started with a “national conference” to discuss the issues, followed by regional meetings, like under SADC or EAC, and then followed by a continent-wide meeting of regional representatives at the African Union level to hammer out continental consensus and positions. This way, one gets a political backing of the process, not only for the purpose of authoritative negotiations but also to secure commitment to results from the international forum and hence enhancing domestic ownership and prospects for national level action. With such positions, it would not matter whether the negotiations in New York or Geneva

²⁹ Quote from JR Kamugisha

were carried out by national diplomats accredited to the UN. Africa can only be effective in the G77 if it came to the meetings with positions agreed on in such a preparatory regional process.

It is often said that G77 should talk for Africa. However, the posturing in G77 meetings, the manipulative tendencies based on who speaks English better and the behind-the-scenes bickering and “trading” are serious problems. Participation in G77 is voluntary and yet the group often takes binding positions for all “developing countries” and can even negotiate on behalf of so many very different countries – it is, for example, difficult to see what forestry priorities Argentina and Burkina Faso have in common, or China and Rwanda! This process masks Africa’s interests and undermines its negotiating power.

3.10 *Sharing information and follow-up in African countries*

Each of the global dialogue processes should put in place a programme for tracking in-country follow up. Such a programme should have resources for the purpose that can be applied for preparing back-to-office reports by delegations and organising formal meetings for reporting back. The processes should also guarantee a minimum set of documents to be given to each delegation, documents that will then be essential in reporting back and sharing at home. Electronic versions of such documents are also important, so that, upon return, delegations can duplicate and share the documents with colleagues and relevant authorities. Many countries in Africa, and very much so civil services and ministries, still have limited access to internet. It is important to give due consideration to this when planning how to disseminate information coming out of the IFPs.

3.11 *Representation from home offices*

There is a question whether Africa should be represented by forest administrators (Heads of Forestry Departments) or by experienced technical professionals, who may have the disadvantage that their “convening power and authority” back home is limited. The ideal is probably to have a conscious mix of both. Many forestry administrators in Africa do not necessarily reach the top on merit but through years of employment. Some are political appointments. They may not possess what it takes for effective representation and active participation in international negotiating processes such as UNFF. In any case, there is a demand for a mix and combination of competencies that may not be expected to be possessed by one individual under normal situations. Thus, a deliberate mix of administrators, technically qualified people, skilled negotiators and others with an institutional memory of the dialogue is not only desirable but essential. This happens with delegations from many developed countries, particularly those where forests and forestry are of national importance. It is, for example, notable that both Sweden and Finland normally have delegations with up to ten people in them.

3.12 *Active African participation*

Plenaries or working groups should be structured in such a way that time slots are provided for each delegation to make a statement. This would encourage passive delegates to be under obligation to prepare and say something from their countries. Unless one has great personal confidence and technical experience, and is comfortably in command of one of the UN languages, it is difficult to come from a poor African country and make a statement in a UN plenary in New York or Geneva. Technically experienced people who may be less comfortable in their speaking skills, can be effective behind the scenes and provide inputs to those that speak and negotiate on behalf of the region and/or country – this would require a well-composed pan-African delegation. USA and EU uses such supplementary skills most effectively.

3.13 *An ideal international process*

A good international process would follow a political pathway we have outlined above and have a good mix of administrative, diplomatic and technical cadres in the national/regional delegations. National conferences would be dominated by technical people and as one moves up to sub-regional, continental and, finally, the international levels, the politicians and administrators would gradually become more dominant in the teams. Inter-sessional meetings and supplementary processes are essential to elaborate and prepare the technical issues and they often provide good fora for frank and analytical work. Therefore, in any meaningful global dialogue on forests and forestry, they should be encouraged and supported, and their findings respected.

4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

There are important action points that need to be taken and questions to be answered to increase the effectiveness of Africa in the global forestry dialogue. Below are some key questions that need to be addressed:

Are global forestry priority issues necessarily Africa's priorities?

Has the management of African forests improved as a result of the UN dialogue/processes?

Have African countries benefited from the post-UNCED forestry processes?

Is there any real change in attitudes after UNCED?

Have African participants in the IPF/IFF/UNFF process adapted the international agreements reached for implementation by Africa with its limited capacities?

Have African participants negotiated for adjustment time for Africa in order to improve capacities to achieve internationally agreed standards and proposals for action?

How can recommendations in the international process be implemented by countries with limited resources?

Why is African participation weak?

With limited resources, is it best to have a global process or should there be more work at the regional level?

Can the present system (UNFF, COFO, ITTO) be made more responsive to Africa's needs?

ANNEXE 1 AFRICAN PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL PROCESSES

The table in this annexe has been derived from the report and, to a significant degree, from the very lively discussions and comments that followed the presentation of the report at the SFM Workshop in Nairobi in February 2004.

Issues	Lessons learnt and key observations	Way forward and recommendations
<p>African contribution is not adequately influencing outcomes of IFPs.</p>	<p>The Secretariat's interest was to make sure the sessions take place as scheduled but paid little attention to global representation of countries as equal partners.</p> <p>African governments could not afford the cost of their delegations from the capitals to the venues.</p> <p>African experts from the capitals were often ill prepared to participate in the debates as they lacked information and were too few.</p> <p>The documents were posted on internet, which they could not access easily back home.</p> <p>Invitations were also to be down loaded from the internet, which is neither generally available nor acceptable to many African Governments as official documents.</p> <p>African countries don't have ownership of the process and lack motivation to effectively participate.</p> <p>There is lack of capacity to proactively participate in setting the agenda and influencing the negotiation processes.</p> <p>There is high turn-over of delegates and this hampers building of institutional memory and formulation of ideas and positions.</p>	<p>Provide financial assistance to cover travel and DSA for African participants.</p> <p>Provide documents to African Governments (in the Capitals) well before the sessions.</p> <p>Organise pre-session meetings for African delegates to prepare and go through the issues and harmonise positions.</p> <p>The UNFF Secretariat should recruit a senior African forest expert under the regular budget to be the focal point for Africa. This is necessary as affirmative action to bring Africa to the same level of interest as other regions.</p> <p>Have a more robust representation process to ensure consistency in African delegations.</p> <p>Regional and sub-regional technical caucuses and political mechanisms are necessary to form a unified front and articulate inputs into the processes and reflect African realities.</p> <p>The emergence of NEPAD, AU, EAC, SADC, ECOWAS, etc., are opportunities that need to be utilised.</p> <p>Secretariats of IFPs must ensure adequate expertise from Africa.</p>
<p>Many overlapping initiatives requiring substantial human and financial resources for meaningful participation.</p>	<p>Despite the efforts of UNEP, ITTO and AAS to rally opinion and support of African institutions, there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-optimal representation to the fora; • Inadequate preparation for meetings; • Regional diversity making a common African front difficult; and, • Insufficient understanding of the negotiation processes. 	<p>Delegations should comprise both diplomats and technical people.</p> <p>Prioritise IFP agendas and attend meetings that are most relevant to Africa.</p> <p>Explore possibilities of regional representations to IFPs.</p> <p>There is a need to contextualise some of the issues to a regional level.</p>
<p>Investment in forestry has low priority for some African countries</p>	<p>The benefits of many IFPs to Africa have not been convincingly demonstrated.</p>	<p>There is a need to demonstrate the benefit to Africa from these processes.</p>

resulting in lack of will to politically support participation in IFPs.	Foresters have not been able to showcase the importance of forestry in an appreciative and understanding manner. In-country processes of developing a position don't take into account all relevant sectors and stakeholders.	Foresters need to communicate without technical language, need for more interactions with politicians. Support the formation of strong forestry associations in Africa.
Inadequate representation and lack of continuity affects the performance of Africa at IFPs.	Lack of institutional memory due to inconsistent attendance. Low technical representation in delegations to IFPs and lack of unified positions open African countries to be taken advantage of during IP negotiations that impinge on forestry.	Better record keeping, information sharing and coordination within and between relevant ministries and other actors. There is a need for a regional coordinating mechanism, and potentially useful institutions should be recognised and asked to represent the continent or provide inputs into the process
Mainstreaming of outcomes of IFPs is a challenge to national institutions.	Weakness in communication and technical skills that translate outcomes from IFPs into technically feasible actions. Feedback and mainstreaming of the outcomes from IFPs into national programs is insufficient.	Some African countries that have better skills and capacity can be requested to assist others. All countries must be encouraged to share experiences.
Involvement of the forest/wood industry sector to contribute to consideration of issues that affect the sector is inadequate.	In most African countries, only government officials attend these meetings without the involvement of industry representatives.	Governments must be encouraged to involve the industry and particularly industry organisations and civic organisations.

The following questions were asked to participants in the workshop as a basis for the discussion that led to the above views:

- In your opinion, has Africa in general or your country in particular benefited from the post-UNCED international forestry processes (IPF, IFF and UNFF)? For example, has management of forest resources improved?
- Have African participants, directly or through the G77-group, been able to influence the agenda of these processes?
- What reasons are there for African countries to participate in the UNFF (and what reasons against), and what are the priority issues that Africa ought to pursue?
- The interest from African countries in the UNFF-process seems to be rather weak. Why do you think it is like that?
- On the other hand, interest in the biannual FAO COFO meetings appears higher, judging from the level of participation. Should this be interpreted as if African countries and forest authorities/Ministries see more value in these meetings?
- How could, in your opinion, the international forestry processes improve to become more valuable and relevant to Africa?

ANNEXE 2 COUNTRY DETAILS ON PRESENCE AND PARTICIPATION

Country	No. of meetings with statements	No. of meetings without statements	No. of statements	Meetings with three or more statements	Total No. of meetings attended
Angola	1	1	1		2
Benin	3	1	5		4
Burkina Faso	1	2	1		3
Cameroon	2	4	6	2	6
Cap Verde		2			2
Comoros		2			2
Congo	2		11	2	2
DR Congo		2			2
Djibouti		1			1
Equat. Guinea		1			1
Ethiopia	1		1		1
Gabon	9	2	52	5	11
Gambia		2			2
Ghana	6	2	19	4	8
Guinea Bissau		2			2
Ivory Coast		4			4
Kenya	2	1	7	1	3
Lesotho	1	1	2		2
Liberia		2			2
Madagascar		6			6
Malawi	1	1	1		2
Mali	2	4	6	1	6
Mauritania		1			1
Mauritius	1	1	1		2
Mozambique		3			3
Namibia	2	1	6	1	3
Niger	3	2	7	1	5
Nigeria	5	2	24	2	7
Rwanda		1			1
Senegal	7		29	4	7
South Africa	6	1	26	4	7
Sudan	1	6	1		7
Tanzania	1	3	5	1	4

Togo	1	4	4	1	5
Uganda	6	4	38	4	10
Zambia	1	2	2		3
Zimbabwe	6	3	31	3	9