

PRELIMINARY REACTIONS OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA TO THE DRAFT PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY THE CO-CHAIRMAN ON INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS ON FORESTS (E/CN.17/IFF/2000/L.1), DELIVERED BY MR. OSITADINMA ANAEDU DELEGATION OF NIGERIA

New York, 4 February 2000

Mr. Co-Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China wishes to acknowledge and to commend the efforts of the Co-Chairman in speedy submission of the draft report on international arrangements on forests.

The Group of 77 and China would like to make preliminary comments since most delegates will want more time to consult their governments on the implications of the new proposals, which could have far reaching consequences in the future of the global dialogue on sustainable forest management (SFM)

The Group of 77 and China notes that the draft proposals by the Co-Chairman contain some interesting proposals which had not been the subject of discussion during the relevant plenary sessions. However, the Group of 77 and China, for the sake of progress, is willing to move negotiations forward on the basis of this document.

The Group observes that the proposals are heavily focused on coordination and policy development functions but in isolation of the critical issue of the much needed financial resources. The Group of 77 and China is of the view that policy development, policy coordination and implementation are mutually reinforcing functions and must be considered together. It is noted specifically that the proposed financial support will be sourced through reallocations within the already strained budgets of the United Nations and its specialized agencies or existing institutions and organizations. The Group of 77 and China considers these arrangements to be totally inadequate. The Group still insists that the needed financial resources to support sustainable forest management be addressed through the establishment of a global forest fund or the strengthening of the present Global Environmental Facility with specific mandates on forests.

The Group of 77 and China supports the proposal for continuation of the current dialogue in the form of a permanent intergovernmental body of the United Nations. The Group considers this to be the minimum provision for these valuable consultations to continue. However, past experience of the IPF/IFF Secretariat, has shown the Group that the Secretariat had been run without regional balance. Budgetary provisions should be made for broad representations in the Secretariat.

While waiting for clarification on the proposed UN Partnership on Forests (UNPF), the Group presently considers the proposed United Nations Forest Council to be closest to a permanent forum. However, the Group is of the view that the word "Council" should be substituted with "Forum" in such a way to encourage participation of all members of the UN family. At this stage, the Group continues to consider both options of having the Forum to operate under the umbrella of the UN General Assembly or the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The Group observes that there is heavy bias on the mandate of the proposed Forum towards mobilizing political support for a global convention on forests. The Group is of the view that the primary mandate of the Forum should be to further policy development and coordinate efforts towards its implementation at country levels. Furthermore, the Group is of the opinion that the proposed forum should have a time limit.

The Group is concerned with the long intervals between the meetings of the proposed Forum (once every two years). The Group strongly feels that the meetings should be more regular, at least once a year, in order to maintain the current momentum towards conclusion of outstanding issues on transfer of technology, trade and financial resources. The Group is in agreement that there could be a high-level ministerial meeting on forests at two years intervals.

The Group of 77 and China needs to give more thought and reflection on the composition, role and functions of the proposed Steering Committee. As it stands, it appears to be no more than formalization of high-level informal task force on forests (ITFF). For the Steering Committee to be meaningful will require the participation of members of the developing countries.

The Group of 77 and China sees this matter as very crucial and would want the highest priority given to it during the coming week.

I thank you.