

**Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN) Minutes
Environmental NGO (ENGO) and Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)
Conference Call on the UNFF6**

February 8th, 2006, at 1 pm EST

Present: Bill Singleton (Director, NRCan, International Affairs Division), Sandra Ribey (Policy Analysts, CFS, International Affairs Division, NRCan) Andrea Lockwood (Nature Canada, RCEN Forest Caucus Chair), Andrea Waywanko (Sierra Club – Prairie Chapter), Sarah Heiberg (National Caucus Coordinator, RCEN), Rachel Plotkin (Sierra Club of Canada), Harry Bombay (National Aboriginal Forestry Association), Denyse Rousseau (Deputy Director, Multilateral Forests, OECD Env and Sust Dev, Foreign Affairs Canada, Environment and Energy Division)

Chair: Sandra Ribey

Minutes: Sarah Heiberg

1. Context for UNFF6

- Results of UNFF5 (May 2005) (Chairs text from UNFF5)

Introduction by Sandra Ribey: There was no ministerial declaration as a result of UNFF5 and the general sense was that the process did not move forward. Some progress was made in terms of certain agreements achieved. The dates for UNFF6 were established. For the Chairs text from UNFF5 go to <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/396/66/PDF/N0539666.pdf?OpenElement>

- Country Led Initiative (Berlin, 16 -18 November 2005)

This was an Intersessional meeting entitled the “International Expert Meeting Scoping for Future Agreements on Forests” to advance consensus on UNFF6. For more information go to: www.inwent.org/themen_reg/themen/umwelt/biodiversitaet/forests/index.en.shtml. The objective of this meeting was to clarify some of the ideas and concepts regarding the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF).

There were two working groups for each of the following topics: Voluntary Code; Implementation and Means of Implementation; and Regional Activities.

Voluntary Code: The value-added of the voluntary code was questioned by many and some countries regarded it as a first step toward a legally binding instrument (LBI), while others such as Brazil held that a loose voluntary understanding was preferable. No real consensus was reached.

Implementation and Means of Implementation: No Canadian representative was in either of these groups which focused on how to integrate forest issues into other frameworks on climate change, desertification and biodiversity as well as discussing monitoring techniques.

Regional Activities: The discussion focused on the need for strengthened links between UNFF and regional processes, while not duplicating processes or creating new regional processes under UNFF.

Overall, Canada stressed the importance of forest policies on the global agenda.

2. Canadian Approach for UNFF6

- Canada will still be supporting launching negotiations on a LBI and will try to block discussion on a voluntary option.
- Countries that are expected to align with Canada in the support of a LBI include: Switzerland, Mexico, Argentina, Costa Rica, China, South Korea and possibly the EU, among others.
- Brazil and the US are opposed to a LBI, and it is expected they will be opposed to any voluntary option, as it is seen as a “stepping stone” towards something legally binding
- Canada will push toward having a more action-oriented UNFF.
- In terms of including the provinces and presenting a strong position on forests:
 - ENGOs voiced concern that Canada first needs to improve provincial-territorial and national sustainable forest practices to have a credible and strong presence in international meetings
 - NRCan consulted with the provinces and territories before UNFF6
 - As one of the biggest forest-product producing country, Canada has a significant presence at UNFF
- NRCan is going into UNFF6 with a positive, if not optimistic, outlook
- Even if UNFF6 remains only a “talk shop”, Canada will continue to be involved

3. Delegation

- ENGOs expressed their disappointment that no ENGO delegate will be part of the official Canadian delegation.
- According to NRCan, as UNFF6 will be a continuation of UNFF5, no major shift in the Canadian position, for budgetary reasons, and because of the organization of work for UNFF6 (no multi-stakeholder dialogue, little time in plenary) it was decided to not have an ENGO (or any other major group) representative.
- There is some disparity of views between NRCan and the RCEN as to whether the ENGO community was given an adequate opportunity to participate in UNFF6. It was agreed that NRCan will consider funding an ENGO representative to participate in the official Canadian delegation for UNFF7. It was suggested that a group of ENGO representatives write a proposal in favor of including an ENGO delegate in the official Canadian delegation in advance of UNFF7.

- Reasons for having an ENGO delegate on the official Canadian delegation include:
 - To present the ENGO perspective (instead of having others speak for ENGOs)
 - To allow ENGOs to contribute to the official Canadian delegation's response to other countries' positions
 - To present a positive Canadian model to other countries at UNFF6 of environmental organizations as equal partners in the official Canadian delegation

- Members of the UNFF6 official Canadian delegation:
 Keith Christie (Director General, Foreign Affairs Canada, Environment, Energy and Sustainable Development Bureau), Denise Rousseau (FAC), Jim Farrell (Director General, Natural Resources Canada, Policy, Economics and Industry Branch), Bill Singleton, Simon Bridge Sandra Ribey (NRCan/CFS), Ralph Roberts (CIDA, Environment), Boris Romaguer (CIDA), David Morel (Province of BC) and Peter Besseau (IDRC: International Model Forest Secretariat)

4. Other Issues and Questions

- ENGOs requested that **sustainable forestry as it relates to climate change and aboriginal traditional ecological knowledge** be reflected in Canada's position for a LBI at UNFF6.
 - It can be addressed during the discussion on Means and Implementation including recommendations on mitigating the effects of climate change and biodiversity ENGOs suggested writing a statement for UNFF6
- The **whole ecosystem, including conservation of forests** and reusing/reducing/recycling forest products (as opposed to a strictly lumber production approach) needs to be incorporated into the Canadian position
- UNFF6 can be a forum for encouraging **restoration and the redevelopment of wild forests**

DECISION:

ENGOs can write a statement in response to the "Canada's Objectives for the 6th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests" paper prepared for the official Canadian delegation and send it to Sandra Ribey (sribey@nrcan.gc.ca), who will pass it on to the official Canadian delegation for consideration.

5. Conclusions and Next Steps

- Post UNFF6: There needs to be consultation with stakeholders such as aboriginal peoples (as they are impacted by but do not necessarily benefit from the international agreements).
- It's too early to know what effects the new Conservative government will have on NRCan, but multilateral initiatives such as UNFF will be evaluated in the near future. Foreign Affairs will likely not be impacted significantly by the change of government.