

Official Communiqué

30 July 2010
Accra, Ghana

Presented by Lambert Okrah, Chairman of the MGI Steering Committee

From 26-30 July, 2010, representatives from Major Groups involved in the United Nations Forum on Forests met in Accra, Ghana for a five day, multi-stakeholder workshop to support the goals of sustainable forest management and poverty eradication.

The international workshop was hosted by the Government of Ghana and was supported financially by the governments of Norway, Finland, United Kingdom, Austria, and Canada, as well as by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO).

The meeting brought together approximately 70 key representatives from 30 different nations representing Major Groups, as well as representatives from governments and intergovernmental organizations.

The central goal of the event was to actively engage Major Groups and support the UNFF process by developing input and policy recommendations for the 9th session of the UN Forum on Forests on the theme “Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication”.

This workshop was unique, in that it was the first time ever that such a meeting in support of UNFF had been initiated and led by Major Groups.

Reflecting on the significance of the meeting, Jan McAlpine, the Director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat, noted: “this workshop comes at a beneficial time, and strengthening multi-stakeholder contributions is essential”

According to Joseph Cobbinah, a Ghanaian participant representing the Scientific and Technological Major Group, “this meeting presented a tremendous opportunity to bring together people with a wealth of practical knowledge and experience in order help shape and improve global forest policy”

During the workshop, participants underscored the importance of forests in providing diverse livelihood benefits, ecosystem services and biodiversity stores, and stressed that the livelihoods of forest-dependent people are integrally linked to the sustainability of their forests.

Participants recognized the many attempts to date of member governments and other stakeholders to advance SFM through the UNFF, and developed key recommendations linked to the themes of: Tenure Rights, Access and Benefit Sharing; Traditional Forest Related Knowledge; Community-Based Forest Enterprises; and Leadership for SFM among women, Indigenous Peoples and Other Marginalized Groups.

Major Groups-Led Initiative in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests

Applying Sustainable Forest Management to Poverty Reduction: Strengthening the Multi-Stakeholder Approach within the UNFF

To build on the gains so far made, the meeting produced a number of key initial recommendations, including:

- Further concrete steps should be taken to ensure meaningful participation from all stakeholders, including especially Women, Youth and Indigenous Peoples, in order to strengthen policy frameworks.
- Forest policy must address issues associated with equity in terms of access, rights, land and resources tenure, and benefits generated from forests. Reforms should be undertaken where necessary to ensure rights and responsibilities are upheld.
- Case studies that demonstrate innovative practice (such as participatory mapping) and successful implementation, should be highlighted, shared, and used to inform policy decisions.
- Forest-dependent peoples must have reliable access to forest resources, and must have a role in the decision-making structures that decide how the resources are to be used, and to whom the benefits from those resources will accrue.
- Policies must take into account local contexts in order to ensure that they are equitable and promote the livelihoods of forest-dependent peoples.
- Efforts of capacity building must be strengthened at all levels and among all groups (including Indigenous Peoples, Women, Youth and other marginalized groups) in order to effectively implement policies related to sustainable forest management (livelihoods, poverty reduction, etc).
- Community based forest enterprises that focus on sustainable, valued added goods and services should be promoted and supported, and payment for ecosystem services must be a viable option.
- National and international forest-related policies, laws, and institutions should recognize the importance and legitimacy of TFRK and local knowledge in maintaining forests and livelihood security for forest dependent peoples, and take steps to incorporate TFRK in planning and implementation.
- Research and knowledge generation that emphasizes the needs of forest-dependent communities must be encouraged, supported and enhanced. TFRK must be documented in close collaboration with knowledge-holders, and individuals and communities must receive fair compensation for use of their knowledge.
- More work should be done to integrate the achievements of other UN fora on issues that are vital to forest-dependent communities. Connections between the work of the UNFF and other related UN bodies must be strengthened and enhanced.

The effective participation of Major Groups is critical to the success of the UNFF process, and this workshop has helped take an important step forward, and has allowed the further development of alliances, partnerships and networking to advance essential work in sustainable forest management.