

Youth Participation in the UNFF: A role of Major Groups in the global forest policy dialogue

Youth have participated in the international forest policy dialogue since UNFF3. This year 15 forestry students are participating in UNFF6 on behalf of the Major Group Youth and Children, as well as also being included as official delegates of the Indonesian and Australian government delegations. Through outlining the current and potential future contributions of Youth in the UNFF, this non-paper both recognizes and advocates the importance of facilities that allow Youth and other Major Groups to be involved in the Forum.

Objectives of Youth participation

The primary objective of youth participation is to promote intergenerational equity in SFM through education and transfer of knowledge to the younger generations and access to natural resources. The goals of the participation of youth and children representatives are to:

- 1. Use our capacity as a worldwide youth network to inform the policy dialogue debate from the Youth's perspective.**
- 2. Demonstrate the potential of forest related education in the implementation of SFM and international forest policy processes.**
- 3. Advocate means to use and increase this potential.**
- 4. Promote the need and opportunities for stronger integration of forest related education in the international forest policy dialogue.**

Achievements and Contributions

Youth have contributed significantly to global forest policy processes through;

- Achieving recognition and actively participating as a Major Group in the UNFF;
- Assisting in the organization and facilitation of significant discussions in Side Events including;
 - *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers study*, UNFF4
 - *Linking the UN decade of education with education on SFM and UNESCO*, UNFF5
 - *Contributions of Civil Society to Sustainable Forest Management: From Policy Development to Implementation*, UNFF6.
- Informal awareness raising through establishing professional relationships and roles within government delegations; and
- Fully representative participation and knowledge sharing through sophisticated worldwide student and education networks of the International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA) and the Forest Policy Education Network (FPEN).

Youth contributions for the future of UNFF:

- Provide a realistic evaluation of the process and outcomes of the UNFF as a representative subset of the generation that will bear the future burden of the decisions made.
- Facilitate capacity building for future policy makers through practical experience.
- Provide a global educational network of students as a resource for both views and future collaborations of Youth within IAF implementation at the regional and sub-regional levels.
- Initiate international working relationships between Youth that lead to significant professional networks in the future.
- Assist in the collaboration of UNFF with other UN processes in which Youth also participate.
- Provide strong links to higher education institutions around the world as centres for technological, scientific research and capacity building.
- Provide a source of innovative thinking, new ideas and a fresh perspective to the forest policy dialogue.

Youth as part of the Major Groups at UNFF6:

1. *request* that any reference to NGOs, E-NGOs or civil society should be replaced by the term Major Groups, as articulated in Agenda 21;
2. *support* the two year cycle of the meetings on the global level;
3. *support* linkages proposed between regional meetings with the global policy forum of the UNFF (through existing regional structures);
4. *need* to play an active role in both regional and global policy processes that the forum decides on;
5. *strive* for a better balance and better representation of Major Groups from all regions in the process*;
6. *need* to be involved in the design, formulation and evaluation of the Multi Year Program of Work to promote transparency and broad participation;
7. *need* to be involved in the design and formulation of frameworks for the monitoring , reporting and assessment of actions agreed on by the UNFF;
8. *strongly* support the proposals of the EU on intensifying the role of Major Groups in identifying and implementing CPF activities⁺; and
9. *advocate* for active involvement in partnership-related and capacity-building activities at all levels, including partnership fairs and learning centres*.

*agreed language of the Commission on Sustainable Development

⁺ EU proposal 16 February 2006 (III.1, VI.3, VIII.5)

Web references:

International Forest Policy Education Network: www.forestpolicy.net

International Forestry Students Association: www.ifsa.net