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**Implementation of the proposals for action of the
Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental
Forum on Forests and the plan of action of the
United Nations Forum on Forests: progress in
implementation: rehabilitation and conservation
strategies for countries with low forest cover**

Progress in implementation of rehabilitation and conservation strategies for countries with low forest cover

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report summarizes progress in implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) relating to low forest cover countries. Reference is made to national reports to the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, among other sources. The precise definition of a low forest cover country is still uncertain; here, a threshold of less than 10 per cent of land area covered by forest has been adopted, giving a total of 67 low forest cover countries. The expert meeting held in Tehran in 1999 helped greatly to provide clearer guidance on the issues that are most important for forest management in low forest cover countries. The launch of the Tehran Process and the founding of its secretariat represent additional steps forward. However, progress has been slow in establishing the full capability of the Tehran Process and its secretariat, and additional resources and personnel are needed from a number of international sources.

* E/CN.18/2002/1.



In general, low forest cover countries appear to have made limited progress towards implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. Despite some growth in the recognition of the importance of forests in low forest cover countries, progress in enhancing forest cover has been limited. There is little evidence that restoration of degraded forests or re-establishment of native forest landscapes has been given any priority. It is also difficult to assess what progress has been made in forest conservation among low forest cover countries. Data on unique forest types and their protection are limited. Technical and institutional capacities have been identified by most low forest cover countries as serious limitations in progress towards implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action, especially for the drafting and implementation of national forest programmes. International cooperation and financial assistance are required to help remedy those problems. Donor countries and institutions will need to recognize the importance of forests to poverty alleviation in low forest cover countries and to make long-term commitments of resources in order to assist them in improving their capacities. Low forest cover countries themselves need to accord higher priority to forest issues, including the mobilization of domestic resources.

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I. Introduction

1. In large areas of the world, especially in many developing countries, forest cover is limited in extent. In those countries, scarce forest and wooded lands are particularly significant in terms of their economic, social, cultural, environmental and subsistence values. Low forest cover poses special challenges in meeting national needs through sustainable development and ensuring adequate access to the many goods and services provided by forests, including wood and non-wood products, watershed protection, soil conservation, biodiversity conservation and carbon storage. Strategies for rehabilitation and conservation of forests are crucial steps towards sustainable development in low forest cover areas.

2. The present report has been prepared to support the deliberations of the United Nations Forum on Forests by describing progress made towards implementing the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) proposals for action relating to the theme of “Rehabilitation and conservation strategies for countries with low forest cover”. The scope of the report has been limited by the short interval between the first and second sessions of the Forum. The report was prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as the focal agency within the Collaborative Partnership on Forests for this Forum programme element. Inputs and comments from other Partnership members and the Forum secretariat were provided during the drafting process.

II. Background: summary of relevant IPF/IFF proposals

3. For the purposes of the present report, the IPF and IFF proposals for action relevant to the theme “Progress in implementation on rehabilitation and conservation strategies for countries with low forest cover” are summarized below in groupings of related actions, based on a practitioner’s guide to the IPF proposals produced by the Six Country Initiative¹ and an Australian summary of the IPF proposals for action (a number of proposals specifically related to indigenous peoples and traditional forest-related knowledge will be under discussion at the fourth session of the Forum and have therefore been omitted from the summary; the summarized proposals are not intended to replace the detailed negotiated text; references are provided to the relevant paragraphs of the IPF and IFF reports that contain the full text of the proposals for action).

Table 1
Summary of relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action

Summary proposal for action	Reference	
	IPF ^a	IFF ^b
A. Implementation of forest-related decisions at the national level		
I. Promote the regeneration and restoration of degraded forest areas, including involving indigenous people, local communities, forest dwellers and forest owners in their protection and management.	58 (b) (iii) 58 (c)	129 (c)
II. Plan and manage forest plantations to enhance production and provision of goods and services, paying due attention to relevant social, economic and environmental considerations in the selection of species, areas and silvicultural systems.	58 (b) (ii)	
III. Analyse and take into account the related social, economic and environmental implications, costs and benefits of non-wood substitutes and imports of forest products.	58 (b) (iv)	
IV. Seek long-term security of forest goods and services through the development of national forest programmes for sustainable forest management.	58 (b) (i)	
V. Develop and implement appropriate planning and management strategies for the representative protection and conservation of all types of forests on an ecosystem basis, incorporating the full range of forest values, including cultural, social, spiritual, environmental and economic aspects.	46 (c)	85 (a) and (b)
VI. Develop adequate research and information systems, and improve linkage between forest science and forest policy processes in order to allow for timely decisions related to national forest policies and programmes.	58 (b) (vii)	96 (c)
VII. Take positive action towards forest conservation, by establishing or expanding networks of protected areas, buffer zones and ecological corridors in order to conserve biodiversity, and to safeguard their water supplies and uses in areas affected by drought.	58 (b) (v) 58 (c) 46 (c)	
VIII. Establish joint protected forest areas and guidelines for collaborative management of ecologically important or unique transboundary forests.		86
IX. Develop and implement methodologies and criteria to assess the adequacy, consistency, condition and effectiveness of protected areas, and their management, incorporating reserve design principles that identify the need for new protected areas.		85 (e) 88 89
X. Improve cooperation, coordination and partnerships in support of sustainable forest management within a national forest programme, by involving relevant stakeholders including indigenous people, forest owners, women and local communities in forest decision-making, and utilizing appropriate expertise in international organizations.	17 (b), (f) and (i); 40 (e), (g) and (n); and 77 (c) and (f)	19 (b) 64 (b) 66 140 (a)

<i>Summary proposal for action</i>		<i>Reference</i>	
		<i>IPF^a</i>	<i>IFF^b</i>
XI.	Promote policies and regulations aimed at creating a favourable environment to attract domestic and foreign private sectors, as well as local community investment, for sustainable forest management, conservation and protection of forests.	69 (d)	
XII.	Develop and implement partnership mechanisms to engage forest owners, private sector, indigenous and local communities in the planning and management of forest conservation areas.		84 85 (b), (c) and (d)
XIII.	Develop and implement a range of innovative mechanisms for financing and encouraging forest conservation, including economic incentives, private contracts, taxes and charges, tax deductions, and possible returns from carbon sequestration, in accordance with, and within the context of the implementation of relevant articles of the Kyoto Protocol; and to address cross-sectoral policies, structural adjustment packages and perverse incentives.		85 (f) 90
B. International cooperation in financial assistance and technology transfer			
XIV.	Contribute to a global and regional assessment of the status of protected forest areas.		85 (g)
XV.	Assist low forest cover countries in sustainably managing their forests and in some cases expand their forest cover, through the provision of financial resources and transfer of appropriate technology, as well as through the exchange of information and access to technical know-how and knowledge.	58 (c)	30 (b)
XVI.	Embark on capacity-building programmes at the national, subnational and local levels to promote effective participation in decision-making with respect to forests.	58 (b) (vi)	
XVII.	Assist low forest cover countries in building capacity for data gathering and analysis so as to enable them to monitor their forest resources.	58 (e)	
XVIII.	Support and promote local community involvement in sustainable forest management through technical guidance, capacity-building and information dissemination, provision of economic incentives and legal frameworks; and by supporting direct participation of all interested parties in forest policy discussions and planning.	77 (f) 70 (c) 40 (b)	64 (f) and (i)
XIX.	Provide financial support to activities in developing countries related to forest conservation and to the implementation and management of protected areas in the surrounding landscape, in accordance with national action plans.		87

	<i>Summary proposal for action</i>	<i>Reference</i>	
		<i>IPF^a</i>	<i>IFF^b</i>
XX.	Continue the implementation of various measures aimed at effective, equitable, development-oriented and durable solutions to the external debt and debt-servicing problems of developing countries, particularly the poorest and heavily indebted countries, including exploring the opportunities for innovative mechanisms, such as debt-for-nature swaps related to forests and other environmentally-oriented debt reduction programmes.	67 (g)	
XXI.	Improve the efficiency of and procedures for international cooperation to support the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests in low forest cover countries.	58 (d)	
C. International organizations and multilateral institutions and instruments			
XXII.	FAO called upon to develop a workable and precise definition of low forest cover, applicable to all countries and suitable for use in the forest resources assessment in the year 2000.	58 (a)	
XXIII.	Explore innovative ways to both use existing financial mechanisms more effectively and generate new and additional public and private financial resources in order to support activities for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.	67 (f)	
XXIV.	Undertake efforts to achieve a common international understanding on concepts, essential terms and definitions used in developing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.	115 (d)	

^a Numbers refer to paragraph(s) in IPF final report (E/CN.17/1997/12).

^b Numbers refer to paragraph(s) in IFF final report (E/CN.17/2000/14).

III. Implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and of the plan of action of the United Nations Forum on Forests

A. Progress in implementation

4. An open-ended international meeting of experts on special needs and requirements of developing countries with low forest cover and unique types of forest was held in Tehran in October 1999. The meeting provided a forum for the discussion of a number of key issues among representatives of Governments of low forest cover countries, NGOs and relevant international organizations. The recommendations of the meeting are largely reflected in the proposals for action summarized in section II above. The Tehran Process was established at the meeting as a mechanism to bring together low forest cover countries and to provide a forum for addressing the specific needs of developing countries with low forest cover. A secretariat hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran was established; its strategy and action plan emphasizes its role in coordinating activities and exchange of experience among low forest cover countries and in disseminating information via a web site.

5. The meeting also recommended that intergovernmental forest policy deliberations recognize that many low forest cover regions within high forest cover countries have concerns similar to those of low forest cover countries, and should share their experience on progress made with respect to policy implementation. The meeting also recommended that low forest cover countries review their forest policies, taking into account the wide range of societal needs that can be met from their forest sectors and emphasizing non-wood forest products; increased market access for forest products; environmental services; and food security. The recommendations further emphasized the importance of cross-sectoral linkages, national forest programmes and participatory approaches involving civil society.

6. Limited progress has been made on the development of a more precise definition of low forest cover. In 1998, UNEP and the International Union of Forestry Research Organization (IUFRO) developed a paper on defining low forest cover, which proposed a number of different bases upon which low forest cover could be defined. Although the Tehran meeting discussed that paper, no firm conclusion about the best definition was reached. Most papers supporting discussion at the Tehran meeting used a threshold of 10 per cent land area covered by forest, and addressed the resulting group of 70 countries. The publication of the *Forest Resources Assessment* (FRA 2000) by FAO applied a globally consistent definition of forest as land with a tree canopy cover of more than 10 per cent and area of more than 0.5 hectares, in which the trees should be able to reach a minimum height of 5 metres. FRA 2000 indicates that 64 countries meet that criterion, but the new definition of forest cover meant that a number of developed countries previously included among the low forest cover countries (e.g., Australia, United Kingdom) are no longer included. Three developing countries considered to be low forest cover countries on the basis of previous forest cover estimates now have just over 10 per cent forest cover according to FRA 2000. Information from those countries was included in the preparation of the present report, which is therefore based on a total of 67 low forest cover countries.

7. A number of activities are being undertaken by countries, multilateral organizations and stakeholders either in direct response to the IPF/IFF proposals or in support of them. The present report attempts to provide an overview of such activities, corresponding to the specific proposals for action. However, there is currently no formal monitoring and reporting system within the Forum; the findings of the present report should therefore be considered as tentative and incomplete. In order to assess action towards implementation, the following sources were consulted:

- First and second national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity (of 53 low forest cover country parties to the Convention, 22 submitted first national reports, 11 submitted second national reports);
- Thematic reports on forest ecosystems to the Convention (nine from low forest cover countries);
- National reports on forests to the Commission on Sustainable Development (from 24 low forest cover countries);
- National reports to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (40 from low forest cover countries);

- National action plans to combat desertification (11 low forest cover countries);
- A number of studies and contributions by members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, NGOs and others;
- Voluntary reports to the Forum: four countries submitted preliminary voluntary reports on how they are organizing the assessment of progress; five countries (including one low forest cover country) submitted more complete reports;
- Responses to an informal questionnaire circulated to more than 100 national contact points; nine responses were received and analysed, one from a low forest cover country.

8. The actions towards implementing the IPF and IFF proposals for action on rehabilitating and conserving forests in countries with low forest cover are summarized in the annex.

1. Country experience and lessons learned

9. Low forest cover countries are commonly but not exclusively characterized by arid or semi-arid climates, poor soils and extensive rangelands. They are particularly prone to degradation of forest cover and desertification caused by drought and destructive land-use practices, including overgrazing. Forest products in low forest cover countries are predominantly for subsistence use, including non-wood forest products and fuelwood. Low forest cover countries are often dependent on imports to meet their needs for wood and wood products. Although the cost of importing forest products poses no economic problem for the few low forest cover countries that are prosperous, many others are among the poorest countries of the world.

10. The great importance of the environmental functions of forests are increasingly being recognized in low forest cover countries. Forests are essential for watershed protection, helping to prevent erosion and reduce sediment loads in streams, conserving scarce water and soil resources, and reducing the risk of flooding. The important role of forests in the conservation of biological diversity in low forest cover countries is also recognized and reported by many of the low forest cover countries that are signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Table 2

Change in forest cover among low forest cover countries, 1990-2000

	<i>Increasing forest cover</i>	<i>Decreasing forest cover</i>	<i>No measurable change</i>
Number of low forest cover countries	17	15	35

Source: FAO, FRA 2000.

11. Some low forest cover countries have successfully expanded their forest cover in recent years, but many more have continued to lose forest or have seen no change in cover (see table 2). To date, most of the gain in forest cover has been through plantation activities, with relatively little effort devoted to restoration of degraded natural forests. Although much afforestation is intended for protective and environmental roles rather than for production and economic outputs, its administration is often via agricultural authorities, with little or no input from

conservation organizations. In some cases, reforestation of degraded forest lands has caused serious conflicts with local people who previously used such areas as common grazing lands. Reforestation sites have provided only limited benefits for local people in most countries, other than the employment opportunities provided in plantation establishment and maintenance activities.

12. Although a few countries have made substantial progress, the development and implementation of national forest programmes and policies has proved problematic for a high proportion of low forest cover countries. Such programmes have most frequently stalled owing to a lack of internal support and a decline in external financial assistance. Because of the small size of forest resources in those countries, forest matters are often the responsibility of government agencies outside the forest sector. Cross-sectoral cooperation is therefore particularly important in low forest cover countries. Several countries have made efforts to implement integrated watershed programmes involving the institutions responsible for conservation, forestry, agriculture and rural development. In some cases, efforts have been made to introduce participatory approaches encouraging involvement of local populations in planning and management of land-use systems. Cross-sectoral efforts are also needed for the development of livelihood opportunities for rural populations in forest areas.

13. Forest protection is variable among low forest cover countries and the data available to assess it are limited. Some low forest cover countries have recently adopted policies for expansion and management of protected areas and national parks, and have established new protected areas. According to the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), a smaller proportion of all forests (7.9 per cent) is included in protected areas in low forest cover countries than the global average (10.4 per cent).

14. Forest institutions in the low forest cover countries share a number of constraints. Most report a lack of financial and staff resources. The need for training and development of human resources has been underlined. One of the main problems affecting all low forest cover countries is the lack of reliable, consistent and up-to-date forest information.

2. Emerging issues relevant to country implementation

15. Low forest cover countries are in need of approaches for restoring forest cover in ways that address the full range of forest functions, goods and services, including poverty alleviation. Such approaches will need to include using native species, addressing the underlying causes of forest loss and cross-sectoral planning at the landscape scale. The forest landscape restoration approach under development by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) provides an example of such an approach. Case studies and practice in Central America, South-West China and East Africa (by WWF and partners) provide useful examples for low forest cover countries. The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) is also developing forest restoration guidelines, in cooperation with FAO and IUCN.

16. A second emerging issue highlighted by a large number of low forest cover countries is wild fire, which impedes both conservation of existing forests and efforts at rehabilitation and afforestation. As noted in the report on deforestation (E/CN.18/2002/6), the results of analyses of the underlying causes of fire need to be

transferred into policy. Such initiatives as Project FireFight and The Global Fire Monitoring Center provide support for identifying and responding to fire risks. However, to date those initiatives have focused principally on countries and areas with large forest resources; they need to be encouraged to generate research and tools that are applicable in areas of low forest cover. Several low forest cover countries have also identified illegal logging as a significant pressure on forests. The emerging global discussions of forest law enforcement (see E/CN.18/2002/___) need to develop tools and approaches that can be adopted by countries with low forest cover for use in their own forest policies and programmes.

17. Valuing ecosystem services of forests has been identified by several low forest cover countries as a crucial step in increasing the prominence of forests on their national agendas. Work by the World Resources Institute, IUCN and others on quantifying and expressing the value of forests in providing water and other ecosystem services (e.g., in Eastern Africa) is likely to prove useful in that context. Another recurring issue in discussions of low forest cover is the need for mechanisms to include low forest cover areas of high forest cover countries in the process and to ensure that they can exchange information and benefit from the experience shared. The Tehran Process could provide an appropriate mechanism for promoting such exchange of information. An additional issue for low forest cover countries is the long-term commitment required for them to be able to achieve sustainable forest management. That issue will need to be recognized and addressed by Governments and donors alike.

3. Promoting public participation

18. Since forests are not extensive in low forest cover countries, they are usually not an important source of revenue for the national Government in terms of industrial timber production. It is therefore more likely that the greatest importance of tree and forest resources in those countries will be in the area of rural livelihood support, especially for the poor, which will provide a favourable environment for public participation in forest management. In spite of their considerable development during recent years, NGOs involved in environmental issues still play a relatively insignificant role in many low forest cover countries. Nonetheless, participation of NGOs and intersectoral dialogue have been increasingly secured in national forest programme processes in some low forest cover countries. In some cases, efforts have been made to introduce participatory approaches that encourage involvement of local populations in planning and management of watershed activities and improvement of land-use systems. Some countries are using national forest funds to promote local management by channelling assistance to subnational and municipal governments or to community groups.

19. Some low forest cover countries have active ongoing participatory forestry initiatives, which have provided useful experience in the application of participatory and collaborative approaches to management of scarce or fragile forest resources. Such experience deals with issues of land tenure, pastoralism and nomadism, poverty and population growth, migration, desertification, and other topics of interest to low forest cover countries. In some cases, it has been observed that although the participatory approach is very effective it takes a long time to apply. FAO has promoted increased public participation in forest and land management through a number of projects in low forest cover countries. Many donors have also

supported those approaches in a range of countries and should be encouraged to support them in low forest cover countries.

4. Enabling environment

20. In many countries, there have been significant improvements regarding the legal framework for sustainable forest management and forestry-related policies. At the national level, a key problem is the low commitment and priority given to the forest sector, often caused by failure to demonstrate the contribution of forests to socio-economic development. Accordingly, opportunities for funding are often missed by not linking forests to priority concerns, such as poverty reduction, human health and well-being and sustainable development. Other important factors in constraining investment are insecure tenure; policy and market failures; high levels of actual and perceived risk owing to factors outside sectoral control; lack of suitable credit options; and weak and unstable regulatory environments that encourage rather than discourage unsustainable or illegal land-use practices. In many low forest cover countries, there is a need for external public funding (official development assistance (ODA)) to support capacity-building, development of appropriate legal frameworks, and creating the socio-economic conditions conducive to investing in sustainable forest management. Many developing countries face a general lack of funds and skilled people, poor agricultural practices and problems of communication. As a result, practical implementation of national forest programmes and criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management are still weak.

5. International and regional cooperation

21. The emerging Tehran Process and its secretariat provide an important opportunity for cooperation and collaboration among low forest cover countries. However, care will be needed to ensure that the process reaches constituents beyond the Middle East and North Africa. The incorporation of input from, and discussions with representatives of low forest cover areas within high forest cover countries will also be important. The Conventions to Combat Desertification and on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change provide important forums for collaboration among low forest cover countries.

22. The strategy and plan of action of the Tehran Process secretariat calls for the creation of regional centres of excellence that will promote cooperation and research on key issues for low forest cover countries. A number of low forest cover countries are participating in regional programmes for the exchange of information, particularly in Africa. Regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Timber Organization, the Economic Community of West African States, the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) could put particular effort into coordination and regional cooperation on forests and wildlife, especially into information networking. With support from Dutch trust funds, FAO, together with the low forest cover country secretariat, SADC, CILSS, IGAD, UNEP, the International Center for Research in Agroforestry, regional forestry commissions and national collaborators are developing, validating and implementing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management in dry zones of Africa, Asia and Near East; preparing national reports; and conducting an international meeting on criteria and indicators for low

forest cover countries. They are also conducting case studies in Tunisia, Oman and Iraq in the Near East and Mali, Ethiopia and Namibia in the African region to evaluate the role of planted forests, trees outside forests and the significance of non-wood forest products.

B. Means of implementation

1. Finance

23. Lack of financial resources is widely acknowledged to be a major constraint to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals. According to the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee analyses, two low forest cover countries were among the top 10 recipients of forestry aid in the period 1994-1998. About 20 per cent of World Bank macroeconomic adjustment lending between 1992 and 1998 went to countries with 20 per cent forest cover or less. The declining trend in ODA is recognized by a number of low forest cover countries as a significant factor constraining implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. African countries are faced with the sharpest declines in overseas development assistance for forestry. The African Development Bank (ADB) had planned to dedicate US\$ 245 million to forestry for the period 1995 to 1997. Because of the low priority given to forestry by Governments in the region, that funding did not materialize. ADB forestry loans have generally gone first to forest industries (43 per cent) and second to forest conservation/production (31 per cent), while social/rural forestry captures 26 per cent.

24. The need for international cooperation towards sustainable forest management, including financial support, capacity-building, research and transfer of technology, as stressed by IFF, has not been adequately met in Africa. The region has not benefited from consolidated, regionally rationalized financial support from developed countries. Traditional bilateral support has remained scattered and has had little sustained impact. The mechanisms for overseas development assistance have not promoted collective actions by countries in the region. Yet African countries are in great need of networking for information exchange and capacity-sharing. Africa needs a consolidated forestry fund to mobilize collective action and share its limited capacity for sustainable forest management.

25. Between 1991 and 2001, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) allocated \$538.2 million in GEF funding to 87 projects within forest ecosystems,² accounting for almost 40 per cent of its biodiversity portfolio and 11 per cent of all GEF allocation. About 80 per cent of GEF projects in the current forest portfolio have focused largely on protected areas. As of 2000, only 8 per cent of the GEF allocation for forest projects was directed to low forest cover countries.

26. A number of additional mechanisms may help low forest cover countries to access finance to support activities relating to the rehabilitation and conservation of forests. The global mechanism for securing funding for the Convention to Combat Desertification is not a fund but a catalyst to mobilize multi-channel financing sources for the Convention; it emphasizes, inter alia, partnership-building and a multiplier effect. Ideally, Convention funding should be built into the development plans and budgets of concerned countries, with external inputs being used to leverage other resources. The lack of a specific financial instrument poses special

challenges, and fund-raising for the Convention has not met desires or expectations (the mechanism has only US\$ 6 million for 2001-2002). It has been suggested that the mechanism could link Convention action programmes to combat land degradation with corresponding actions in the forest sector.

27. Some countries are using national forest funds to promote local management and to provide general services of benefit to private forest landowners. One of the most common uses of funds is to give general support for afforestation and reforestation. The forest fund may be derived from government budgets, targeted taxation and/or amounts collected during forest-related law enforcement. An annual spending plan, with outside approval and auditing, is a common requirement of forest fund legislation.

28. The newly proposed revised World Bank forestry strategy acknowledges a need to focus on forest-poor areas for poverty reduction and integrating forests into sustainable economic development but does not acknowledge any global values of forests in those areas. For example, for the Middle East and North Africa, the priorities according to the new strategy are (a) to increase employment of the poor in reforestation, conservation and rehabilitation activities, build stakeholder incentives to manage resources sustainably and develop local participation in those processes; (b) incorporate forest issues in comprehensive development frameworks and develop linkages to forests in cross-sectoral investments, especially in rural development and water management; and (c) undertake further research on the linkages between forest land management and broader economic and institutional reforms.

2. Transfer of environmentally sound technologies

29. The Tehran Process secretariat has established a web site (<http://www/lfccs.net>) to enhance information exchange among low forest cover countries. It may also help to coordinate capacity-building and experience-sharing among low forest cover countries. Although there is currently a high rate of technological innovation, many technological developments remain unrecognized, underutilized or inadequately shared; this is particularly true of new technologies, which are especially relevant to countries with low forest cover. Some countries are applying specific technologies to combating deforestation, including:

- Increased application of remote sensing and geographical information systems technologies for the assessment of the condition and extent of forest cover;
- Development of information systems for the assessment of forest areas, including development of tools to provide an early warning service for specific threats, such as fire.

However, many low forest cover countries have not been able to implement such technologies because of a lack of technical capacity and financial resources.

3. Capacity-building

30. Many countries have identified the need for capacity-building to help implement the IPF/IFF proposals for action. Key needs include implementing capacity-building programmes for government institutions to help foster cross-sectoral policy harmonization, for forest and environment sector personnel to increase the range of tools available for rehabilitating and conserving forest cover,

and for local communities to increase their participation in forest management. Well established forestry research institutions exist only in some low forest cover countries. Most of their research efforts still concentrate on technical forestry problems. There is a need to expand their expertise to address environmental and socio-economic issues, as well as policy analysis.

31. University-level educational institutions with forestry training components have traditionally existed in several Middle Eastern countries. Training in less traditional aspects of forest management, including conservation management, is less developed. Lack of skilled personnel still constitutes a major constraint in forestry development and conservation in many low forest cover countries. Awareness-raising, especially with respect to multiple values of forests, is very important for low forest cover countries. The Tehran Process secretariat could play an important role in generating materials for this purpose.

IV. Conclusions

32. The expert meeting held in Tehran in 1999 helped greatly to provide clearer guidance on the issues that are most important for forest management in low forest cover countries. The launch of the Tehran Process and the founding of its secretariat represent additional steps forward. However, progress has been slow in establishing the full capability of the Process and its secretariat, and additional resources and personnel are needed from a number of regional and international sources.

33. More generally, low forest cover countries appear to have made limited progress towards implementation of many of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, but the precise degree of progress is difficult to assess because of the limited information available. Forest values and benefits and consequently forest sector activities continue to have a relatively low profile within many low forest cover countries, resulting in limited availability of financial resources for forest management. There has been limited progress in the development of national forest programmes per se, but some progress can be seen in other forms of natural resource management and poverty alleviation strategies. The inclusion of forest goods and services in such strategies is likely to enhance progress towards sustainable forest management in low forest cover countries.

34. Despite some growth in the recognition of the importance of forests in low forest cover countries, progress in enhancing forest cover has been limited. What progress has been made has been principally through plantation programmes. There is little evidence that restoration of degraded forests or re-establishment of native forest landscapes has been given any priority. It is also difficult to assess what progress has been made in forest conservation among low forest cover countries. Data on unique forest types and their protection are limited.

35. Technical and institutional capacities have been identified by most low forest cover countries as serious limitations in progress towards implementing the IPF/IFF proposals for action, especially drafting and implementation of national forest programmes. International cooperation and financial assistance are clearly required to help remedy those problems. Donor countries and institutions will need to recognize the importance of forests to poverty alleviation in low forest cover countries and make long-term commitments of resources to improving their capacities. However, there is also a need for low forest cover countries themselves

to accord higher priority to forest issues, including the mobilization of domestic resources.

36. The present report identifies six emerging issues in the discussions of forest rehabilitation and conservation in low forest cover countries. Some, such as wildfire and forest law enforcement, are also key to discussions of other elements of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum, but will need to be addressed from the perspective of low forest cover countries as well as that of more forest-rich countries. Others, including restoration approaches, valuing ecosystem services and identifying low forest cover areas, are more specific to the needs of low forest cover countries and should be the focus of specific Forum actions directed at supporting those countries. The encouragement of long-term commitment to financial support and other programmes in support of sustainable forest management is important throughout the work programme of the Forum, especially for the low forest cover countries.

V. Points for discussion

37. The Forum may wish to:

(a) Invite donor community to support the continued development of the Tehran Process and its secretariat, and to mobilize financial and technical resources to make the Process fully operational;

(b) Request the ad hoc expert group on finance to be established at the second session of the Forum to consider examining the feasibility of developing a special fund, perhaps under the aegis of the global mechanism of the Convention to Combat Desertification, specifically to address rehabilitation and conservation of forests in low forest cover countries;

(c) Invite countries with low forest cover to:

(i) Report on the protection status of unique forest types;

(ii) Accord high priority to forest issues and the full range of values and benefits of forests, including through the mobilization of domestic resources;

(iii) Identify ways and means of recognizing and communicating the multiple values and benefits of forests that are specifically applicable for use by low forest cover countries;

(d) Invite UNEP, with assistance and support from Collaborative Partnership on Forests partners, to prepare an in-depth study on approaches for restoring forest cover in ways that address the full range of forest functions, goods and services and disseminate results via the Tehran Process and other mechanisms accessible to low forest cover countries.

Notes

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “Practitioners guide to the implementation of the IPF proposals for action”, paper prepared in support of the work of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (1999).

² See A. Madhvani, “An assessment of data on ODA financial flows in the forest sector” (London, Overseas Development Institute, 1999).

Annex

Actions towards implementation

A. Implementation of forest-related decisions at the national level

<i>Summarized proposal</i>	<i>Action towards implementation</i>
I. Regeneration and restoration of degraded forest areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of low forest cover countries submitting second national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2 per cent report no measures taken to rehabilitate and restore ecosystems, 8 per cent report some measures in place and 3 per cent report that potential measures are under review. • Forest degradation is mentioned repeatedly as a problem, especially in national action plans to combat desertification. • A few countries have given importance to planting with native species rather than exotics.
II. Plan and manage forest plantations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly all low forest cover countries reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Convention on Biological Diversity have afforestation through plantation as a major component of their forest sector activities, and many have specific targets for the forest cover that they intend to generate by this means. • According to <i>FRA 2000</i>, the 67 low forest cover countries together have over 10 million hectares (ha) of forest plantations; nearly 10 per cent of their forest cover is plantation, while globally plantations represent less than 5 per cent of all forest cover. • Plantations in low forest cover countries represent nearly 6 per cent of a global total of almost 187 million ha; low forest cover countries' annual plantation establishment (279,000 ha), is also 6 per cent of the global total.
III. Costs and benefits of non-wood substitutes and imports of forest products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several low forest cover countries have reported to the Commission on Sustainable Development programmes to promote use of non-wood fuels (mostly butane) in areas where pressure on forests is high; however, estimates of the costs of replacing fuelwood by oil are very high, except in oil-producing countries. • Some countries report that low energy costs do not reduce pressure from fuelwood use. • Recycling has proved an important mechanism for reducing demands for forest products in at least one low forest cover country. • Shortage of forest resources reduces low forest cover countries' abilities to promote use of wood as alternative to non-renewable resources.
IV. Development of national forest programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to FAO, out of 27 low forest cover countries for which information is available, 11 are implementing national forest programmes; two have ongoing planning processes; 10 have stalled in the early stages of programme planning and preparation; and four have drafted programmes but failed to implement them. • 60 per cent of low forest cover countries either have no national forest programme or failed to respond to FAO inquiries on the subject. • Most low forest cover countries reporting to the Convention on Biological Diversity report little progress on incorporating biodiversity importance into forest planning and management. • 13 low forest cover countries of 52 that are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have national biodiversity strategies and action plans in place.

<i>Summarized proposal</i>	<i>Action towards implementation</i>
V. Strategies for the representative protection and conservation of all types of forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 per cent of low forest cover countries reporting to the Conference of Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification have national action plans to combat desertification. • Based on the second national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity, most (six of seven) responding low forest cover countries are implementing an ecosystem approach to forest conservation and sustainable use. • Most low forest cover countries place a high priority on in situ conservation of biodiversity; one low forest cover country ranks it as of medium priority. • Five reporting low forest cover countries have a relatively complete system of protected areas in place, one has a system under development, one has a national review of protected areas in place and one has a national protected areas plan in place. • Most reporting low forest cover countries indicate that resource availability for appropriate in situ conservation within their countries is limiting or severely limiting; one country reports that resource availability is adequate or good.
VI. Research and information systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the low forest cover countries reporting to the Convention on Biological Diversity on forests felt that they had made little progress in sharing scientific and technical information or approaches and tools to improve forest practices with respect to biodiversity; most also reported little progress in prioritizing research activities or disseminating research results.
VII. Establish or expand networks of protected areas and safeguard water supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to UNEP-WCMC, nearly 8 per cent of forest cover in low forest cover countries is within protected areas, as compared with a global average of approximately 10 per cent; however, the available data on forest cover and protected areas for many low forest cover countries are of poor quality. • Around 14 per cent of mangrove forests in low forest cover countries are protected, a level equivalent to the global average of mangrove protection. • Catchment forests are protected in some low forest cover countries but often on an ad hoc basis. • 22 per cent of low forest cover countries submitting first national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity have protected areas; no clear distinction is given as to whether such areas are representative forest-protected areas. • 15 per cent of low forest cover countries actively indicated in first national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity that they plan to expand their protected areas.
VIII. Protection and management of transboundary forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of "common" watersheds is specified as a priority regional activity in the Tehran Process secretariat strategy and action plan. • 33 per cent of low forest cover countries submitting second national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity have not developed management practices for transboundary protected areas, 22 per cent have done so to a limited extent and 11 per cent to a significant extent.
IX. Assess effectiveness of protected areas and their management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWF has recently developed a rapid assessment and prioritization methodology to assess the management status of protected area systems; the methodology has been field-tested in one low forest cover country and will soon be applied in another.

<i>Summarized proposal</i>	<i>Action towards implementation</i>
X. Improve coordination and coordination and partnerships in support of sustainable forest management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In first national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2 per cent of low forest cover countries indicated that they had some (usually rudimentary) method of evaluating protected area management effectiveness; 11 per cent of low forest cover countries were planning or developing such methodologies. • Of low forest cover countries submitting second national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity, most have nationally adopted guidelines for the selection, establishment and management of protected areas. • The establishment of the Tehran Process and its secretariat will improve coordination and cooperation among low forest cover countries. • Fifteen low forest cover countries have at least drafted national forestry programmes, 12 national action programmes to combat desertification, 13 have national biodiversity strategies and action plans; the degree of participation and cooperation involved in drafting them varies. • Some low forest cover countries reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development remarked on difficulties in communication between the forest sector and wider society. • Only one low forest cover country reporting to the Convention on Biological Diversity had promoted cooperation on conservation and sustainable use of forest biological resources.
XI. Policies to attract investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some countries have offered tax breaks for retaining trees on private lands. • Others have provided grants to farmers to promote tree planting, especially for shelter belts.
XII. Partnership mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one of nine low forest cover countries reporting to the Convention on Biological Diversity had promoted cooperation on conservation and sustainable use of forest resources. • 9 per cent of low forest cover countries submitting first national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity were actively forming or engaged in partnership mechanisms. • Second national reports submitted to the Convention on Biological Diversity by low forest cover countries indicate that approximately 90 per cent have undertaken relevant measures. • A team of specialists on participation and partnership in Forestry had been established by the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training in order to clarify the concept of participation and to develop a conceptual framework.
XIII. Innovative mechanisms for financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four developing low forest cover countries have national forest funds. • 40 low forest cover countries signatories to the Convention to Combat Desertification can potentially make use of the global mechanisms of the Convention to obtain funding for forest work • Incentive measures are afforded high or medium priority by 66 per cent of low forest cover countries submitting Convention on Biological Diversity second national reports; 66 per cent of low forest cover countries have or are reviewing policies to promote incentives for forest conservation and sustainable use.

<i>Summarized proposal</i>	<i>Action towards implementation</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 65 per cent of low forest cover countries reporting to the Convention on Biological Diversity have reviewed incentive measures promoted through the Kyoto Protocol and the Convention on Climate Change. Although a few (about 28 per cent) are in the early stages of implementing such incentives, most have not started or are still considering such measures (56 per cent).• The Tehran Process has proposed that wealthy low forest cover countries contribute to a fund to support forest-related initiatives in developing low forest cover countries.

B. International financial assistance and cooperation

Summarized proposal	Action towards implementation
XIV. Global and regional assessment of protected areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO has evaluated forest protection in <i>FRA 2000</i>. • The UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre has performed a more detailed analysis in terms of forest types and management categories of protected areas; for the needs of low forest cover countries and others, it will be important to refine that analysis still further to focus on unique forest types.
XV. Financial resources, technology transfer, information exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tehran Process secretariat will raise awareness of forest activities and their importance to low forest cover countries among donors characteristically supporting development in those countries, including AsDB, AfDB, the World Bank, GEF and IFAD. • From second national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity, many low forest cover countries (50 per cent) have some measures in place that promote international technical and scientific cooperation in the field of sustainable forest management; access to and transfer of technology is of high to medium priority in about 71 per cent of countries, but funding is problematic (limited or severely limited for 80 per cent).
XVI. Capacity-building to promote participation in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FAO Community Forestry Unit has provided leadership, administration and management of the Forest, Trees and People Programme, which is a network of national, regional and international institutions that develop tools and methodologies to support participatory processes in community forestry. • International cooperation and the development of approaches in community forestry has been promoted by the FAO Community Forestry Unit, which is exploring the impact of decentralization on forest resources and the capacities of local communities and authorities to manage and benefit from that process; conflicts within and between communities and government and other groups arising from forest management have been analysed, and concept notes, an electronic conference, training materials, web sites and other resource materials have been developed.
XVII. Capacity-building for monitoring forest resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO has provided capacity-building to participating countries through <i>FRA 2000</i>. • IUFRO provides support to participating institutions, e.g., through development of the Global Forest Information Service.
XVIII. Support and promote local community involvement in sustainable forest management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FAO Community Forestry Unit has played a major role in supporting community involvement through technical guidance, capacity-building and information dissemination. • IUCN has formed a working group on community involvement in forest management to draw and apply lessons from field experience, and to persuade Governments and donor agencies to become more responsive to community conservation efforts. • In some countries, community involvement is now a well established and integral part of the framework for forest management; however, many countries are still in the early stages of introducing forms of community forestry appropriate to their situations.
XIX. Financial support to forest conservation and protected areas management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In late 2000, the GEF commitment to projects in its operational programme on forests was just over \$349 million, of which \$26.4 million was directed to low forest cover countries; a further \$22.7 million was directed to projects in low forest cover countries in which forests were a secondary focus.

<i>Summarized proposal</i>	<i>Action towards implementation</i>
XX. Solutions to debt problems of developing countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately US\$ 159 million of debt has been retired in debt-for-nature swaps focusing on forests. • In 1998, the United States of America enacted the Tropical Forestry Conservation Act, which allows developing countries to restructure their debts to the United States in exchange for actions in support of tropical forest conservation.
XXI. Improve efficiency of international cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GEF, the European Commission and a number of bilateral donors have been working to share information on their activities, including those relating to forests, that could potentially be used for donor coordination; relevant efforts include a GEF project tracking and mapping system, the Natural Resources Information System of the United Kingdom Department for International Development, and the USAID-backed Natural Resources Management tracker, which focuses on Africa.

C. International organizations and multilateral institutions and instruments

<i>Summarized proposal</i>	<i>Action towards implementation</i>
XXII. FAO to develop a definition of low forest cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress has been made on the development of a more precise definition of low forest cover: the publication of the <i>Forest Resources Assessment 2000</i> provided some advance by applying a globally consistent definition of forest, and UNEP and IUFRO developed a paper on defining low forest cover, which proposed a number of different bases upon which low forest cover could be defined.
XXIII. Innovative use of financial mechanisms and new financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CCD global mechanism could potentially play a key role in this context; funding is currently limited. ITTO could potentially support activities in low forest cover countries as it does in Egypt if low forest cover countries joined the organization. A review undertaken by FAO provided information on national forest funds in 41 countries, including some low forest cover countries, which indicated that a large number of countries have established such funds to provide some degree of assured continuity in funding for their forest sectors. Considerable progress has been made in building consensus on financing sustainable forest management through an international process on financing strategies in sustainable forest management (workshops in Pretoria in 1996, Croydon, United Kingdom, 1999 and Oslo in 2001). The Marrakesh meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in November 2001 finalized operational details of the Kyoto Protocol, which specify how the joint implementation and emissions trading systems will work; it also sought to ensure a prompt start to the clean development mechanism, whose mandate is to promote sustainable development by encouraging investments in projects in developing countries that reduce or avoid emissions. Recognizing that the private sector has a critical role in stopping forest degradation and loss, an ad hoc chief executive officers forum has established a series of working groups to produce recommendations on conservation and forest management.
XXIV. Common understanding on concepts, terms and definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 140 countries, including some low forest cover countries, are participating in at least one of the nine major processes on criteria and indicators, which include the ITTO, Dry Zone Africa, Near East Process, Dry Forests in Asia, Pan-European, Montreal, Tarapoto and Lépatérique initiatives. Such processes have been supported by activities by a variety of organizations, including FAO and CIFOR.