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**Analysis and Assessment
of the German NFP Process
at the Federal Level
(Phase I: 1999/ 2000)**

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Analysis and Assessment of the German NFP Process at the Federal Level (Phase I: 1999/ 2000)¹

1 Background and General Conditions

On the basis of the elements and principles formulated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), Germany started the societal dialogue process for elaborating a national forest programme in October 1999, with the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry² (BML) taking the lead.³ In principle, all governmental and non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the subject-matter of forest and forest use were free to participate in the NFP process. Individual invitations were sent to all actors which were known to the BML for their previous involvement in for-

est policy.⁴ The NFP process took place in the premises of the BML in Bonn, which also supplied the necessary materials (such as computers, photocopier, etc.). The results of the process were made available to the interested public via internet (see www.dainet.de/bml/nfp).

In the course of a first “discussion for information” in Bonn, the actors were familiarised with the international context and the resulting obligations for the elaboration of a NFP. To enable the participants to deepen their consideration of the subject-matter following the discussion, the BML put additional information material at their disposal. Within the context of an open and participatory process, all actors were called up to participate actively and were encouraged to contribute their respective positions to the process through verbal or written comments. Furthermore, the BML explained the provisional schedule for the elaboration of the NFP and appointed the Federal Research Centre for Forestry and Forest Products (BFH), subordinate to the Ministry, to conduct an “analysis of relevance” of the IPF Proposals for Action at the federal level. The findings of this investigation were destined to enable future “round table meetings” to identify thematic priorities for the German NFP and thus provide a primary structure of the content.

The second round table meeting in December 1999 attended to the BFH-analysis and discussed a preliminary draft of the structure of the NFP, which had been prepared by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry based on the findings available by then.⁵ The most important outcome of the one-day meeting with the interested actors was the selection of five “*priority subjects*”, destined to be the focus of the NFP process

¹ The findings of this analysis and assessment are part of the research project “Global Forest Policy in Germany”, which is promoted by the Volkswagen-Foundation Hannover within the framework of the focal point “Global Structures and their Control”. The text including all its components is protected by copyright. Any exploitation beyond the strict limits of the copyright law is illegal without prior permission of the authors.

² Since 2001: Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food, and Agriculture (BMVEL).

³ The BML could build upon the lessons of what is called the “Six-Country Initiative” in support to the IPF. This initiative examined the practical implementation of the IPF-Proposals for Action at the national level. Because of the constitutional distribution of responsibilities in the forest sector between the Federal Government and the States in Germany, the case study was carried out with the participation of key stakeholders at the State level by the State of Baden-Württemberg. The BML acted as the responsible organizational unit at the Federal level. In view of the aspects of international co-operation in the forest sector – especially with developing countries – the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ) and the Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) were also considerably involved. Following the “Six-Country Initiative”, Baden-Württemberg initiated the process towards a state forest programme according to the IPF principles as early as by the end of 1998 (cf. MLR 1998; MLR 2000).

⁴ A list of the organisations and associations participating in the NFP-process is found in BML (2000): National Forest Programme Germany; page 70.

⁵ At the same time, the BML based this draft in many points on the preliminary work and lessons learned within the framework of the Baden-Württemberg forest programme.

during the months to come. The following forest-policy fields of action were identified to be the priority subjects:

- Forest and Society
- Forest and Biological Diversity
- The Role of the Forest in the Global Carbon Cycle
- Significance of the Regenerative Raw Material Wood
- Contribution of Forestry and Timber Industry to the Development of Rural Areas

To avoid overburdening the time schedule of the actors, an agreement was reached to have the round table meetings limited to once a month for the next half year to come, but to extend them over two days. During each of these meetings, one of the five priority subjects was discussed in detail, different positions were exchanged, and, where possible, consensus on problem assessments and potential solutions was elaborated. The BML prepared “*basic papers*“ outlining key issues and policies for each of the priority subjects which were serving the respective round table meetings as a basis for discussion. These papers were sent to the actors about two weeks before the meetings in Bonn in order to enable the representatives of the participating organisations and associations to prepare themselves according to the content.

After these rather policy-oriented round table conferences up to May 2000, two other two-day meetings took place in June and August, which focused on the final discussion about the findings and lessons of the NFP process up to date. The outcomes of the first stage of the national forest programme were presented to the public by the Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forestry at the Hannover EXPO (World Exhibition) on October 4th, 2000.

2. Analysis and Assessment of the NFP – Content

2.1 Selection of the “Priority Subjects“

Assessment:

The selection of the five priority subjects on the basis of both the content-related preliminary work in Baden-Württemberg⁶ and the “analysis of relevance” of the IPF-Proposals for Action by the BFH proved to be appropriate and practicable. Within the framework of the subjects listed under point 1, many of the current forest-policy problem areas in Germany could be discussed with the actors. It was important in this context that the forest-related components, greatly fragmented at the international level, could be combined and discussed for the first time within one comprehensive framework. This applied primarily to the two subjects “Forest and Biological Diversity“ and “The Role of the Forest in the Global Carbon Cycle“, both of which are addressed in independent conventions as part of the International Forest Regime within the institutional structure of the United Nations. Because of the close relationship of the different subjects, the occurrence of certain thematic repetitions and similarities was unavoidable in the course of the round table meetings. The “Promoting the Use of the Regenerating Raw Material Wood“ objective, for example, was regarded as being relevant for as many as three priority subjects and, therefore, addressed repeatedly. New subjects, which could be identified in the course of the discussion process, were collected in a separate “subject pool“ and will be discussed beginning in spring 2001 in a second NFP-stage.

Recommendation:

- In the course of the second NFP-stage, mainly those subjects ought to be taken up that were identified ‘new‘ or ‘relevant‘ by the actors in the course of the discussion process so far. A possible

⁶ In this context it is referred again to the results of the „Six-Country Initiative“ of 1998. Within the framework of this initiative the relevance of the IPF-proposals was examined based on the situation in the state of Baden-Württemberg (cf. MLR 1998).

classification of future subjects according to priority should be carried out on consultation with the interested actors.

- At the same time, it must be absolutely possible, on request, to return to previously discussed subjects and to deal with them as required.
- The content-related interface with the two most important forest-related international conventions, i.e. the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and their national implementation mechanisms ought to be examined more thoroughly. On the basis of this analysis, a concerted strategy for the forest should be co-ordinated between the responsible institutions at the Federal and State level and with the key stakeholders. In this manner contradictory measures can be minimised.
- In the course of the next NFP-stage, special emphasis should be given to the discussion about the future communication and the formation of public opinion on international processes as well as to the process of formulation and co-ordination of individual positions including the responsibilities at the Federal and State level and of the key stakeholders.

2.2 Inter-Sectoral Linkages and Integration into a Strategy of Sustainability

Assessment:

During the IPF/IFF-process, factors, which are *beyond* the actual forest sector, have been identified to be the underlying causes for forest destruction and degradation. This is true for Germany as well, where airborne pollution and infrastructure measures endanger the forest. Therefore, the IPF recommends an inter-sectoral procedure for elaborating national forest programmes, which will analyse comprehensively the impacts from other sectors and their policies on the forest and formulate steps towards harmonisation of sector policies as well as adequate measures in view of forest conser-

vation and sustainable management. In the German NFP process, inter-sectoral aspects have been widely raised, but thus far insufficiently discussed and the elaborated recommendations for action concerning essential impact factors and linkages with other sectors, such as agriculture, energy, transport, and water management, are not very concrete or were largely excluded for political reasons. Although cross-sectoral aspects, such as tax policy, have been addressed, the integration of forest policy into a paramount strategy of sustainability comprising all sectors is not yet discernible.

Recommendation:

- In the next NFP-stage, the inter-sectoral aspects of forest-relevant policy ought to be addressed in concrete terms and analysed by an independent person or institution to be determined. Proposals for action and appropriate measures need to be elaborated in co-operation with the respective sectors and then co-ordinated at a higher political level within the framework of a paramount strategy of sustainable development. From the forest sector the connection to a holistic sustainability-oriented policy can be established in an exemplary way.

3 Analysis and Assessment of the NFP – Structure

3.1 Role of the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (BML)

Assessment:

The organisational structure of the German NFP process must definitely be assessed more critically than the selection of subjects. The crucial problem in this connection was the *simultaneous role* in the process of the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry as actor, moderator, and authority mainly responsible for the editorial work. In several cases the BML gave up its imperative impartiality in the moderation and supported its own interests/concepts or adopted the opinion of certain actor coalitions. Especially the representatives of nature protec-

tion organisations and associations have been sharply criticising this kind of proceeding in the course of the NFP process. To ensure the well-balanced consideration of all actors’ interests, an *independent* person/institution trustworthy to all participants should have been entrusted with the moderation of the round table meetings. In this context the BML advanced the argument that no financial means was available for engaging a neutral moderator. Such a hurdle is regarded in par. 17c of the IPF Proposals for Action as being a problem mainly for developing countries and should therefore be only partially true for Germany. The form and intensity of participation of the concerned actors have not been dealt with sufficiently, nor have binding agreements been made on a method of procedure and the obligation of all participants to adhere to it.⁷

Recommendation:

- On continuation of the NFP process it is absolutely necessary that the direction of the discussion be entrusted to an independent moderator accepted by all actors. Current scientific publications take the view that the satisfaction of the involved actors and thus the promotion of the participatory process are determined to a large extent by this parameter. This procedure has proven very useful to enhance the consensus-building within the framework of the Finnish NFP process (A. REUNALA, pers. communication).
- At the beginning of the second planning cycle, unequivocal agreements must be made on the form and intensity of participation.

3.2 Size of the Groups, Moderation and Monitoring

Assessment:

A structural problem of the NFP process was due to the fact that during each round table meeting the discussion was carried on with all actors present in the plenary. The large number of 35 to 50 participants per session caused the discussion to be ineffective and purposeless in many cases. Because of the numerous requests for permission to speak, the discussions developed their own dynamics that limited the proportional participation and well-balanced exploitation of the participants’ professional potential. Before certain actors could make their contribution to the initial point of controversy, the discussions had already progressed in completely different directions through the arguments and exchange of ideas of numerous previous speakers. Therefore, such requests for permission to speak, which were no longer relevant to the current discussion, would either be withdrawn (and thus be lost) or, through a kind of “boomerang function“, cause the same (already discussed) subject to be resumed repeatedly.

Another weak point of the process became evident during the moderation by the BML. Modern moderation techniques (such as the metaplan-technique) and means to visualise the discussion, e.g. on pin-boards with appropriate material, flip-charts, and overhead-projectors, were either inadequately used or not employed at all. An additional difficulty was the repeated change of moderators (sometimes within one day) due to time-schedule problems on the part of the BML, through which the necessary continuity in the direction of discussion was not constantly ensured. An independent *monitoring* of the planning process was missing at the same time.

Recommendation:

- Within the framework of a future NFP process it should be taken into consideration that an effective and efficient discussion is not likely to be obtained with groups of more than 15 to 20 par-

⁷ See BRÜGGEMANN (1999): Directions on participation include a definite mandate of all involved parties, time-schedule agreements, open results, equal rights and obligations of all involved parties, knowledge and learning processes, rationality, and feedback. Cf. ILO (2000).

ticipants. The solution could be to divide the plenary into several working groups, which in turn present their findings to the plenary. Such working groups could either discuss the same subject in parallel or address different thematic priorities. In this context, importance should be attached to equal representation in the working groups of experts and representatives of the various interested parties. Positive experience with this kind of proceeding could be gathered within the framework of the regional NFP process in Baden-Württemberg.

- The obvious choice to resolve moderation problems would be to employ expert moderators and professional moderation methods as well as to reduce the size of the groups (see above). The change in discussion leaders can be avoided by nominating a neutral moderator for the direction of the overall process. Thorough preparation to the discussion and good post-discussion work are important prerequisites for quality results.
- A good example in this context may be the successful moderation of the expert meeting on the Eight-Country Initiative “Shaping the Programme of Work for the United Nations Forum on Forests”, which was jointly organised by BML, BMZ, and GTZ in Bonn in November 2000.
- Through independent monitoring of the planning process, the motivation of all involved actors can be enhanced by means of regular and selective ‘feedback’ in the course of the current negotiations. This refers, in particular, to learning processes within the planning process itself, which ensure better co-operation in the sense of iterative proceedings.

3.3 Basic Papers

Assessment:

The fact that the BML elaborated a basic paper for each of the round table conferences proved to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, this indeed had the advantage that a certain structure of discussion was given from the very beginning, which could serve as framework with regard to the content; but, on the other hand, these basic papers often inhibited an open and “visionary” discussion about the subject and lead compulsory to the result that *not the content* but *merely the editorial matters* were discussed. The actual objective of the meeting – that is the open and innovative study of the forest subject – was often obscured in this context. The content quality of the basic papers was varying, so that important issues were often not raised until the discussion. At the same time, the actors’ expert knowledge of special issues was limited in some cases with the consequence that certain crucial aspects had to be left unclarified or had to be set aside. Furthermore, the possibility of consulting external experts to clarify specific issues was under-utilised.

Recommendation:

- Integrating external expert knowledge should be essential for the elaboration of basic papers; in the progress of the elaboration, the analysis and presentation of current basic data (*‘figures’*) and facts play an important part in contributing to objectivising the respective discussion. Case studies relating to specific subjects should be ordered and presentations by experts or exploitation of relevant literature by actors involved in the NFP process should be carried out in order to clarify special issues, including the impacts of other sectors on the forest. These contributions may then serve as basis for debate. It would be appropriate to present them to the plenary prior to discussion of the contents. A report documenting the outcomes should not be drawn up before special issues are adequately clarified.

- In this connection it must be pointed out as well that small working groups foster open and innovative discussions and produce results in an effective manner. Intelligent use of modern didactic techniques, such as ‘brainstorming’ or the ‘metaplan-technique’, can be made at the same time.

4. Inadequately clarified issues in the run-up to the NFP process

4.1 The Binding Character of the NFP-Paper and the Relevance for Implementation

Assessment:

At the end of the first stage of the NFP process, few actors had a clear idea of the concrete binding character the elaborated NFP-paper was expected to have. Repeated inquiries up to the sixth round table meeting prove that it had not been made clear enough whether it should be a matter of a ‚sector-paper’ of the BML/Federal Government, a non-committal ‚community task’ of the involved actors, or actually a ‚new type of policy instrument’. Above all, the constant pressure to produce an appropriate result by that date when the NFP was to be presented by the responsible minister at the EXPO 2000, made many actors increasingly feel that in the end it turned out to be a nothing more than a BML sector-paper. As a result several participants reduced their activities or dropped out of the process.

For implementing national forest programmes, the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action refer to bundles of measures that are clearly classified according to objectives, findings and activities. The current results of the NFP process are loosely oriented towards implementation. The formulated proposals for action on the respective subject-matter are non-committal on many points and do not contain any practical advice as to their implementation. The formulation of concrete measures and activities as well as the time-schedule of implementation in view of the general goal of sustainable development in

Germany are still expected. Additionally, a system of clear goals and results, monitoring of implementation, and assessment of results as well as a reporting system on the NFP have yet to be developed.

Recommendation:

- Prior to the second ‘NFP-stage’, an attempt should be made to clarify the status of the NFP process and its future results at the highest political level.⁸ Since the first result is now available, addressed accordingly by the Minister during the EXPO 2000, this task is not impossible to accomplish. The State of Baden-Württemberg may serve as example in this context as well, where the regional NFP was under discussion in the *Cabinet* and was adopted there as forest policy framework for the years to come.
- Right at the beginning of the second stage, the actors concerned with the NFP process must be informed decidedly about which *status* and which *binding character* the process and the jointly elaborated results are going to have. Only when it is clear **what** specifically will be achieved with the next ‘intermediate result’, can an adequate involvement of all concerned stakeholders be expected.
- The NFP process must not be limited to non-committal recommendations, but must result in **clear directives for action**. An unequivocal set target supported by all actors with exactly defined results and a related bundle of measures over a determined time frame must therefore be elaborated after the analytic step. These measures must be supported and implemented by all concerned parties. This also includes the monitoring of the results as well as a NFP-related reporting system, for instance as a substitute for the national forest report.

⁸ Such a procedure is not only necessary to make things clear for the actors, but is also based upon the fact that the establishment of a NFP-process is not a matter of forest policy “fancy” but of international political commitment.

4.2 Treatment of Contributions and Dealing with ‘Minority-Votes’

Assessment:

An organisational problem of the NFP process was the treatment of written and verbal contributions. The comments drawn up by the participants were usually laid out at the beginning of the respective round table conferences. However, the only contributions that were addressed in the discussions were those introduced and supported by persons in attendance. Those contributions made by authors who were not present were lost in these proceedings. Likewise in some cases the feeling developed that the BML did not make all contributions publicly available and in due time and that it considered some contents only in part or not at all in the redaction of the NFP text. In addition, the documentation on the different round table meetings was insufficient. The respective minutes that were sent to the participants after the meetings reflected the debate either very poorly or not at all, since the BML proceeded on the assumption that the principle papers, which had been revised in the course of the sessions, would contain the outcomes of the debates. Concerned actors not present at the meeting were thus unable to reconstruct the manner by which individual positions in the NFP-paper had come about.

Another issue that had remained unclarified from the very beginning of the NFP process was the dealing with ‘*minority-votes*’, i.e. diverging opinions that different actors or actor constellations continued to support despite intensive discussion. In the course of the process, the attempt was usually made to compromise on all subjects, instead of clearly identifying unresolvable conflicts and integrating minority-votes into the text of the paper. This is regrettable inasmuch as it is the *identification* of existing conflicts that is very important for future discussions and the search for potential solutions. Only those who know the unequivocal position of the other side can search for arguments to weaken it or can possibly modify their own position.

A problem was the final redaction of the NFP-paper on the first stage of the process through an editorial group nominated by the BML. Here, previously discussed contents were likewise not included and written comments on individual subjects remained unconsidered. The representative of the environmental non-governmental organisations nominated for the editorial team did not take part in the actual work, so the positions of this interest group could be taken into consideration only insufficiently or not at all. Furthermore, it seems that the paper was subject to another “final redaction“ through the BML. The product presented at the last round table conference in August 2000 consequently provoked some vehement discussions on complexes of subjects which were believed to be already closed, but were not reflected in the paper to the satisfaction of all actors. Some of the stakeholders, especially on the side of environmental non-governmental organisations, were irritated and disappointed at this proceeding and commented very critically on the process afterwards.

Recommendation:

- Written contributions should be made available to the participants prior to the respective round table meeting in order to create the appropriate transparency. It seems to be useful to submit them by way of electronic mail. In order to make it possible for the general public to widely participate, the contributions should also be posted on the NFP-website. Each session should begin with the opportunity to briefly present and explain comments. The contents of written contributions of persons not in attendance should at least be mentioned in the plenary. ‘Clearly-telling’ minutes on each session should be prepared reflecting the progress and contents of the debates. This can be accomplished without major problems through thorough preparation and adequate post-discussion work as well as through appropriate moderation of the sessions (cf. recommendation to fig. 3.3.2).

- At the beginning of the coming NFP-stage, a form of ‚code of conduct‘ must be determined, which defines exactly how minority-votes are to be dealt with in the future. One means to find a solution for diverging opinions/unsolvable conflicts might be the comparison of ‚forest-specific‘ and ‚nature-protection-specific‘ experts‘ opinion, as it has been applied in the experts report, „Forest Use in Germany“, ordered by the German Council of Environmental Advisors (cf. HOFMANN et al. 2000b). Opinions of minorities could thus be integrated into the text with an adequate marking.
- The description of still unresolved conflict areas should be of great importance. This would also better meet the intended character of the programme process.
- The editorial work should be made exclusively by editorial groups with equal representation that are legitimised by the plenary of all actors and that carry out their task with a transparent method of working. Once the members of these editorial groups are nominated, they must not „disengage“ too early, but must assume their mandate in a responsible manner also towards the plenary. Furthermore, there must not be a unilateral „final redaction“ by the BML.

5. Actors

5.1 Mandate

Assessment:

In the course of a total of nine round table meetings, some actors expressed that they had not been given enough clarity about their mandate within the framework of the NFP process by their own organisation/association. As a consequence, the disapproval of certain formulations or proposals for compromise was justified with the argument that there was a lack of adequate authorisation or competence to act on this specific issue. Such a state or such an attitude may develop into a real ‚discussion-killer‘, since many proposals for compro-

mise or approaches to solutions are ruled out right from the beginning by reason of an unclear mandate.

Recommendation:

- The actors participating in the NFP process should clarify unequivocally within the organisations and associations they are representing, which mandate they are vested with and for which issues consultation would be necessary. This may contribute to reducing unclear situations and prevent unnecessary adjournments of debates.

5.2 Circle of Actors

Assessment:

The IPF-Proposals state that the „creation of partnerships involving all actors interested in the process“ is one of the key elements for implementing a NFP. This formulation is not very explicit and leaves open the question of whether the actors would mainly be representatives of organisations and associations or if „society in general“ (fundamental democratic approach) would be integrated into the process. The decision of the BML to rely primarily on the collaboration of institutionally tangible organisations and associations was certainly right in the sense of a practicable and pragmatic approach towards the NFP. A weak point in this context was only the missing participation on the part of the tourist sector and sports associations. Since the forest in Germany plays a momentous part especially for these two sectors, it is desirable that, in the future, respective actors should take an active part in the process. The Churches in their capacity as large-scale forest owners were also unrepresented.

Recommendation:

- The actors involved in the process thus far should be encouraged to designate „new“ actors with whom future collaboration would seem appropriate.
- Representatives of the tourist sector, the sports sector and the Churches should be

deliberately invited again by the BML to participate in the NFP process.

- The moderator should make *active* efforts to continuously integrate all concerned actors and to win new interested groups for participation in the process.
- The interested public should be widely integrated through enhanced public relations in the media as well as via internet.

5.3 Personnel/ Financial Resources of the Actors

Assessment:

The BML met the costs for the organisation of the process including the entertainment expenses for the two-day round table meetings. However, due to the tight budget situation and the short lead-time for due planning it was not possible for the BML to provide sufficient funds for the NFP process that would have allowed to finance, for instance, expert opinions, the preparation of basic papers, the neutral moderation and the independent monitoring (‘feedback’) of the process. Considerable bottlenecks and drawbacks in the process were thus a foregone conclusion.

The total number of nine round table meetings (six of which were two-day meetings) overstrained some actors from both the personnel and the financial point of view. This affected especially small organisations and associations with few members. In order to continue to foster the participation of all *convincingly concerned* actors, it is essential to find a solution for the problem.

Recommendation:

- A sufficiently large budget should be allocated to the second stage of the NFP process allowing for the elimination of the above mentioned bottlenecks. An example worth mentioning in this context may again be the Finnish NFP process for which a substantial budget was provided right from the beginning allowing for the payment of the personnel costs for an independent moderation of the

overall process as well as for experts reports and specific events.

- Organisations and associations that have provable personnel and financial difficulties in participating in the NFP process should be identified.
- Potential finance sources should be ‘explored’ on behalf of the actors confronted with such a situation.
- A method of procedure for the conference should be agreed upon that maintains personnel and financial burdens on a relatively low level within a suitable working frame.

5.4 Active Involvement of the Actors

Assessment:

The analysis of the participatory behaviour of the various actors showed very different patterns. Without considering the details of specific behaviour patterns, it was clearly shown that attendance of the round table meetings was very selective in many cases. Two basic strategies have been revealed: First, the organisations and associations attended only such meetings that had a direct content-related connection with their own respective work and interests. Second, they attended only such meetings that addressed the clarification of basic modalities or dealt with the discussion/redaction of the final papers. The criticism on the NFP process expressed by many organisations and associations presents itself in a different, rather questionable light against this setting. It is evident that whoever, because of non-attendance, cannot follow the progress of completion of different contents/ formulations, which are based on exhaustive discussions, will eventually find it difficult to think in corresponding abstract terms as well as to assess the outcomes. Looked at from a neutral point of view, such a behaviour may be interpreted in the positive sense as being only ‘*non-co-operative*’, but in the negative sense it may be considered as being ‘*destructive*’.

Recommendation:

- By emphasising the above mentioned findings of the analysis and through a better basic consensus on the future proceedings, the attempt should be made to convince the actors of the negative impacts generated by such a behaviour and to work towards enhancing more co-operative behaviour.

6 Conclusion

For the first time in Germany, forest-related subjects have been discussed coherently over a relatively long period of time with participation of the key stakeholders within the framework of the NFP process. In the course of this process, mutual understanding of the respective positions and a partial degree of consensus was reached by the various interest groups. Potential solutions for many issues and proposals for action were identified that need to be further discussed and, most importantly, must be eventually **implemented** step-by-step in concerted action. However, these positive results are contradicted by some serious drawbacks that must be addressed in the follow-up process of the NFP.

For the time being it appears to be important to reach consensus on the relative importance of the NFP as well as to clarify the future procedure including the mandate of the concerned parties, e.g. through a kind of “*code of conduct*” that mandatorily defines the procedure as well as the responsibilities, voting rights and rights of intervention of all concerned parties. This should be the first step at the beginning of the next stage of the NFP process. The BML has already called a round table meeting to this effect for April 2001, which should, apart from dealing with previous lessons and the identification of still pending subject-matters to be taken up in the further debate on the NFP, address primarily the clarification of unresolved issues and aspects of procedure. Many of the proposals mentioned in this paper will necessitate efforts that cannot be performed by

voluntary work of the participants alone. The allocation of an appropriate *budget* is therefore absolutely necessary for the future process in order to finance personnel and material resources required for the successful course of the NFP process.

Cross-sectoral aspects and the harmonisation of forest-related policy, including financial policy should be the centre of discussion in the future course of the process. In view of a coherent Federal Government Policy on sustainable development, the discussion at the highest political level on the role of *Forests and Forestry* is unavoidable. The current parallel process of revising the BMZ forest concept, as a political guideline for international forest-related co-operation, might enrich the discussion in this context and release synergies within the Federal Policy. This process is also carried on in a participatory manner involving the key stakeholders including the BML. It aims, as does the national forest programme, at policy coherence within the framework of sustainable development as a contribution to safeguarding the global future.

The continuation of the NFP process offers the potential to approach this goal, to identify the relevant conflict areas in this context, to explore scopes for action, and to put the consensus on forest issues on a wider basis. Of crucial importance in this context is, apart from the clarification of political issues, the definition of a *concrete bundle* of measures, which gradually carries the elaborated consensus *towards implementation*, as well as the provision of adequate financial and personnel *resources*. Only when the aim to place the process at a higher political level and to enhance the relative importance of the forest in the public discussion on sustainability strategies has been successfully accomplished, would society consent to provide the funds necessary for the future implementation of the NFP.

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