

Facilitator's Summary

Expert Meeting on Enhancing Regional and Sub-Regional Involvement in the Work of the International Arrangement on Forests

(26-28 September 2016; ECO Secretariat- Tehran, Iran)

1. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF THE MEETING

Based on the outcome of the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), held in May 2015, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted the resolution on the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) beyond 2015 (E/RES/2015/33). Several provisions of this resolution highlight the significance of the engagement of regional and sub-regional entities in the work of the IAF and more specifically, the work of the Forum. Under section II of this resolution, the Council decided to restructure the sessions of the Forum and enhance the intersessional work of the UNFF so as to maximize its impact and relevance including by fostering an exchange of experience and lessons learned among countries, regional, sub-regional and non-governmental partners and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

In this regard, the odd-year sessions of the Forum will serve as an opportunity for the CPF and its member organizations, as well as regional and sub-regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, to provide technical advice and input to the Forum. Such an opportunity also exists during the even-year sessions of the Forum which will be devoted to the policy discussion and decision making on important issues related to forests. In accordance with section VIII of the resolution, the Forum should strengthen its collaboration with relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related entities in order to facilitate the implementation of the United Nations Forest Instrument (UNFI). Moreover, the Forum's Secretariat will consult with these entities on the means to enhance collaboration, including regarding the implementation of the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work referred to in section XI of the same resolution.

The resolution also invites relevant regional and sub-regional entities, in a position to do so, to consider, in accordance with their mandates, developing or strengthening programmes on sustainable forest management, including facilitating the implementation of the UNFI and relevant aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as to provide coordinated inputs and recommendations to sessions of the Forum.

In consistency with the mandate of E/RES/2015/33, the Secretariats of the United Nations Forum on Forests and of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) decided to jointly organize and convene an expert meeting with the objective of exploring concrete means and ways to enhance the involvement of regional and sub-regional entities in the IAF. This expert meeting was held from 26 to 28 September 2016 at the ECO Headquarters in Tehran, Iran and its discussions were based on the outcome of UNFF11, as well as on the relevant elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015.

The meeting brought together experts who deal with forests and Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)-related policies and activities in regional and sub-regional entities throughout the world. The experts reflected on the challenges and opportunities presented by the post-2015 IAF and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets.

In order to achieve the objective of the meeting, the following key elements were discussed:

- i) Specific suggestions for inclusion in the IAF Strategic Plan and the Quadrennial Programme of Work, to enhance effective engagement in and contribution of regional and sub-regional entities to the work of the Forum;
- ii) Actions to advance implementation of the UNFI and the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda at the regional and sub-regional levels in an integrated manner;
- iii) Modality for engagement of regional and sub-regional entities in the Forum's sessions, and in the intersessional activities of the Forum;
- iv) Type and format of inputs of regional and sub-regional entities to the Forum's sessions;
- v) Ways and means that the Forum and other IAF components can assist regional and sub-regional entities to advance their work on the implementation of the UNFI and the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda.

Each substantive session featured presentations by experts and an interactive discussion on the topic at hand. During the closing session, a list of proposed actions related to enhancing regional and sub-regional involvement in the work of the International Arrangement on Forests were agreed upon. Attached to this Facilitator's Summary, are the Organization of Work (Annex 1) and the List of Participants (Annex 2).

2. MEETING SUMMARY

A. Opening session

The Meeting was jointly inaugurated by Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari, ECO Deputy Secretary General and Mr. Manoel Sobral Filho, Director of the UNFF Secretariat. The UNFFS Director welcomed participants and expressed his gratitude to the ECO Secretariat for their generous support in hosting the meeting. Mr. Sobral invited Mr. Alavi to serve as the Facilitator of the meeting discussions.

Mr. Seyed Jalaledin Alavi Sabzevari welcomed participants to the ECO Secretariat and thanked the UNFF Secretariat for partnering with ECO in organizing the meeting. He underscored the importance of such partnerships in advancing environmental actions in the ECO Region, including in the area of mobilizing financing for sustainable forest management. Mr. Alavi provided an overview of the history and work of ECO, highlighting activities in areas of trade, energy, transport, environment and sustainable development. He expressed ECO's readiness to partner with UN and regional and subregional

organizations present at the meeting. He voiced his hope that the meeting would generate substantive input towards the development of the IAF Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2030.

B. Discussion Sessions

The UNFFS Director pointed out that 2015 was a landmark year for forests and sustainable development; from the UNFF11 Resolution and XIV World Forestry Congress, followed by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and Paris Agreement. He highlighted the Forum's proactive role in contributing to the implementation, follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda, noting that the development of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 and Quadrennial Programme[s] of Work will incorporate forest-related actions towards achieving the SDGs. Mr. Sobral noted that the regional dimension in UNFF deliberations had been evolving and that the UNFF multi-year programme of work of the Forum for 2007-2015 set the stage for a new focus on regional collaboration and partnerships. He emphasized that the restructured annual UNFF sessions, with the focus on implementation and technical advice, could provide an opportunity to enhance the visibility of regional and subregional contributions in the global policy arena.

Ms. Anna Masinja, African Forest Forum, emphasized that the Strategic Plan should be relevant to regions, and should include "on the ground" actions towards achieving sustainable forest management. In the context of the African region, she highlighted that forests are crucial for subsistence, and serve as a safety net for food security and livelihoods.

Mr. Dampha Almani, African Union Commission, noted that sustainable forest management in Africa is directly related to some of region's biggest development concerns, including poverty alleviation, food security and climate change. He pointed out that bankable forest projects and access to funding for SFM were some of the key areas requiring priority action.

Mr. Mostafa Jafari, Tehran Process Secretariat for Low Forest Cover Countries, emphasized the need for capacity development at the national level, in areas related to project design, and the development of national action plans for SFM. He further emphasized that such support was particularly needed in regions with the Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Mr. Antonio Matamoros, Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, highlighted ACTO's long history of working with UNFF, and indicated interest in the idea of formalizing the cooperation mechanism between regional organizations and the Forum. He shared that capacity building, strengthening cooperation and facilitating access to forest financing were key areas of interest.

Mr. Fuad Farzalibayov, Economic Cooperation Organization, stressed the need for cooperation between regional and sub-regional organizations in promoting implementation of the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda. He also noted the importance of fostering closer cooperation between regional and relevant international actors in promoting solutions for shared environmental concerns such as climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Mr. Xia Jun, Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation, pointed out that the contributions of regional and subregional organizations to SFM implementation on the ground

requires greater visibility in work of the IAF and at the UNFF. He noted that the organization of events such as “Regional Days” within the programme of UNFF sessions could help address this issue.

Mr. Peter Pecachek, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, highlighted the role of the FAO Forestry Commissions in providing a link between global policy debate at the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) and the UNFF, with regional discussions and emphasized the need to promote synergies between existing regional fora.

Mr. Jozef Turok and Mr. Rastislav Rasi, Forest Europe highlighted the contributions of regional processes in promoting policy coherence, policy instruments and in streamlining and harmonizing monitoring assessment and reporting on implementation of SFM. They also highlighted the work being conducted by Forest Europe in the context of criteria and indicators for SFM, as well as in raising awareness of the contributions of forests to achievement of the SDGs.

Mr. Tint Lwin Thaug, RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests, pointed out that a number of regional organizations in Asia have their own strategic plans, based on their areas of work which include issues such as community forests, sustainable livelihoods, climate change and good governance.

Mr. Charles Akol, UN Economic Commission for Africa, highlighted the work that ECA is carrying out in assisting countries in aligning their development plans with the 2030 Agenda. He also pointed out that the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development, which are held in the context of the HLPF, offer a useful regional platform to share best practices on SFM implementation in regions.

Ms. Ivonne Higuero, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, highlighted the benefits of regional cooperation on forests in the context of data sharing, monitoring, assessment and reporting, mobilizing access to financing, and in outreach and communication. She noted the importance of peer to peer learning, and stressed the importance of having such learning/information exchange opportunities during UNFF sessions.

D. General Findings

During the course of discussions, the diversity amongst regional and sub-regional organizations and processes was highlighted, and at the same time it was noted that many regional organizations are working to address similar thematic issues such as poverty eradication, food security, climate change, SDGs and the 2030 agenda, and mobilizing financing for forests. The key activities that many regional organizations focus their work on also had common elements - including capacity building, data analysis and information sharing, outreach and communications, policy dialogue, and scholarships.

The need to give greater visibility to the contributions of regional and sub-regional organizations and processes to the implementation of SFM was seen as a priority. In this regard, experts suggested that UNFF sessions include a regional dialogue/forum/panel, to provide a platform for showcasing lessons learned and best practices from regions.

Experts also voiced their interest in creating a mechanism for inter-regional coordination, which would facilitate information exchange, joint activities, and coordinated inputs to UNFF. It was noted that regional and sub-regional organizations and processes are diverse in terms of membership and working

modalities, and that the proposed inter-regional coordination mechanism (*please see proposal on D.4 below*) will need to be flexible to fit different organizational contexts and mandates.

Experts further noted that there are multiple existing regional fora which are relevant to forests and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These include amongst others, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) Regional Forestry Commissions, the UN Regional Commissions and their Regional Fora on Sustainable Development. The proposed inter-regional coordination mechanism could promote synergies between these fora and the global discussions at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the UNFF.

3. Proposed actions related to enhancing regional and sub-regional involvement in the Work of the International Arrangement on Forests

1. SDGs forest related targets and actions that have been adopted by regional and sub-regional organizations and processes should be reflected in the IAF Strategic Plan, to the extent possible, and as appropriate. UNFF will facilitate submission of these targets and actions.
2. Greater visibility on the role of regional and sub-regional organizations and processes in galvanizing implementation of SFM on the ground, and in serving as a bridge between global policy discussions and national and local level actions, should be reflected in the IAF Strategic Plan.
3. Mechanisms should be developed to foster cooperation between UNFF and regional and sub-regional organizations and processes in implementing the IAF Strategic Plan.
4. UNFF should assist interested regional and sub-regional organizations and processes to develop an inter-regional coordination mechanism, to enable consultation and agreement on submission of coordinated inputs and recommendations to UNFF sessions in a systematic manner. This mechanism may include arrangements such as regular meetings, online platforms, joint research, virtual meetings, etc.
5. UNFF and regional and sub-regional organizations and processes should organize capacity building activities on developing actions/strategic plans to translate/facilitate implementation of the Strategic Plan at the local, national and regional levels, in particular in the regions with Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
6. UNFF and regional and sub-regional organizations and processes should develop mechanisms for exchange of information (between UNFF and regional and sub-regional organizations and processes, between regional organizations and Member States, and amongst regional organizations) to promote synergies and joint activities in implementing the UNFI and the 2030 Agenda.
7. The UNFF inputs/reports to HLPF should include coordinated input from regional and sub-regional organizations and processes to the HLPF. This input to the HLPF should be seen as an opportunity to communicate the cross-sectoral contributions of forests to all 17 SDGs.
8. Given the importance of regional and sub-regional organizations and processes in monitoring, assessment and reporting on implementation of the UN Forest Instrument and the 2030 Agenda and

other regional development agenda, they should be invited to participate in relevant activities/events organized by UNFF and other UN bodies.

9. Given the importance of coordination between UNFF Secretariat and regional and sub-regional organizations and processes, the UNFF should be invited to participate and collaborate in relevant activities/events organized by regional and sub-regional organizations and processes.
10. The new “restructured” programme of the annual UNFF sessions should include a regional dialogue/forum/panel to provide greater opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, sharing technical advice and best practices on implementation of the UNFI and the 2030 Agenda, similar to the arrangements that exist for the CPF and Major Groups.
11. Regional and sub-regional organizations and processes should commemorate the International Day of Forests and utilize its communication platform to raise awareness of SFM best practices in their regions.
12. The priorities for the Global Forest Financial Facilitation Network, to be set by the Strategic Plan, shall give due attention to the imperative of involvement of regional and sub-regional organizations and processes in the implementation of the UNFI and Strategic Plan, including those activities mentioned above. Special priority should be given to financing the capacity building programmes, organization of regional workshops, and development of project concepts to assist countries to access financing from resources, such as the GCF, GEF and Adaptation Fund, for promoting SFM.
13. UNFF should make use of existing regional and sub-regional mechanisms to enhance synergies, communicate global policy discussions to relevant stakeholders, collaborate on capacity building activities and raise awareness on the importance of forests.

ANNEX1: Provisional Organization of Work

Time	Monday 26 September	Tuesday 27 September	Wednesday 28 September
09:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening Session: remarks by ECO and UNFF Secretariats Organizational matters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Election of Co-Facilitators (to be conducted by UNFF) Adoption of provisional organization of work Introduction of participants 	<p>Summary of Day 1</p> <p>Discussion: Advancing Implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the IAF Strategic Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to enhance collaboration of the Forum and regional and sub-regional organizations in implementing forest-related SDGs and reporting to the HLPF (paragraphs 27, and 34 to 37 UNFF11 resolution) ; How to promote collaboration of the Forum and regional and sub-regional organizations in implementing the IAF Strategic Plan, including on the implementation of the UNFI (paragraph 25 and 36 of UNFF11 resolution); What can be done by the Forum to support regional and sub-regional organizations in their implementation of forest-related activities and programmes 	<p>Summary of Day 2</p> <p>Discussion: Identification of proposed actions on enhancing regional and sub-regional involvement in the work of the IAF</p> <p>(Interactive discussions)</p>
10:00	Morning Break (10:00-10:30)		
10:30	<p>Discussion: Significance of regional and sub-regional collaboration on forests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation by UNFF Secretariat on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Past experiences, lessons learned and success stories in engaging at the regional and sub-regional levels; Major developments on forests; 2030 Agenda, UNFF11 resolution, and Paris Agreement; IAF Strategic Plan; an integrated and comprehensive action plan on forests. <p>(Interactive discussions)</p>	<p>Morning Break (1030 – 11:00)</p> <p><i>Continued from morning session</i></p>	<p>Morning Break (10:30 – 11:00)</p> <p><i>Continued from morning session</i></p>
12:30	Lunch (12:30 – 13:30)	Lunch (12:30 – 13:30)	Lunch (12:30 – 13:30)
13:30	<p>Discussion: Forests at the regional and sub-regional levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations by participants on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest related activities/programmes of the respective regional and sub-regional organizations and processes Past experience in collaborating with the UNFF, including on implementation of the UNFI; <p>(Interactive discussions)</p>	<p>Discussion: Enhancing engagement of regional and sub-regional organizations in the work of the IAF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the input of regional and sub-regional organizations to the UNFF (suggestions on the modalities of engagement and type of input to UNFF sessions) Regional and sub-regional organizations and the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way forward: Endorsement of proposed actions on enhancing regional and sub-regional involvement in the work of the IAF for inclusion in the IAF Strategic Plan Conclusion of meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing remarks by ECO Secretariat Closing remarks by UNFF Secretariat
15:00	Afternoon break (15:00 – 15:30)	Afternoon break (15:00 – 15:30)	Afternoon break (15:00 – 15:30)
15:30 - 17:00	<i>Continued from afternoon session</i>	<i>Continued from afternoon session</i>	

* UNFF11 resolution (E/RES/2015/33), in particular, paragraphs 1c, 2, 6b, 6g (i), 13, 25, 26, 27, 28, 34, 35, 36, and 37 provide the context for the discussions during the meeting.

ANNEX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

FACILITATOR

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EXPERTS

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