

Expert Group Meeting on reporting to UNFF

Brasilia, Brazil, 7-10 February 2017

Concept Note

I. Introduction

The United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat (UNFFS) and the Federal Government of Brazil will jointly convene a four day expert meeting to discuss and propose a draft format for reporting on progress towards implementation of the UN Forest Instrument and achievement of global forest goals, including the forest related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets.

ECOSOC resolution 2015/33 on the “International Arrangement on Forests beyond 2015” requested the secretariat of the Forum, in consultation with relevant bodies and partners including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and its members, to propose for consideration by the Forum at its next session a cycle and a format for national reporting and the enhancement of voluntary monitoring, assessment and reporting on the progress made in the implementation of the UN Forest Instrument and its Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs), as well as the forest related SDGs and targets, taking into account and utilizing existing data collection mechanisms. Consistent with this request, and as part of the consultative process, this expert meeting is being organized in Brazil in February 2017 to propose a cycle and a format for national reporting to UNFF12 in May 2017.

2. Background:

ECOSOC Resolution 2015/33 “International arrangement on forests beyond 2015” called for the development of a strategic plan for the international arrangement on forests (IAF) for the period 2017–2030 which should, among others, incorporate the global objectives on forests (GOFs) and the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The strategic plan will be considered by the Special Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) scheduled in January 2017.

Furthermore, the ECOSOC Resolution 2015/33 strengthened the monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR) function of the Forum and decided on the continuation of national reporting to the Forum. Moreover, MAR activities should constitute an integral part of the Strategic Plan 2017-2030 which will provide framework for and guide the work of the IAF and its components. MAR will also play an import role in supporting the contribution from UNFF to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and to the implementation, follow-up and review of the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. Reporting to UNFF

Since 2009 the national reporting to the Forum has focused on tracking progress towards implementation of the UN Forest Instrument and achievement of its GOFs and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In total 180 country reports were submitted in the four reporting cycles to the Forum, with steady increase from UNFF8 (21 reports) to UNFF11 (81 reports). The national reports submitted to each session of the Forum provided basis for, and were summarized in the Secretary General Report, on progress made on the implementation of the UN Forest Instrument and towards the achievement of GOFs and contribution of forests to MDGs.

In the last two years there have been a few major developments that have a direct impact on reporting on forests. These include 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, the Paris Agreement and the expected IAF Strategic Plan/UN Strategic Plan for Forests. The request from the resolution 2015/33 to propose the reporting format to the Forum is well-timed. Indeed, there is a need to review the existing format or possibly develop a new one that would accommodate information needs to measure progress toward the new global forest related goals and targets, without increasing the reporting burden on Member States. In this regard the outcome of the organisation-led initiative (OLI) in support of UNFF titled: “Development of the global forest indicators to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the IAF Strategic Plan” will have laid the ground work and will provide an important input into the expert meeting.

4. Meeting’s objectives

The main aim of the meeting is to provide an opportunity to experts on MAR to discuss and agree on a draft reporting format and cycle for voluntary national reporting by Member States under the 4POW 2017-2020. It is expected that the experts will develop a draft reporting format that has the capacity to accommodate information needs for measuring progress towards implementation of the various global forest goals/objectives/commitments including the UN Forest Instrument and its GOFs, goals and targets of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests, and contribute to the follow-up and review of the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The specific objectives of the meeting are as follows:

- Develop a proposal for a reporting format/template and a reporting cycle to UNFF;
- Propose data sharing arrangements with relevant CPF members and C&I processes and/or how to take into account existing forests data collection mechanisms

- Work on a set of possible indicators that will facilitate reporting on the global forest goals/commitment/objectives including the UN Forest Instrument and its GOFs, the forest related SDGs goals and targets, and goals and targets of the Strategic Plan 2017-2030;
- Propose how the information collected through national reports should be used (e.g. during UNFF sessions and in reporting to relevant forest-related processes including contributing to the follow-up and review of the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. Expected Outputs:

The outcome of the expert meeting will be submitted for consideration by UNFF12, and will ultimately support the implementation of ECOSOC resolution 2015/33, in particular supporting the implementation of the IAF Strategic Plan 2017-2030 and monitoring of progress made in the implementation of the UN Forests Instrument, its GOFs and the forest related SDGs. Four main outputs are expected to emerge from the meeting:

- (a) Proposal for a reporting format/template to UNFF along with a new reporting cycle,
- (b) A set of possible indicators for the goals and objectives of the UN Strategic plan
- (c) Reviewed and identified sources of forest-related data and agreed data-sharing arrangements,
- (d) Suggestions on the use of the information collected through the national reports

6. Organization of work

The meeting will be held from 9 am-5 p.m. daily for four days from 7 – 10 February 2017 (*venue to be confirmed*) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brasilia. The organizers will aim to create a good working atmosphere and expect a high level of engagement from all participants.

The structure will combine the following elements:

- Introductory presentations to provide a brief background and context
- Discussions in working groups on the development of the draft reporting template
- Plenary Sessions

A detailed organization of work agenda is being developed and will be disseminated in due course.

7. Participation

The meeting is expected to gather around 40-50 experts from Member States and CPF member organizations, representatives of major groups and criteria and indicators processes who have knowledge and experience in data gathering, reporting on and monitoring of forests and sustainable forest management.

8. Background Materials and working language:

Participants will be provided with the draft programme of work and background papers in due course. The background documents will include:

- The outcome of the UNFF Working group on the IAF strategic plan
- A summary report of the OLI on C&I
- Other relevant documents.

The working language of the meeting is English with no interpretation