

**Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad hoc Expert Group on the  
Preparations for the Midterm Review of the International Arrangement on Forests**

**10-13 October 2023, UNON, United Nations Office at Vienna**

**Co-Chairs' Summary**

**I. Background**

1. In its resolution 2015/33, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) strengthened and extended the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) to 2030. The Council further requested the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) to undertake a midterm, and final review of the effectiveness of the IAF in achieving its objectives in 2024, and 2030. In accordance with the program of work of the Forum for 2022-2024, the seventeenth session of the Forum (UNFF17), which took place in May 2022, considered, and decided on the actions to be taken in preparation for the IAF midterm review in 2024 (ECOSOC Resolution 2022/17<sup>1</sup>). These actions are contained in ten sections in the annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17:

- A. Actions related to the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and its members
- B. Actions related to the Forum secretariat
- C. Actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)
- D. Actions related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN)
- E. Actions related to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests
- F. Actions related to the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017–2030
- G. Actions related to the contributions of the Forum to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- H. Actions related to the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017–2030
- I. Actions related to the involvement of regional and subregional partners
- J. Actions related to the involvement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders

2. The activities in preparation for the midterm review of the IAF at UNFF19 in 2024 on the above mentioned ten areas, as contained in annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, included:

- a. Preparation of assessment reports on the above-mentioned ten areas (A to J)
- b. Organization of intersessional meetings to review the findings in the assessment reports on sections C, D, F, G, I, and J, and,
- c. Organization of an Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) before the end of 2023 to review all the assessment reports and outcomes of the preparatory intersessional work, including intersessional meetings, with a view to making proposals to the Forum at its nineteenth session on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF, including the future steps to be taken by the IAF beyond 2024.
- d. Informal consultations to be conducted by the Bureau of UNFF19, following the conclusion of AHEG, with the view to producing zero a draft resolution regarding the IAF midterm review.

3. In line with the guidance provided in ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, the UNFF secretariat undertook the following steps:

- a. Recruited nine consultants to carry out a total of eleven assessment reports regarding the areas identified in the annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/172.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/438/29/pdf/N2243829.pdf?OpenElement>

- b. Organized an expert group meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, in January 2023 to review and discuss the assessment reports on section G of the annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17 on the contribution of the Forum to the 2030 Agenda, Section I on the involvement of regional and subregional partners, and Section J on the involvement of major groups.
- c. Organized jointly with FAO, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) Organization-Led Initiative (OLI), in February 2023 in Rome, Italy to review and discuss the assessment report on section C of annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17 on actions related to the CPF.
- d. Organized an expert group meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, in June 2023 to review and discuss assessment reports on Section D on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), and Section F on the implementation of the UNSPF.

4. In accordance with ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, the objective of this Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) meeting was to review all assessments and outcomes of preparatory intersessional work related to the IAF midterm review, with a view to making proposals to the Forum at its nineteenth session on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF, including the future steps to be taken by the IAF beyond 2024.

## **II. Opening of the meeting**

5. The meeting was opened by Ms. Juliette Biao, Director of the UNFF secretariat. In her opening remarks, Ms. Biao welcomed the participants to the meeting. She outlined the background, objective and expected outcome of AHEG, and drew attention to the efforts of the UNFF secretariat to diligently follow the guidance in resolution 2022/17 to conduct preparatory activities for the midterm review, with an emphasis on transparency and independence. Ms. Biao thanked the Forum members who made this work possible through their generous contributions to the UNFF trust fund: Australia, China, Finland, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland and the United States. In the name of the UNFF secretariat, she extended gratitude to the CPF for coordinating the organization-led initiative, as well as to ESCAP, FAO, UNON and UNOV for the logistical support provided in the organization of the intersessional meetings. She further expressed appreciation toward all members of the Forum, CPF members, regional and subregional partners, and major groups for their active participation throughout the preparatory process of the IAF midterm review.

6. Following Ms. Biao's remarks, experts elected Ms. Maureen Whelan, Manager of Multilateral Affairs at the Canadian Forest Service, and Mr. Avhashoni Renny Madula, Acting Chief Director of Forest Policy Management at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment of South Africa, to serve as the Co-Chairs of AHEG. In their opening remarks, the Co-Chairs provided detailed information about the programme for the meeting. They informed that discussions on each of the reports for Sections A, B, E and H would be held separately starting on Tuesday morning, according to the programme of work for the meeting. Following the presentation of each assessment by the consultant, experts would be invited to share their views on the findings and suggestions contained in the relevant assessment report, and/or seek clarification from consultants. During the second part of the AHEG, starting on Wednesday morning, consultations would take place on the initial draft of the AHEG Co-Chairs' proposal. Following the conclusion of the first reading of the draft AHEG Co-Chairs' proposal, the Co-Chairs would revise their proposal, considering the views expressed during AHEG, and share the revised draft proposal with participants, on the evening of the third day of the meeting, for a final round of discussion on Friday. The Co-Chairs stressed that proposals made through the AHEG do not represent consensus or negotiated outcomes.

## **III. Discussions on the consultant's assessment report on Section A on Actions related the United Nations Forum on Forests and its members**

7. The Co-Chair invited Mr. Ivan Tomaselli to present his [assessment report](#). The consultant recommended several actions to achieve the IAF's objectives. The recommendations for the UNFF include increasing stakeholder engagement, strengthening forest governance structures and means of implementation, enhancing regional cooperation, and to continuously provide technical and financial support to Forum members to encourage the preparation and submission of their Voluntary National Contributions (VNCs) and Voluntary National Reports (VNRs). The report also recommended that Forum members be more active in implementing the UNSPF and the Global Forest Goals (GFGs), raise the political status of the Forum by highlighting the importance of forests in broader

multilateral processes, continuously propose contributions in High Level Political Forum (HLPF) sessions and increase stakeholder engagement. Additionally, the consultant recommended raising the commitment of Forum members to the presentation of their VNRs, underlined the need for the UNFF to support subnational and local institutions, and raised the possibility for the Forum to work in synergy with other relevant initiatives dealing with sustainable forest management. The report also underscored the importance of engaging Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in global policy discussions and improving communication between Forum members and the UNFF secretariat.

8. Following the presentation made by Mr. Tomaselli, experts engaged in interactive discussions. A summary of key points of the discussions regarding the UNFF and its members and recommendations for future actions is provided below.

- a. Several experts emphasized the important role of UNFF in strengthening long-term political commitment to sustainable forest management worldwide, including through promoting increased voluntary national reporting and VNCs on the implementation of the UNSPF and achievement of the GFGs. It was also indicated that the Forum should function as the platform for sharing best practices and knowledge on forest related matters and practices at the local, national, and regional levels.
- b. There were differing views among experts on the impacts of the non-legally binding nature of the IAF on the visibility of the Forum and its impact on global forest policies and the flow of financial resources to forests. Some experts considered that the non-legally binding nature of the IAF provides the adequate space and flexibility for countries to adopt policies related to the IAF and has no impact on the level of funding for forests, while some other experts considered the non-legally binding nature of the IAF diminishes the ability of UNFF to be an impactful global policy body on forests. Some experts also mentioned that the conclusions referred to under the assessment related to the non-legally binding nature of the IAF were not consistent with ECOSOC Resolution 2022/17, by which the Forum agreed to defer consideration of this topic to the final review.
- c. Many experts emphasized the need for deeper engagement of relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities at various stages of decision-making, and implementation of forest related policies at the national, regional, and international levels. Several experts also stressed the strong need for gender-balanced transformative actions and social inclusion in the implementation of the forest policies.
- d. Several experts indicated that UNFF annual sessions should provide opportunities for more interactive policy dialogue, discussions on emerging issues, sharing lessons-learned and best practices, and providing a systematic science-policy interface, using the scientific and technical capacity of CPF member organizations.
- e. Several experts pointed out that some of the recommendations in the consultant's report, such as provision of financial support to local governments, were not part of the mandate of UNFF. It was also suggested that some of the recommendations related to the VNCs should be moved to the relevant section on national reporting.
- f. Several experts stressed the importance for the UNFF to engage and interact more effectively with all forest related global processes and organizations such as the HLPF, CPF member organizations including the three Rio Conventions and their outcomes such as Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and relevant regional organizations and commissions to promote greater synergy and collaboration on forest related issues.
- g. Several experts stressed the need for the outcome of the IAF midterm review to take a more strategic approach and connect more strongly with other relevant processes. There is a need to raise political interest in UNFF and enhance its strategic approach, including through seeking and enhancing synergy between the UNSPF and the GBF, thereby enhancing the contribution that forests can deliver to its implementation.
- h. Some experts suggested that simplification of the format for VNRs, and VNCs would help to increase submission of VNRs, and VNCs, and with more qualitative data.
- i. Some experts suggested that UNFF, as a policy body, should not conduct capacity building work, while some other experts emphasized the importance for the Forum to provide capacity building support and technical assistance to countries, including for resource mobilization for implementation of UNSPF.

- j. Some experts called for increased organization of intersessional activities of the Forum in virtual, or hybrid format, whereas others indicated that virtual or hybrid intersessional meetings often pose difficulties due to connectivity problems, among other issues.
- k. Some experts suggested greater interaction between UNFF and bodies such as the International Parliamentarians Union, in the organization of round tables with participation of high-level representatives on important cross-sectoral/cross-cutting topics and emerging issues.
- l. Several experts considered UNFF to be an important platform for communication and implementation of sustainable forest management, and the UNSPF to be the guiding framework for sustainable forest management. They called on countries to develop forest policies at the national level in line with the UNSPF, and to enable UNFF to strengthen global forest governance.
- m. Some experts emphasized the important role of regional and subregional organizations in assisting countries to translate the provisions of the UNSPF into specific actions, in their respective context. Some experts further highlighted the importance of regional and subregional organizations to strengthen monitoring capabilities across countries. In this context, these experts called for greater interaction between the Forum and regional and subregional organizations. These experts also considered the lack of resources as a major challenge that the Forum could address to further strengthen its work in this area.
- n. Some experts considered the low number of responses to the questionnaire provided by consultants as an indication of the lack of engagement by countries in the work of the UNFF.

#### **IV. Discussions on the consultant's assessment report on Section B on Actions related to the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat**

9. The Co-Chair invited Mr. Tiega Anada to present his [assessment report](#). The consultant invited experts to consider twelve recommendations, including actions for more resource mobilization and breaking up the planning into three phases: short term (1-2 years), medium term (3-5 years), and long term (over 5 years). These actions are intended to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the UNFF secretariat to achieve greater synergies with other forest-related global processes and organizations, to enhance the contribution of forests in addressing climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity loss, among others.

10. Following presentation by Mr. Anada, experts engaged in interactive discussions. A summary of key points of the discussions on actions related to UNFF secretariat is provided below:

- a. Many experts recognized the achievements made by the UNFF secretariat in performing its functions despite its small size and limited financial and human resources. They indicated that the UNFF secretariat has accomplished a lot, even during the global pandemic, and has supported the work of the Forum successfully and in an efficient way. The role of UNFF secretariat was also pivotal in building consensus around forest-related issues.
- b. Some experts indicated that the staffing and financing for the UNFF secretariat should follow the tasks and functions of the secretariat. These experts stressed that the UNFF secretariat should provide more information on its workload, gaps, needs, and the requirements for its subprogramme. The process for preparation of the UN programme and budget for the UNFF secretariat happens in UN bodies other than UNFF, which poses a challenge in having a holistic consideration of these issues at UNFF.
- c. A suggestion was made to DESA to examine how further integration of forests in its programme and budget can strengthen implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- d. Several experts called for countries in a position to do so to provide voluntary financial contributions and Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) to address the financial and human resources needs of the UNFF secretariat.
- e. Several experts asked for a specific, independent analysis and information on the human resource and financial needs of the UNFF secretariat well in advance of UNFF19. They considered this information as an important step for them to understand its expanded mandate, needs, gaps, and workplan in the UNFF secretariat, to enable members to review and make decisions accordingly. Several experts called for increased and better communication between the UNFF secretariat and members of the Forum, including

about its needs, activities and workplan. The UNFF secretariat should continue holding brief intersessional meetings to inform members of the relevant developments, and keep them engaged in the process, and facilitates exchange of best practices and lessons learned among members. The UNFF secretariat should also redesign its website to make it more informative and user friendly, including a calendar of forest related events and regular newsletter.

- f. Referring to the recommendation by the consultant for travel of the UNFFS staff to visit countries who are not active in the work of the Forum, several experts did not consider a need for increased travel budget for the UNFF secretariat. It was noted that the secretariat is based in UNHQ, where all members of the Forum have their Permanent Missions. This facilitates exchange of information between the secretariat and members. Virtual participation in meetings outside UNHQ is another way for the UNFF secretariat to engage in meetings and conferences. More frequent interactions with CPF member organizations were also highlighted as an opportunity to improve information exchange.
- g. Several experts called for improved collaboration between CPF members and the UNFF secretariat to better share responsibilities between them.

#### **V. Discussions on the consultant's assessment report on Section E on Actions related to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests**

11. The Co-Chair invited Mr. Tiega Anada, to present his [assessment report](#). In summarizing his conclusions, the consultant noted that the voluntary contributions to the UNFF trust fund are important because they supported the core activities of the UNFF with USD 20 million in funding between 2000 and 2014. From 2015 to 2021, the trust fund received a total of USD 7,050,457, representing an annual average of USD 1,007,208 of voluntary contributions that increased the capacity of the secretariat. The consultant invited experts to consider his recommendations in the report, including seeking sustainable and consistent extrabudgetary funds to be allocated to the trust fund to provide the Secretariat with a reliable foundation for the performance of its core functions, for scaling up the activities of the GFFFN, improving capacity development, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on the implementation of the UNSPF, regional coordination, communication and strengthening stakeholder engagement.

12. Following presentation by Mr. Anada, experts engaged in interactive discussions. A summary of key points of the discussions on actions related to UNFF trust fund is provided below:

- a. Many experts considered the trust fund as an effective and flexible means to support the work of the Forum and the UNFF secretariat, in particular as it allows donors to support a specific area of work, such as Major Groups and other stakeholders' participation, CPF, GFFFN, monitoring, assessment and reporting, and regional and sub-regional organizations' involvement, among others.
- b. Several experts requested that more information on the funding gaps be shared with members of the Forum, so interested members can support and provide resources to the trust fund.
- c. Some experts indicated that fundraising for the trust fund is directly related to raising political awareness on the work of UNFF and its visibility. These experts also stressed the need for the UNFF secretariat to provide additional information on its workload, and required funding, preparation of optional funding proposals for sharing with donor countries, and preparation of optional funding proposals for joint activities with CPF member organizations.
- d. Some experts mentioned the need to diversify the sources of funding for the trust fund, respecting the UN rules and regulations. It was also suggested that a small group of countries and stakeholders could discuss a strategy for resource mobilization for the trust fund.

#### **VI. Discussions on the consultant's assessment report on Section H on Actions related to the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030**

13. The Co-Chair invited the consultant, Mr. David Henderson-Howat, to present his [assessment report](#). The consultant then invited experts to consider the 14 recommendations contained within the report. These recommendations welcome the efforts made to implement the communication and outreach strategy (COS), including through the International Day of Forests, and note that the COS continues to provide a useful framework

for action. The consultant also emphasized the need to do more to reach out beyond the forest community and engage with high-level decision makers, offering specific proposals for further action by members of the Forum, the secretariat, CPF members, regional and sub-regional organizations and Major Groups and other stakeholders.

14. Following presentation by Mr. Henderson-Howat, experts engaged in interactive discussions. A summary of key points of the discussions on actions related to the COS of the UNSPF 2017-2030 is provided below:

- a. Experts, who were largely supportive of the conclusions and recommendations, highlighted examples of successful communication and outreach activities in their countries. They also re-iterated the value of the International Day of Forests and recognized the potential value of developing regional and sub-regional, national, and subnational communication and outreach strategies. In addition, they highlighted the importance of making innovative use of communication tools.
- b. Experts supported the proposal that the secretariat should develop a communication plan setting out its proposed activities and associated objectives, with targeted messages, languages and communication channels appropriate for different audiences, together with metrics for monitoring and evaluation. This communications plan should also explain how it would contribute to the implementation of the UNSPF COS. In addition, experts stressed the need to upgrade the structure and content of the website and for the secretariat to have professional communications staff.
- c. Experts highlighted the importance of doing more to reach out beyond the “forest community” to other sectors.
- d. Experts noted the need to highlight the social and economic benefits of forests, including their importance for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.
- e. It was noted that communication between countries can be valuable in helping to share experiences and success stories. Experts also noted that the forest-related World Flagship Initiatives being taken forward as part of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration provide a good example of high-profile initiatives that can help communicate forest benefits.
- f. Experts stressed the need to communicate with variety of audiences, including Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities responsible for managing forests, who do not necessarily have access to a wide range of media tools. Suggestions were made regarding opportunities for disseminating material at the local level, using local languages, and with eye-catching images through, for example, schools and community centers.
- g. It was noted that visibility of the GFGs could be improved by using short, memorable headings – similar to those used for the SDGs (e.g. “Life on Land” for SDG 15).
- h. The different approaches and responsibilities for national communications related to the UNFF vs responsibilities of international organizations was also noted.
- i. While experts welcomed the idea of producing short, sharp policy briefs, and additional flagship publications, they highlighted the need to consider carefully in a transparent and inclusive manner, the potential themes and target audiences.
- j. Experts also stressed the importance of education and outreach activities, and the need to work closely with CPF members and the CPF Communicators’ Network on this topic. There were a number of suggestions regarding the use of attractive and interesting teaching and communication devices, including interactive tools, social media, influencers, quizzes, and competitions (e.g. a prize for the best children’s book on forests or best short animation film), as well as promoting the GFGs through school curricula.
- k. In addition to the matters considered in the report, there is a need to improve internal communications through, for example, an online calendar of forest events and a regular newsletter on the UNFF website. A scrolling list of smaller projects looking for funding, placed in a prominent place of the website was also suggested. The UNFF Clearing House on Forest Financing should also be regarded as a communications tool, focusing on forest finance. UNFF members and stakeholders are currently being invited to comment on ways to improve its usefulness.
- l. Other comments included the need to recognize the value of all types of forests and trees outside forests.

## **VII. Midterm Review of the Effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests; Proposed actions by the Co-Chairs**

15. The Co-Chairs of the ad hoc expert group proposed the following actions for the decision of the Forum on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF, including future steps to be taken by the IAF beyond 2024. These proposals for actions are proposals of the Co-Chairs based on the outcome of the expert group meetings convened in preparations for the IAF midterm review, reports prepared by the consultants, as well as the major points raised during the discussions in AHEG. The proposals are presented in the same order of the actions and sections contained in the annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17. Several experts stressed that the following proposed actions should be dealt with in the context of the discussions on the same issues as summarized in III-VI in this Co-Chairs summary.

### **A. Actions related to the UNFF and its members**

16. Acknowledging the progress made by the UNFF and its members towards achieving the objectives of the IAF, and noting that members, in particular developing countries, need financial, technical, and technological support to further make progress towards these objectives.

17. Inviting UNFF and its members to:

- a. Work in synergy with other relevant multilateral forest related processes and bodies, in line with their respective mandates.
- b. Involve political leaders in the decision-making process on forest agendas to increase efforts to implement the United Nations Forest Instrument (UNFI), the UNSPF and achieve the GFGs.
- c. Increase the involvement of political leaders in the inclusion of forest-related issues in the international agendas of relevant processes to broaden UNFF's impact and visibility in the broader policy context.
- d. Promote cross-sectoral cooperation at all levels.
- e. Consider increased use of hybrid and virtual means for conduct of UNFF intersessional activities, taking into full account the need for transparency, and inclusivity of virtual modalities and the specific challenges faced especially by developing countries.
- f. Promote participation of high-level officials in UNFF sessions, involving them in more interactive discussions on important cross-cutting, cross-sectoral issues, and emerging issues of concern to forests.
- g. Ensure round tables are designed, communicated, and chaired in a way that invites dialogue among officials.
- h. Strengthen, where applicable, existing intergovernmental regional platforms or organizations relevant to the implementation of the UNFF recommendations and the UNSPF, including by enhancing regional and national capabilities.
- i. Support inclusive and participatory decision-making modalities at the national level to enable the effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and gender inclusivity in the implementation of forest conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management activities.
- j. Strengthen the implementation of forest-related national legislation and the provision of means of implementation for sustainable forest management.
- k. Strengthen the coordination and working agendas of the UNFF with other forest-related multilateral agreements as well as multilateral agreements working on themes related to forests and other relevant topics.
- l. Enhance cooperation, including public-private partnership, at all levels.
- m. Promote visibility, effectiveness, efficiency & accountability of the IAF beyond 2015, including by requesting the UNFF Secretariat to improve communication with Forum members, e.g., through regular written updates.

18. Inviting the UNFF to:

- a. Continuously provide its inputs into the HLPF sessions reaching other sectors and increasing relevance in promoting sustainable forest management.

- b. Increase VNCs' visibility and sharing of successful sustainable forest management cases at the regional level through online platforms, and social networks.
- c. Promote a systematic science-policy interface, to ensure science-based decision-making.
- d. Continue providing technical and financial support to strengthen the capacity of Forum members to implement sustainable forest management, considering the specific challenges, in particular of developing countries.

**B. Actions related to the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat**

19. Acknowledging the progress made by the UNFF secretariat towards the IAF objectives, including through providing technical and organizational assistance for the preparations of UNFF Sessions in a professional manner, timely production of the necessary documentation, logistical arrangements, travel assistance, financial support for delegates to attend meetings and providing technical capacity building support to members within the mandate of the IAF.

20. Requesting the UNFF secretariat to:

- a. Prepare and share an information paper in advance of UNFF sessions, highlighting demands on its workload, identifying needs and gaps, including in human and financial resources and proposals for a workplan for consideration of the Forum, and inviting members of the Forum to review this information and make appropriate decision.
- b. Further enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies with forest related regional and subregional organizations and processes, and international organizations and bodies, including CPF member organizations, in line with their respective mandates.
- c. Use more frequently the hybrid format for intersessional activities, and for exchange of information with Members of the Forum and Major Groups and other stakeholders, taking into full account the need for inclusivity and transparency for the virtual meetings, and the difficulties that some countries are facing in this respect.
- d. Facilitate greater synergies with financial organizations and other international cooperation mechanisms, to enhance contribution of forests to address climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity loss, among others.
- e. Share information more frequently with Permanent Missions of Forum members in New York to raise awareness, further highlight the economic, social, and environmental benefits of forests, and increase the visibility of the secretariat's work.
- f. Provide information not only on positive changes, accomplishments, and progressive steps forward, but also regarding remaining challenges that require additional efforts to reduce obstacles toward implementation of the UNSPF and achievement of the GFGs.

21. Encouraging members in a position to do so, to second JPOs to the UNFF secretariat, as a means to address the human resource gaps, following the assessment of secretariat resources referred to in para 20 a.

**C. Actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests**

22. Welcoming the progress made by the CPF and its member organizations towards achievement of the IAF objectives and inviting the Partnership to continue to advance implementation of the UNSPF, promote its joint initiatives towards the GFGs, provide technical and science-based support to the work of UNFF, promote the visibility of forests in various fora, reduce burdens and streamline national reporting, and provide financing facilitation support to countries through the GFFFN.

23. Inviting the CPF and its member organizations to:

- a. Continue to enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on sustainable forest management, and upscale progress and impact on the ground towards sustainable forest management by



- addressing the interlinkages of climate change, biodiversity, land, among others, and forest agendas in a holistic manner at all levels, considering the outcomes of UNFF and other forest-related fora.
- b. Sharpen the focus of its workplans on the UNSPF and its GFGs, as well as other multilaterally agreed forest-related goals, with clear priorities, actions, joint activities, resources, outputs, and indicators for assessing progress. In this respect, CPF reports to the UNFF could be structured around the GFGs.
  - c. Undertake regular assessments of its completed joint initiatives to identify challenges and successes and document lessons learned to share with the members of the Forum, and other stakeholders. This assessment should also include the contributions of the joint initiatives to the GFGs.
  - d. Continue to promote dialogue with Major Groups and other stakeholders.
  - e. Enhance interaction and communication, including through hybrid format, with members of the Forum, regional and subregional partners, and Major Groups and other stakeholders on its activities during UNFF sessions, as well as during intersessional periods by organizing short briefing meetings.
  - f. Prepare decisions for their governing bodies on the continuation of collaboration within the partnership, comprising, inter alia, options for strengthening collaboration, such as MoUs.
24. Encouraging CPF members to engage more actively in the work of the GFFFN, as an effective platform to enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on the work of the CPF in support of the GFGs.
25. Encouraging non-UN members of the CPF, which are better placed for receiving private sector and philanthropic contributions, to work with those partners to generate funding for the CPF activities.
26. Inviting the Forum to:
- a. Enhance coordination and collaboration among national focal points of different CPF member organizations, send consistent and supportive messages to the work of the CPF in the governing bodies of the CPF member organizations, support funding for the CPF activities, and consider options for further supporting the mandate of the CPF.
  - b. Adopt a decision in the different governing bodies of the CPF organizations to underscore engagement for the work of the CPF, strengthen the CPF's mandate and support the work of the CPF.
  - c. Assess and consider potential pathways and options to strengthen the CPF, including the potential transitioning of the CPF to an interagency coordination mechanism, in a manner consistent with UN provisions, based on the CPF's assessment and in consultation with Member States.
  - d. Continue to actively engage CPF and its members in its work, including during UNFF sessions, to promote interaction with CPF members.
  - e. Prioritize its requests to the CPF to facilitate the work.

#### **D. Actions related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network**

27. Welcoming the contribution of the GFFFN towards achieving the objectives of the IAF through capacity building and provision of technical assistance to several members of the Forum and in mobilizing financing for sustainable forest management.
28. Inviting members of the Forum to:
- a. Maintain and increase the momentum of mobilizing resources from all sources to forests and generating new and additional resources to reach the desired levels, in particular by strengthening existing multilateral funding mechanisms to support developing countries.
  - b. Align financial flows with forest conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management, including cooperation and public-private partnerships on science, technology and innovation in the forest sector, and to engage sectors beyond the forestry sector to unlock sustained finance.
  - c. Promote the development and use of innovative financial mechanisms, including payments for ecosystem services and blended finance at national level.
  - d. Maintain momentum and strengthen efforts to continue mobilizing the provision of financial resources from all sources for sustainable forest management.
  - e. Use the Clearing House as one of several information sources on forest financing.

- f. Recognize, respect, and protect secure forest tenure and/or user rights of both men and women, smallholders, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities when facilitating their investment in sustainable forest management.
  - g. Identify pathways to facilitate gender-responsive access to finance for smallholders and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.
  - h. Improve understanding across relevant stakeholders of existing national regulatory frameworks related to SFM investments, in order to leverage additional resources.
  - i. Provide adequate incentives to advance sustainable forest management.
  - j. Develop green and sustainable financing policies which support and enhance sustainable forest management.
  - k. Ensure that national forest financing strategies address the financing needs of different stakeholders/actors as they have distinct/different needs and roles.
29. Inviting members of the Forum, and others in a position to do so, to:
- a. Provide voluntary contributions to the UNFF trust fund to scale up the activities of the GFFFN, including its Clearing House on Forest Financing, and to assist requesting countries and accredited entities in the preparation and finalization of proposals for funding by donors.
  - b. Consider the results of the UNFF comprehensive staffing review and make recommendations, as appropriate, as to GFFFN staffing.
  - c. Provide staff support to the UNFF secretariat to enhance the GFFFN capacity to provide adequate and timely support to members of the Forum.
30. Inviting the Forum to identify key areas for action by the secretariat for implementing the fourth priority of the GFFFN as set out in the UNSPF and the GFFFN guidelines, i.e. contributing to the achievement of the GFGs and targets, as well as priorities contained in the quadrennial programme of work.
31. Encouraging Forum members:
- a. To approach training in forest financing as a long-term commitment that benefits from staff consistency and the periodic renewal of skills.
  - b. When requesting GFFFN support in developing project proposals for accessing funding from various sources, including multilateral sources, such as the Adaptation Fund, GCF and GEF, to ensure enlisting, from the outset, the full support of an implementing agency or accredited entity and national focal points and national designated authorities.
32. Requesting the UNFF secretariat to:
- a. When a request for GFFFN support is received from a country, and in close consultation with the respective country, send an expression of interest to the accredited CPF members, including the targeted funds, such as the Adaptation Fund, GEF through its Operational Focal Point, and GCF, so that a potential accredited entity/implementing agency and the GFFFN and the national authorities can collaborate in the development of the proposals from the inception of the facilitation process.
  - b. Publicize more widely the UNFF Clearing House on Forest Financing Quarterly Highlight and cross reference the GFFFN-Clearing House website more visibly at the UNFF website.
  - c. Continue to update and maintain the Clearing House on Forest Financing, including its database on forest financial flows, and invite CPF member organizations and Major Groups and other stakeholders to share their lessons learned and best practices and success stories regarding forest financing for publishing on the Clearing House website.
  - d. Make use of digital tools and innovations including artificial intelligence (AI) to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of GFFFN activities, when feasible.
  - e. Develop a template for assessing the results of the technical assistance provided by the GFFFN to requesting countries as a tool for facilitating future assessment of progress achieved, obstacles confronted, and lessons learned, taking into account contributions to the achievement of the GFGs of the UNSPF and UNFI.

- f. Organize regional capacity-building workshops with designated national focal points and trainers in forest departments on the utilization of the Clearing House who in turn could organize national training Clearing House workshops directed at public and private sector stakeholders.
- g. Provide suggestions on areas that require increased resources to advance sustainable forest management, including by identifying, and drawing attention of the Forum to new and emerging issues and their forest financing needs.
- h. Develop projects and initiatives designed to enhance the achievement of the GFGs and targets, as well as priorities contained in the quadrennial programme of work, in line with the fourth priority of the GFFFN as set out in the UNSPF and the GFFFN guidelines, based on key areas for action identified by the Forum.

33. Requesting members of the Forum and CPF members to continue to address barriers to accessing finance, including where appropriate governance and coordination.

34. Inviting the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other relevant multilateral funding agencies, accredited entities to provide assistance to the GFFFN in supporting countries' access to financing, including by identifying ways of simplifying application procedures, shortening the project processing and approval period.

35. Inviting the members of the CPF who are accredited to the financing institutions to be engaged more in supporting the work of the GFFFN, including in the elaboration and promotion of project proposals.

36. Requesting the UNFF secretariat and the GCF, Adaptation Fund and GEF secretariats to work closely on the GFFFN-supported project proposals, which are in the pipeline for review by the GCF and improve coordination and cooperation in the facilitation of project proposals.

#### **E. Actions related to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests**

37. Welcoming the continued annual contributions to the trust fund which have enabled the secretariat to provide capacity development support and technical assistance to members of the Forum to promote sustainable forest management and implementation of the UNSPF as well as create supplementary posts as needed to fill gaps related to the secretariat's staffing.

38. Acknowledging that sustained voluntary contributions to the trust fund have enabled the UNFF secretariat to support participation of representatives and experts to meetings, consultancies and contractual services, staff travel and other operating expenses.

39. Inviting members of the Forum to:

- a. Allocate sustainable and consistent extrabudgetary funds to the trust fund, if in a position to do so, so as to provide the UNFF secretariat with reliable foundation to supplement regular budget resources for the performance of its core functions and activities, including in the implementation of the UNSPF and achieving the six GFGs, improving capacity development, regional collaboration on sustainable forest management, communication and outreach, Major Groups and other stakeholder engagement, and ensuring a balanced representation of developed and developing countries at future Forum-related meetings.
- b. Explore options to attract new voluntary contributions to the trust fund.

40. Requesting the UNFF secretariat to provide additional information on its workload, and required funding, and prepare optional funding proposal for sharing with donor countries on a regular basis, including for joint activity with CPF member organizations.

#### **F. Actions related to the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030**

41. Inviting members of the Forum to continue to work to implement UNFI, and the UNSPF and attach high priority to achieving all the GFGs and targets.

42. Recognizing that war and other armed conflicts slow down and prevent progress in UNSPF implementation and acknowledging the need to assess the consequences of these conflicts on forests and sustainable forest management.

43. Recognizing the specific challenges faced by developing countries and further stress the need to enhance international cooperation to support those countries capacities to monitor, assess and report on the implementation of the UNSPF and the UNFI, and encouraging donors and the international community to continue to work together to increase Forum members' capacity to this end.

44. Emphasizing that in reporting on the implementation of the UNSPF, all the forest-related multilateral agreements into force should be taken into account.

45. Endorsing the timeline for the next reporting cycle to UNFF for 2024-2026<sup>2</sup> (as presented by the UNFFS during the UNFF EGM in June 2023 in UNON, Nairobi-Kenya), and initiate, as soon as possible, activities related to the next reporting cycle, including the establishment of an informal Advisory Group on reporting to UNFF, in an inclusive and transparent manner.

46. Recognizing that inter-sectoral collaboration within each Member State is an important tool to implement sustainable forest management and achieving the GFGs.

47. Recognizing the contributions and role of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and other stakeholders in the implementation of the UNSPF and achieving its goals and targets.

48. Requesting the UNFF secretariat to:

- a. Disseminate relevant information among members regarding preparation of the VNRs in a timely manner and make use of the information received in the next reporting cycle through producing another report on the GFGs and develop it in a transparent manner.
- b. Conduct capacity building activities related to monitoring, assessment, and reporting on GFGs and provide assistance in preparing their national reports.
- c. Facilitate exchange of information, including on innovative techniques, technology, and knowledge management related to GFGs among members.

49. Inviting CPF and its member organizations to:

- a. Advance the ongoing work of the Global Core Set of Forest-related indicators, in particular all Tier iii indicators as they are crucial, to assess progress towards GFG 2 and demonstrate the contribution of forests to sustainable development, all SDGs and all GFGs.
- b. Further enhance coordination, streamline reporting and data sharing activities, and make use of the existing global publications and reports on forests.
- c. Organize a joint workshop on international reporting on forests for focal points of all relevant CPF member organizations.

#### **G. Actions related to the contributions of the Forum to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

50. Inviting Forum members to:

- a. Strengthen international cooperation to promote sustainable forest management, including in the relation to means of implementation, green finance, technology transfer, sharing best practices, scientific exchange and other activities promoting sustainable forest management.

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<sup>2 2</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Note-EGM-reporting-timeline-online-tool.pdf>

- b. Include forest/UNFF experts on their HLPF delegations and their delegations to key meetings of the three Rio conventions and other relevant international intergovernmental bodies, recognizing the difficulties for delegations, in particular from developing countries.
- c. Enhance coordination in capitals between UNFF and HLPF focal points and with New York missions to highlight SDG interlinkages in HLPF preparatory meetings and declarations.
- d. Enhance coordination in capitals among relevant focal points to develop complementary and mutually supportive NDCs, VNCs, VNRs, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)<sup>3</sup>, national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and national action programs to combat desertification.
- e. Include Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders in their VNR and VLR preparation processes.
- f. Advocate concise and impactful inputs from the UNFF to HLPF and the inclusion of a 1–2-page executive summary of key points and commitments, as well as more streamlined and focused templates for intergovernmental inputs to HLPF.
- g. Deliver consistent targeted messages on forests and all SDG and GBF interlinkages across ECOSOC bodies, the three Rio conventions, other CPF member organizations, and other relevant intergovernmental fora in which they participate.
- h. Discuss at the UNFF sessions the input on SDG interlinkages regarding the cluster of SDGs to be discussed at the following year session of the HLPF to submit the message from the UNFF within the timeframe requested by the HLPF.  
Consider establishing a UNFF “Major Group and Other Stakeholders” (MGoS) coordination mechanism to strengthen collaboration with the HLPF MgoS Coordination Mechanism.

51. Inviting UNFF Bureau in a transparent and inclusive manner and in consultation with the respective regions and Forum members to:

- a. Continue to provide timely inputs to the HLPF on SDG interlinkages on behalf of UNFF and focus extra effort on SDG Summit years, and the years during which SDG 15 is under review.
- b. Ensure these inputs are concise, targeted, and actionable in the form of “key messages” and policy recommendations that can be inserted “as is” into HLPF declarations, with supporting text attached as needed.
- c. Work closely with their countries’ HLPF focal points in capitals and the Permanent Missions in New York to help ensure UNFF key messages are well-reflected in HLPF declarations.
- d. Engage with Forum members and other stakeholders to ensure their opinions are taken into account in the preparation of the input to the HLPF on behalf of the UNFF.

52. Requesting the UNFF secretariat to:

- a. Assist and facilitate the UNFF Bureau and Forum members with respect to para 50 and 51 above.
- b. Prominently post the UNFF Bureau’s annual key messages to HLPF on the UNFF home page and provide accompanying infographics.
- c. Include in the documentation for UNFF sessions an analysis of the extent to which UNFF inputs were reflected in the previous year’s HLPF declaration and DESA/OISC reports.
- d. Engage early on with the UNFF focal points of members conducting VNRs in a given year to encourage the highlight of all SDG interlinkages.
- e. Enhance collaboration with DESA/OISC and the secretariats of the UN regional economic commissions, including for their regional forums on sustainable development, particularly in the context of regional VNR workshops and forest-related intergovernmental inputs to HLPF.
- f. Coordinate with CPF members to provide joint input to HLPF with a view to sending consistent “key messages” on forests to HLPF.

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<sup>3</sup> Voluntary Local Review (VLR) is a process in which local and regional governments initiate voluntarily an assessment of their progress of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs at the subnational level.

- g. Enhance collaboration on achieving the SDGs with the secretariats of the three Rio conventions, and other relevant bodies and conventions on forest-related issues of mutual interest, in line with respective mandates.
- h. Prepare a concise report and/or targeted communication products suitable for a variety of audiences to highlight the contributions of forests to the SDGs under review in a given year, their interlinkages, especially those with SDG15, and the critical importance of achieving target 15.b to fully realize these contributions, drawing on the FRA and existing studies, including scientific studies by CPF members.

53. Inviting CPF and its members to coordinate on “topline” key messages to the HLPF on forest interlinkages (benefits and threats) with the SDGs under review in a given year.

54. Inviting Major Groups to share SDG interlinkages by engaging early on in their countries’ VNR and VLR preparation processes and working closely with the “organizing partners” of their corresponding HLPF stakeholder group in preparing inputs to the HLPF process.

55. Inviting UN regional economic commissions to promote SDG interlinkages, both benefits and challenges, especially through their regional forums on sustainable development.

56. Inviting ECOSOC to streamline and focus its annual template for intergovernmental inputs to HLPF to facilitate concise, targeted, and actionable inputs for inclusion in HLPF declarations, and DESA-OISC reports and to consider limiting intergovernmental inputs to a maximum of two pages.

#### **H. Actions related to the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030**

57. Inviting Forum members, the UNFF secretariat, CPF and its members, regional and sub-regional organizations and Major Groups and other stakeholders to continue their work in implementing the COS of the UNSPF, recognizing the importance of communication in actions related to education, awareness, and advocacy, which cannot be reduced to the dissemination of information.

58. Strengthening the professional approach which makes cost-effective use of available resources and of existing and emerging communication options, including the use of innovative and interactive methods, such as collaborations with influencers, surveys, and contests.

59. Requesting the UNFF secretariat to:

- a. Make progress in upgrading the structure and content of its website.
- b. Develop a communication plan setting out its proposed short-term and medium-term activities in support of implementation of the COS-related objectives, messages and communication channels for different audiences, together with metrics for monitoring and evaluation.
- c. Supported as relevant by the CPF, develop short, sharp policy briefs on priority themes identified by members, and to extend its series of flagship publications to highlight the benefits that forests and trees outside of forests bring for other global priorities.
- d. Make greater use of its convening power to widen participation in the Forum’s high-level round tables to strengthen engagement beyond the forest-sector.

60. Recognizing the need to:

- a. Do more to reach out beyond the “forest community” to non-forest sectors to engage with high-level decision makers, and to raise awareness of the GFGs.
- b. Develop communication products to raise awareness on the social, economic and environmental benefits of forests in a balanced and integrated manner and on the important role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and groups in vulnerable situations.

61. Exploring the establishment of a World Sustainable Forest Management Flagship Initiative to identify on a regular basis effective sustainable forest management projects and interventions that contribute to the implementation of UNSPF and deciding to establish an Advisory Committee to support the implementation of this initiative.
62. Stressing the importance of educational and youth outreach activities, both formal and informal education, and the need to help younger generations understand the benefits of forests and trees outside forests and learn about the GFGs.
63. Inviting members of the Forum to consider opportunities to strengthen advocacy, for example through actions that help high-level politicians and senior government officials to understand better the contribution that forests and trees can make towards achieving wider policy goals.
64. Recognizing the need to raise the visibility of the GFGs, develop short, memorable titles for each of the six GFGs similar to those used for the SDGs icons, in consultation with members of the Forum.
65. Inviting CPF members to continue efforts to raise the visibility of forest-related issues at international forums and meetings, including the HLPF, to continue to seek ways to take initiatives that improve understanding of linkages between the forest sector and other sectors, and to use social media and appropriate publications to help raise awareness of the GFGs.
66. Encouraging CPF members engaged in the Global Forest Education Initiative, and Forum members to make full use of the opportunities it presents to raise awareness of the importance of forests, and the role of sustainable forest management, through elementary (primary) and secondary school curricula, as well as promoting forest-related studies at the tertiary level.
67. Inviting regional and sub-regional organizations to consider the possibility of developing regional communication and outreach strategies with messages that reflect regional priorities and needs.
68. Inviting Major Groups and other stakeholders to continue to use their voices to highlight concerns and propose practical solutions to problems associated with the world's forests.

#### **I. Actions related to the involvement of regional and subregional partners**

69. Inviting the regional and subregional partners to:
  - a. Sustain support to countries in respective regions to prepare them for UNFF and related sessions under other conventions and frameworks where forests feature strongly and to related UNFF decisions to their work.
  - b. Pursue engagement of regional or subregional financial institutions, such as regional development/investment banks to expand collaboration on issues related to forests, and to attract funding for their forest-related activities and participation in relevant meetings.
  - c. Explore options to organize a regional/subregional partner-led initiatives to provide inputs to the Forum and implement regional, subregional, and transboundary forestry initiatives leading to achievement of GFGs.
  - d. Regional and sub-regional organizations and processes should engage major groups and other stakeholders in their forest related activities.
70. Inviting the Forum, subject to availability of resources, to:
  - a. Consider the ways to enhance support to the regional/subregional partners, including by organizing capacity development workshops on issues such as monitoring of biodiversity reporting on the GFGs and the SDGs, and training workshop on resource mobilization.
  - b. Devote in its technical sessions, specific meeting to regions, on a rotating basis, to share their experiences and issues related to the implementation of the UNSPF.
  - c. Engage more actively regional financial institutions/development banks in UNFF sessions to build relationship and networking.

- d. Promote cross-regions collaboration and information-sharing on the success stories and best practices on the implementation of the UNSPF and the GFGs.
- e. Include regional perspectives in the potential future issues of The Global Forest Goals Report, in a concise manner, such as through case studies, or best practices.
- f. Promote interaction between regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations with CPF and Major Groups and other stakeholders.

71. Inviting the Forum to revise the GFFFN guidelines to enhance the GFFFN's ability to provide tailored responses to the needs of countries in regions/subregions through making intergovernmental regional and sub-regional organizations eligible to receive the GFFFN support.

72. Requesting the UNFF secretariat to consult regional and subregional partners to better understand their needs and identify actions to address the related gaps and problems.

#### **J. Actions related to the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders**

73. Welcoming the contributions provided by Major Groups and other stakeholders to the implementation of the UNSPF and achievements of the GFGs and inviting MGoS and the UNFF to continue to share and discuss updates, experiences and best practices.

74. Inviting the Forum, the UNFF secretariat and UNFF Bureau to:

- a. Hold an inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue with participation of a wide range of stakeholders and relevant expertise during UNFF sessions.
- b. Use UNFF sessions as a platform for exchange of ideas and best practice on how stakeholders could better capture action opportunities from forest related frameworks and track the progress in those frameworks, including for use in future issues of the Global Forest Goal Report.
- c. Organize a capacity building workshop, subject to funding availability, for fundraising for Major Groups and other Stakeholders to implement the UNSPF and achieve the GFGs.

75. Inviting Forum members to:

- a. Engage Major Groups and other stakeholders in advancing sustainable forest management in a more holistic, multisectoral, livelihoods-oriented approach, using other forest-related frameworks such as climate change, and biodiversity to promote the forest agenda and to mobilize resources for it.
- b. Include and consider the contribution of Major groups and other stakeholders in all relevant forest-related framework and Global Forest Reports.
- c. Support Major Groups and other stakeholders in mobilizing increased financial resources to facilitate their engagement in the implementation of the UNSPF.
- d. Provide resources to facilitate - initiatives led by Major Groups and other stakeholders to prepare their inputs to the UNFF sessions.

76. Encouraging the CPF to engage in dialogue and examine joint activities with Major Groups and other stakeholders as a means to promote implementation of the UNSPF in view of achieving the GFGs.

77. Inviting Major Groups and other stakeholders to:

- a. Provide information regarding Major Groups and other stakeholders coordination mechanisms in other fora for consideration of the UNFF.
- b. Use the UNFF sessions and related intersessional events as opportunities to explore ways for retaining the practice of intra-Major Groups and other stakeholders' consultation, without compromising the pace of processes or action.
- c. Ensure the internal consultation mechanism allowing for balanced representation of subject matter experts based on transparent and inclusive processes for effective participation in the UNFF.
- d. Develop a joint strategy and update their workplans in support of both UNFF policy dialogue and implementation of UNSPF.



- e. Share knowledge on their contributions to the UNSPF with all members and stakeholders of the UNFF.
- f. Seize opportunities, and securing resources for dialogue or action, including finances.
- g. Ensure the adequate representation of Major Groups and other stakeholders from developing countries, including from groups in a vulnerable situation, in the work of UNFF.
- h. Explore means to promote partnership with the large-scale forest industry groups.
- i. Explore the possibility of generating new and additional funding for sustainable forest management by enhancing the visibility of its benefits in different global agendas.
- j. Keep their respective constituencies, and UNFF informed of their actions and the impact.
- k. Work in close coordination with Forum members, complementing their endeavors to meet the GFGs effectively.