

**Remarks by Mr. Boris Greguska**  
**Chair of UNFF15 on item 18k**  
**ECOSOC Management Segment- 21 July 2020**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The fifteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF15) was supposed to be held from 4-8 May 2020 in New York. As a policy session of the Forum, UNFF15 was expected to include a high-level segment and adopt a ministerial declaration. UNFF15 was also supposed to adopt an omnibus resolution to take decisions on several important substantive and operational issues.

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19, numerous scheduled meetings at the United Nations were cancelled or postponed. Based on the recommendation by the Bureau of UNFF15 and through ECOSOC resolutions 2020/206 and 2020/207, it was decided that UNFF15 should neither hold physical or virtual meeting, but it should hold virtual consultations to adopt omnibus resolution and procedural decisions, and to conclude its work before the conclusion of the 2020 ECOSOC cycle.

Based on these decisions, a zero draft resolution was shared with Members of the Forum in March 2020 and an intensive consultation process was set up. To concentrate on the consultation on the draft resolution, UNFF15 Bureau also suspended the informal consultation on the draft ministerial declaration of UNFF15, which was started previously in March 2020.

Three rounds of written inputs were solicited from Members of the Forum and relevant stakeholders on the draft resolution during the period of 26 March to 27 May 2020. Numerous virtual consultations were also conducted during the month of June. As the result of these consultations, Members of the Forum informally agreed on the draft UNFF15 omnibus resolution on 19 June 2020. This draft and several procedural decisions were adopted by the Forum on 30 June 2020 through the silence procedure established in accordance with the relevant ECOSOC decisions, thereby concluding the work of UNFF15.

The key decisions in the resolution are as follow: i) Adoption of the programme of work for the Forum for 2021; ii) Finalization of a proposal in an annex to the resolution, for the programme of work of the Forum for 2022-2024 for consideration and adoption at the next session of the Forum; iii) Agreement on the timing of the submission of the next round of voluntary national reports, and guidance on the preparation of the flagship publication and the establishment of the clearing house of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN). Through this resolution, Members of the Forum quickly reacted to the challenges imposed by COVID-19 on forests, and requested the Secretariat to organize a high level roundtable at the next session of the Forum in April 2021 to address major forest-related issues, and to compile an assessment on the impacts of COVID-19 on several related aspects of the work of the Forum.

Regarding the proposed office for the GFFN in China, despite difference of views among Members of the Forum on the nature of this office, the Forum agreed that the Secretariat should submit a report on the relevant developments on the establishment of the office to the next session. The Forum also agreed to continue its close interaction with the HLPF, and major global processes, namely UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD, and stated the UNSPF can make contributions to the Post 2020 Biodiversity Programme. Members of the Forum also welcomed the outcome of the GA consideration of DESA reform pertaining to the Forum, which maintained a separate subprogramme for forests and a D2 level post as the head of the Secretariat. The Forum also requested the Secretary-General to expedite recruitment of the director.

The agreement on the UNFF15 resolution is unprecedented in the history of the Forum. This agreement was the result of lengthy, inclusive and transparent consultation process over the last three months. Despite significant challenges emerged from the current situation, Members of the Forum engaged in productive consultations which resulted in meaningful and credible outcomes. This agreement also was a test of Forum's preparedness to show its ability to confront emerging issues and extraordinary situations. The Forum passed successfully this test and demonstrated its relevance and effectiveness during the most difficult time of its life.

I wish to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Members of the Forum, as well as the UNFF Secretariat for their collaboration and positive engagement in the consultation process which led to a successful outcome. With a clear agenda for its future work and a newly elected Bureau, the Forum is now ready to embark on the implementation of the intersessional activities, and to further advance the forest agenda within the UN system in the year ahead.

Thank you.