

Terms of Reference for Consultancy

UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS SECRETARIAT, DESA

Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa

I. BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an enormous disruption to human lives, livelihoods and economic systems worldwide. It is the worst global crisis humanity has faced since the second world war. The pandemic has precipitated massive short-term economic contraction, shuttered countless businesses whether big or small, thrown tens of millions out of work, disrupted global supply chains, severely strained fiscal capacity and safety nets, and eroded global solidarity and multilateralism at a time when they are needed the most. The worst impacts of the pandemic have affected some of the most vulnerable segments of society. There have already been reports of indigenous communities in Asia and Latin America, who are turning to forests for food, medicines, fuel and shelter, and to isolate themselves from the risk of COVID-19 infection.

One-in-five people depend on forest products for food, income and nutritional diversity and generates more than \$88 billion in income, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2020). Forty per cent of the extreme poor in rural areas live in forests and savannah areas.

As countries prioritize short and medium-term economic recovery, we could see reduced investment in sustainable forest management (SFM) and a rise in illegal logging. Given the focus on strengthening food security and food production – reduced wood demand, coupled with greater agricultural subsidies could raise the risk of deforestation from agricultural expansion into forests. Forests are also at risk from illegal or unsustainable logging, unmanaged fires, pollution, disease, fragmentation and the impact of climate change, all of which threaten the health of forests and their ability to function as productive and resilient ecosystems.

According to some recent studies (UNEP 2016 and 2020), 60 per cent of all infectious diseases in humans and 75 per cent of all emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic and tend to emerge when land, especially forests, is cleared for human activity, such as agriculture and human settlement. As forests are cleared, natural habitats and traditional buffer zones separating humans from animals or from the pathogens that they harbour, are reduced or lost increasing the chances of contact between animals and humans. In some countries and regions, the situation is confounded by consumption and improper handling of bushmeat especially during trade. Another recent study suggests that deforestation could lead to a rise in the occurrence of diseases like COVID-19. The study's findings suggest that when forests are cleared, the chances for transmission of zoonotic, or animal-to-human diseases, increase.

In Africa, the pandemic poses a great risk to sustainable development including diverting attention from, and derailing, sustainable forest management initiatives on the continent. The African Union Commission has since produced a preliminary forestry brief highlighting the relationship between

the pandemic and the forestry sector including decline in trade in forest products and reliance on forests by people that have lost incomes and employment.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance and role of forests, trees agroforestry, in supporting sustainable development, the resilience of ecosystems and social systems to shocks. Forests provide multiple benefits to humankind and contribute significantly to poverty eradication. For millions of people living in poverty, forests and trees provide food, fuel for cooking and heating, water, medicine, shelter and clothing and function as safety nets in crises. Forests prevent land degradation and desertification and reduce the risk of floods, landslides, avalanches, droughts, dust storms, sandstorms and other natural disasters. They are home to an estimated 80 per cent of all terrestrial species. They sustain essential watersheds, contribute substantially to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to conservation of biodiversity.

When sustainably managed, forests can contribute significantly to not only to recovery from the effects of the pandemic but to supporting long term sustainable development through provision of forest goods and services from resilient and renewable ecosystems. Thus, the sustainable management of forests and trees outside forests is vital to the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The framework for action already exists, through the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 (UNSPF) which serves as a framework for forest-related work at all levels. It builds on the momentum provided by the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

To have a broad overview of the impacts of the global pandemic of COVID-19 on forests and forest-dependent people, and to assess the potential of forests to diminish the adverse impacts of COVID-19, Members of the Forum adopted the omnibus resolution during the fifteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF15) on 30 June 2020. In accordance with paragraph 14 of the UNFF15 resolution, the UNFF Secretariat is requested, in consultation with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and with input from members of the Forum, to compile an initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on: i) sustainable forest management (SFM), ii) the forest sector, forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, iii) forest financing and international cooperation, and to present this assessment to the Forum at its sixteenth session in April 2021.

In this regard, the UNFF Secretariat seeks to engage a highly qualified consultant to conduct a regional assessment of the impact and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the forestry sector and potential responses and measures for recovery and sustainable development with special focus on sustainable forest management, forest sector, forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, forest financing and international cooperation.

II. WORK ASSIGNMENTS

The specific responsibilities/tasks are:

1. Conduct an assessment of the impact and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable forest management (SFM) and the forest sector, drawing on existing

published studies and reports, news items, policy briefs, supplemented by consultations with relevant stakeholders. The study should cover *inter alia*, impact and implications on:

- a) status of forest management and conservation activities, production, forest protection, afforestation etc.
 - b) Livelihoods of forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, smallholder forest owners, workers, women and youth.
 - c) Forest sector, including institutional capacity at the regional, sub-regional, national and subnational levels
 - d) Forest industries labour market and employment, as well as the domestic and international demands for forest products and services,
 - e) Trade, industrial and manufacturing activities,
 - f) Investment and financing (public and private including foreign direct investment),
 - g) Certification and traceability
 - h) International and regional cooperation on forests and forestry issues
2. Working together with UNFF National Focal points, conduct stakeholder consultations to ensure their inputs are incorporated into the findings of the assessment, with particular focus on engagement of government officials, civil society, local community and forest associations, private sector, academia and research practitioners, development partners, intergovernmental and other regional organisations and relevant international organisations including members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) operational in the region.
 3. Identify emerging opportunities (if any) that COVID-19 has brought to the fore and potential responses and measures for the forest sector's recovery and enhanced contribution of forests to inclusive sustainable development.
 4. Present the draft report to sub-regional experts and stakeholders at a sub-regional workshop to be held virtually and produce a workshop report
 5. Participate in the Africa regional workshop (to be held virtually) and present the sub-regional study findings
 6. Produce a final report incorporating comments and inputs from sub-regional workshops not exceeding 50 pages excluding annexes. The final report should clearly describe the impacts and implications including risks, threats and challenges on the forest sector and sustainable forest management, and the identification of, and consensus on, potential measures for addressing the impacts of the pandemic and for accelerating socio-economic recovery as well as inclusive sustainable development.
 7. Present the findings of the study at the global expert meeting on impact of COVID-19 on SFM to be held in (Jan-Feb 2021)

III. CONTRACT DURATION

The contract will be for 45 working days within the period 10 September to 31 December 2020.

IV. DUTY STATION AND LOCATION OF ASSIGNMENT

The consultant will work off-site

V. EXPECTED OUTPUT AND DELIVERY DATES

The consultant will produce the following outputs and work along the following deadlines:

- The first draft of the analytical study on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on SFM, the forest sector, forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities forest financing and international cooperation in the ECOWAS subregion by 31 October 2020.
- A final analytical study (ECOWAS subregion) and regional workshop report by 30 November 2020
- A final analytical study that incorporates findings from the Africa regional by 10 December 2020.

All written outputs will be delivered electronically, via email to UNFFS through Njeri Kariuki at kariuki@un.org

VI. TRAVEL

The consultant is required to travel to attend the regional and global expert meetings on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SFM in January 2021 and present the findings of the analytical study, if conditions permit. Travel cost will be obligated separately.

VII. FEE AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The consultant will be paid a fee of USD \$13,500 to be paid in two instalments:

- The first instalment of USD \$6,750 upon satisfactory submission of the first draft of the analytical study for the ECOWAS subregion by 31 October 2021; and
- The second instalment of USD \$6,750 upon satisfactory submission of the final analytical study of the Africa region by 10 December 2021.

VIII. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The consultant's performance will be based upon the following indicators:

- Technically sound guidance of discussions
- Timeliness of written output submissions
- Quality and readability of reports
- Receptiveness/responsiveness to inputs from the regional workshop, UNFF and the expert group meeting and feed-back from UNFFS staff members

IX. QUALIFICATIONS

The consultant shall have the following competencies and qualifications:

- Advanced university degree or higher (Master's degree or equivalent) in forestry, environment or related area. A first-level university degree in combination with fifteen

additional years of qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree.

- At least 15 years of experience in areas directly related to sustainable forest management and international cooperation, with broad knowledge of the interrelated nature of natural resource management and the cross-sectoral and inter-institutional nature of forests;
- Experience in governments, intergovernmental negotiations which create policies and laws and oversee enforcement of more than two areas of economic, social and environmental matters related to forests and trees;
- Excellent policy, analytical, technical, interpersonal and drafting skills, including experience in facilitating expert meetings and discussions;
- No conflicts of interest;
- Oral and written fluency in English;
- Participation in UNFF activities is an advantage; and
- Willingness to work collaboratively on a team.

XII. SUPERVISOR/PROJECT MANAGER

The consultant will work under the overall guidance of the Officer-in-Charge of the Secretariat, and the direct supervision:

Mr. Peter Gondo

Inter-regional Advisor

UNFF Secretariat

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and

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