

Thematic priorities for UNFF16 & UNFF17

Background

In accordance with Annex I of the UNFF15 resolution of UNFF15, the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2021–2024 includes two thematically linked bienniums: 2021–2022 (UNFF16 and UNFF17) and 2023–2024 (UNFF18 and UNFF19). The thematic priorities will be based on the Global Forest Goals (GFGs) and targets, taking into account the post-2020 programme of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and relevant international forest-related developments. The Bureau should decide the thematic priorities for each biennium in consultation with members of the Forum.

High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and Relevant International Forest-related Developments

UNFF15 resolution requires that the thematic priorities to be decided upon, taking into account the post-2020 programme of work of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and relevant international forest related developments. Regarding the HLPF, The theme and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for review of the HLPF in 2021 are as follow:

- Theme of the 2021 HLPF: Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development
- SDGs to be reviewed in depth at the 2021 HLPF¹: SDG 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17

Other relevant international forest-related developments are:

- UN Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030
- UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030
- Theme of the 2021 International Day of Forests: Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being
- COP26 of the UNFCCC, which is postponed to a later date in 2021 (TBD)
- Post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted at CBD COP15²

Thematic Priorities for UNFF16 and UNFF17

UNFF16, to be held from 26 to 30 April 2021 in New York, will be a technical session. It is thematically linked to the UNFF17 (policy session) in 2022. As a technical session and in accordance with the guidance provided in Annex I of the UNFF15 resolution, UNFF16 will include an interactive exchange of experiences and lessons learned on thematic priorities among members of the Forum, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional and subregional organizations and processes, and major groups and other relevant stakeholders. The interactive exchange will include consideration of the science-policy interface and cross-sectoral and emerging issues and will take into account youth, gender and regions perspectives. The output of UNFF16 will be a chair's summary of those discussions, including possible proposals for consideration at UNFF17. UNFF16 is also expected to consider and adopt the programme of work of the Forum for the period 2022–2024 by means of a resolution.

¹ General Assembly resolution, A/74/L.83 (advance unedited) on: "Review process of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/290 and 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level and resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council.

² The latest news is that COP15 of CBD is now planned to be held after UNFF16 in May 2021 in China.

In its virtual meeting on 23 July 2020, the Bureau of UNFF16 thoroughly discussed the proposal of the Secretariat concerning the thematic priorities for UNFF16 and UNFF17. In deciding on the thematic priorities, the Bureau of UNFF16 also took into account that the next Conference of Parties of the CBD and UNFCCC were planned to be held respectively in May and November 2021. The Bureau was also cognizant of the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of people.

In light of the above, the Bureau agreed with the Secretariat's proposal, and decided that the GFG1 (expansion of forest cover) and GFG2 (improving livelihoods), along with three cross cutting GFGs (GFG4, GFG5 and GFG6) to be the thematic priorities for UNFF16 and UNFF17. The interlinkages of these GFGs based on the GFGs and their linkages/contributions to SDGs³ and international forest related developments are also reflected in the table below:

- Thematic priorities for UNFF16 and UNFF17: (i) Reversing the loss of forest cover; (ii) Enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits; and (iii) mobilizing financial resources and strengthening scientific and technical cooperation; promoting governance frameworks to advance implementation; and enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence, for sustainable forest management.

Thematic priorities	GFGs	Linkages/contributions to the proposed SDGs to be reviewed in-depth at 2021 HLPF	Linkages/contributions to other SDGs	Int. Forest related developments
(i) Reversing the loss of forest cover	GFG1	SDG10, SDG12, SDG13	SDG6, SDG14, SDG15	-IDF 2021 - UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration - COP15 of CBD - COP26 of UNFCCC
(ii) Enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits	GFG2	SDG1, SDG2, SDG8, SDG10, SDG12	SDG4, SDG5, SDG6, SDG9, SDG15	
(iii) mobilizing financial resources and strengthening scientific and technical cooperation; promoting governance frameworks to advance implementation; and enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence for sustainable forest management	GFG4, GFG5, GFG6	SDG1, SDG2, SDG10, SDG12, SDG16, SDG17	SDG5, SDG15	

Next Step

The Secretariat will officially inform Members of the Forum and stakeholders of the decision of the UNFF16 Bureau on the thematic priorities of UNFF16 and UNFF17. The Secretariat will also work closely with the Bureau for productive discussions on the thematic priorities and related major developments during UNFF16, including through early consideration of potential private sector and philanthropic organization participants.

³ The GFGs' linkages and contributions to SDGs are largely identified based on the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030.