

Co-Chairs Summary of Key Actions in Preparations for the IAF Midterm Review

UNFF Expert Group Meeting on the Preparations for the IAF Midterm Review

17 November 2021 (Virtual)

I. Background

1. In accordance with the programme of work of the Forum for the period of 2022-2024¹, and its provisional agenda², the seventeenth session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF17), to be held in May 2022, should consider, and decide on the preparations for the midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) in achieving its objectives. It is important to note that the Forum will undertake the actual midterm review of the IAF during its nineteenth session (UNFF19) in 2024. Therefore, UNFF17 will only discuss and decide on the required actions, events, and outputs to be carried out/prepared during the period between UNFF17-UNFF19 to facilitate the IAF midterm review by UNFF19 in 2024.

2. The UNFF Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the preparations for the IAF midterm review was held virtually on 17 November 2021. In his opening remarks, Mr. Alexander Trepelkov, the Officer-in-Charge of the UNFFS, provided a review of the ECOSOC decision on conducting a midterm review and to strengthening the IAF. He noted the growing political attention to forests, in particular through the adoption of the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use at COP26 of UNFCCC, and the upcoming consideration of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework with ambitious targets. He emphasized that the midterm review provides an important opportunity to further strengthen the IAF, and to enhance the IAF contribution to other forest-related processes. Following his remarks, experts elected Mr. Javad Momeni and Mr. Jesse Mahony, the Vice-Chairs of UNFF17 Bureau, as the Co-Chairs of the EGM. In their opening remarks, the Co-Chairs stressed on the importance of the work of the EGM in facilitating a decision by the UNFF17 on the preparations for the IAF midterm review and invited experts to engage in the discussions actively, and constructively.

3. During the meeting, experts discussed the suggested actions contained in Section IV of the Background Paper, prepared by the UNFF Secretariat (UNFFS)³. The Background Paper contained information on the basis for the IAF midterm review, issues to be considered, brief overview of key developments related to the work of the IAF components, and proposals on the actions to be carried out and the outputs to be prepared in preparation for the IAF midterm review in 2024. In preparation of this background paper, the UNFFS took into account the responses⁴ to the questionnaire that it had circulated to Members and partners of the Forum on 28 July 2021⁵.

II. Summary of key proposed actions in preparation for the IAF midterm review

¹ Annex I of the ECOSOC Resolution 2021/6

² ECOSOC Decision 2021/225

³<https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/EGM-Preparation-for-IAF-Midterm-Review-background-paper.pdf>

⁴ A total of 22 responses were received, including 14 responses from Member States (Australia, Benin, Brazil, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, Ukraine, USA), one from the EU, 2 responses from CPF member organizations (FAO, IUFRO), 4 responses from regional entities (ACoFO, APFNet, Forest Europe, & UNECE) and 1 response from the major groups (Major Group Children and Youth)

⁵ Please see the questionnaire at: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/index.html>

4. This section contains the Co-Chairs' summary of key actions in preparation for the IAF midterm review, taking into account the views and suggestions expressed by experts during the EGM.

Actions related to UNFF and its Members:

- i. Assessing the progress made by the Forum and its members towards the IAF objectives, as defined in ECOSOC resolution 2015/33.
- ii. Analyzing the performance of the Forum in carrying out its functions as defined in paragraph 3a to 3e of ECOSOC resolution 2015/33, identifying the impacts of its work on global forest policy landscape and the work of the HLPF, and means to enable the Forum to broaden its impacts.
- iii. Exploring additional measures to improve the use of annual sessions of the Forum, and to engage Members in the Forum's intersessional activities to foster achievement of the GFGs.
- iv. Identifying further means to encourage submission of more voluntary national reports and announcements of VNCs by Members of the Forum, as well as identifying the means to encourage increased announcement of the VNCs by members of the Forum and promote their effectiveness.
- v. To carry out the above-mentioned tasks, the UNFFS, in consultation with Members of the Forum and stakeholders, conduct an analytical study and submit it to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 5 of this summary.

A. Actions related to the UNFFS:

- i. Assessing the achievements made by the UNFFS in carrying out its functions and in making progress towards the IAF objectives, as defined in the ECOSOC resolution 2015/33.
- ii. Analyze the gaps and the existing capacity of the UNFFS with a view to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations, strengthening its capacity and gaining a better understanding of its decision-making processes and procedures, and amplifying the impact of its activities.
- iii. Identifying additional measures to enhance collaboration and synergy and reduce duplications on forest related issues at the global level, bearing in mind mandates of different organizations and entities.
- iv. To carry out the above-mentioned tasks, the UNFFS, in consultation with Members of the Forum and stakeholders, conduct an independent study and submit it to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 5 of this summary.

B. Actions related to CPF:

- i. Assessing the progress made by the CPF in carrying out its functions towards the IAF objectives, as defined in the ECOSOC resolution 2015/33.
- ii. Assessing the effectiveness, impact, and added value of CPF's activities as outlined in its Work Plan, including its resources, output delivery, Joint Initiatives, including how the Forum can provide input into Joint Initiatives, and recurrent activities to foster the implementation of the UNSPF and the achievement of the GFGs, and the SDGs.
- iii. Considering the suitability of establishing criteria for CPF membership.
- iv. Assessing how the CPF could provide greater support to the policy development work of the Forum, and in assisting countries to strengthen implementation of the UNSPF and UNFF resolutions and decisions on the ground, including the means to further benefit from the potential of other international and regional stakeholders and partners.

- v. Assessment of efficacy of internal communications within the CPF to promote mutual synergies and reduce duplication of effort and enhance CPF communications and outreach externally to promote awareness raising on the multiple benefits of forests, and the visibility of the UNSPF and the GFGs within other forest-related processes.
- vi. To carry out the above-mentioned tasks, an independent study could be carried out, in consultation with the CPF and Forum members. The result of this study should be presented to an intersessional meeting to be organized by the CPF (CPF Organization-Led Initiative) for discussions, with the view to make proposals in relation to the CPF to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 5 of this summary, for consideration of UNFF19 in 2024.

C. Actions related to the GFFFN

- i. Assessing the progress made by the GFFFN towards the IAF objectives, as defined in ECOSOC resolution 2015/33,
- ii. Assessing the status of existing resources from all sources for forests, including private funding, as well as the gaps and constraints in access to these funds.
- iii. Reviewing the performance of the GFFFN and the impacts of its activities, sufficiency of its resources, and the challenges and constraints in its work of the Network,
- iv. Proposing: i) measures to increase efficiency and added value of the GFFFN and strengthen its capacity to facilitate and enhance access of eligible countries to resources from all sources for forests, and ii) review the GFFFN guidelines in 2024 in the context of the IAF midterm review and revise them as needed.
- vi. To carry out the above-mentioned tasks, the UNFFS, in consultation with Members of the Forum and partners, should conduct an assessment of the performance, impacts, and resource sufficiency and longevity of the GFFFN and other measures to strengthen its work. This assessment should be presented to an intersessional meeting for discussions. The outcome of this meeting should be submitted to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 5 of this summary.

D. Actions related to the UNFF Trust Fund

- i. Assessing the impact of voluntary contributions to the UNFF Trust Fund in supporting the core activities of the Forum.
- ii. Exploring options to encourage sustained and adequate contributions to the Trust Fund.
- iii. Identifying the key challenges and constraints in mobilizing adequate resources for the UNFF Trust Fund.
- iv. The UNFFS, in consultation with Members of the Forum, should undertake the above-mentioned tasks and present the findings and suggestion in a background note for submission to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 5 of this summary.

E. Actions related to the implementation of the UNSPF

- i. Gathering new information to be provided by Member States on: their actions in implementing the UNSPF since UNFF15 (2020); challenges and constraints they are facing in preparing voluntary national reports; means to reducing duplications and reporting burdens , suitability of setting the timeline for submission of VNRs six to twelve months following the publication of FRA ; regional and global issues of concerns to forests , in response to a concise UNFFS questionnaire and use this information, as well as information gathered in 2019-2020 and submitted by Member States to UNFF15, along with VNCs and the most recent global publications/reports on forests.

- ii. Inviting the UNFFS to collect the above-mentioned information in one background note for discussion during an intersessional expert group meeting prior to UNFF19 and submit its key outcome to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 5 of this summary.

F. Actions related to the contributions of the Forum to 2030 Agenda

- i. Assessing the contribution of UNFF to the HLPF on the interlinkages of forests and SDGs, and the extent of reflection of Forum's contributions in the outcomes of the HLPF, since the adoption of ECOSOC resolution 2015/33.
- ii. Identifying additional opportunities for enhanced and direct contribution by UNFF, UNFFS and the CPF on issues related to forests to the HLPF sessions, in particular, when it reviews forest-related SDGs, and to other global forest related fora, including the Rio Conventions.
- iii. Proposing measures to attract greater visibility for forests at the HLPF sessions, to raise the political relevance of forests to broader sustainable development agenda, including through the impact of other sectors on global forests, and the wide range of benefits of SFM for the SDGs.
- iv. To perform the above-mentioned tasks, the UNFFS, in consultation with Members of the Forum and UNFF partners, should conduct an analytical study and present its findings to an intersessional meeting for discussions and submit the outcome of this meeting to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 5 of this summary.

G. Actions related to the Communication and Outreach Strategy of the UNSPF

- i. Assessing the progress in implementation of the COS by Members, UNFFS, CPF, regional organizations and relevant stakeholders, and identifying means to address the challenges in furthering its implementation, including challenges with the broader visibility of the UNSPF and the GFGs.
- ii. Assessing the impact of communication and outreach activities carried out to promote the UNSPF and the GFGs, including the IDFs, and the usefulness of its themes to raise awareness on its multiple benefits, as well as the visibility of the Forum's work in the UN System.
- iii. Identifying additional communication options, platforms and channels that have come into prominence in recent years to better reach target audiences with greater impacts,
- iv. Exploring ways to use the potential of Members of the Forum and other players and partners at the global, regional, and national levels to strengthen advocacy on the implementation of the UNSPF,
- v. To perform the above-mentioned tasks, the UNFFS, in consultation with Members of the Forum, CPF member organizations and UNFF partners, should conduct an analytical study and present its findings to submit it to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 5 of this summary.

H. Actions related to the regional and subregional involvement

- i. Assessing the involvement and contribution of regional & subregional entities in the Forum's sessions since UNFF 12.
- ii. Reviewing developments regarding the establishment or strengthening of "regional and subregional processes or platforms for forest policy development, dialogue and coordination to promote sustainable forest management, while seeking to avoid fragmentation", as per paragraph 28 of the ECOSOC resolution 2015/33, as well as the progress in implementing paragraph 27 of the ECOSOC resolution 2015/33.

- iii. Identifying options for further involvement of regional and subregional partners, including better use of the potential provided by existing regional partners, in the work of the Forum and its future quadrennial programmes of work.
- iv. To perform the above-mentioned tasks, the UNFFS, in consultation with regional and subregional partners should conduct the assessments and present it to an intersessional meeting for discussions and submit the outcome of the meeting to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 5 of this summary.

I. Actions related to the involvement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders

- i. Assessing major groups' engagement in the Forum's work including major groups' contributions to the achievement of the GFGs and targets at all levels and their interactions with the Forum and the CPF, including through networks, advisory groups and other mechanisms, to raise awareness, foster information exchange and dissemination and facilitate coordinated inputs.
- ii. Assessing major groups' efforts to autonomously establish and maintain effective coordination mechanisms at all levels for interaction and participation in the Forum and other forest-related UN bodies.
- iii. Assessing the ability of stakeholder groups to deliver effective representation through appropriate and representative membership and focal points, and effective consultation processes within their constituencies.
- iv. Identifying potential financial resources that could facilitate the development and implementation of Major Group-led Initiative meetings every four years.
- v. To perform the above-mentioned tasks, the UNFFS, in consultation with major groups and other relevant stakeholders should conduct the assessments and present it to an intersessional meeting for discussions and submit the outcome of the meeting to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group referred to in paragraph 5 of this summary.

J. Actions related to paragraph 42a and 42 b of the ECOSOC resolution 2015/33

- i. Defer consideration of paragraph 42a and 42b of ECOSOC resolution to the final review of the effectiveness of the IAF in 2030.

5. To make sure that Members of the Forum have a comprehensive view of the outcome of various preparatory intersessional works related to the IAF midterm review in advance of UNFF19, all studies, analytical documents, assessments, and intersessional meetings mentioned in paragraph 4 A through 4 K should be presented to an open-ended ad hoc intergovernmental ad hoc expert group expert group (AHEG), to be convened by the UNFFS towards the end of 2023. The AHEG will be open to all Members of the Forum, CPF member organizations, regional partners and UNFF major groups representatives. The AHEG will be organized within existing resources, including the extrabudgetary contributions. Considering all the analytical works carried out in preparation for the IAF midterm review, the AHEG will make proposals to UNFF19 on the actions regarding the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF, including the future steps beyond 2024.

6. To facilitate the discussions during UNFF19 on the IAF midterm review, the Bureau of UNFF19, taking into account the analytical works and the outcome of the AHEG, will conduct informal consultations with Members of the Forum, and prepare and submit the zero-draft resolution on the IAF beyond 2024 to UNFF19.