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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests**Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests****Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

In accordance with annex to ECOSOC resolution 2021/6, the Forum at its seventeenth session will consider the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests. The present note provides information on the contributions to and expenditures of the trust fund during the year 2021. The generous contributions of donor countries to the trust fund are gratefully acknowledged. Without them, implementation of many of the mandated activities of the Forum would not have been possible.

* [E/CN.18/2022/1](#).

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2015/33 on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, the Economic and Social Council urged donor Governments and organizations, including financial institutions, and others in a position to do so, to provide voluntary contributions to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests. In accordance with annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 2021/6, the Forum will consider the agenda item on Forum trust fund at its seventeenth session.

2. The present note provides an overview of the amounts contributed, the sources of these contributions, and the expenditures of the trust fund for 2021. The present note is submitted for information purposes. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as of 17 January 2021. Activities were carried out pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 71/285, on the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, and 62/98, on the United Nations forest instrument, and resolutions pertaining to the Forum, including Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, as well as annex to its resolution 2021/6.

II. Contributions to the trust fund in 2021

3. In 2021, two donor countries contributed to the trust fund in support of the Forum's mandates, sessions and intersessional activities, as well as the work of the Forum and its secretariat (see table 1). The contributions amounted to \$320,201, inclusive of programme support costs. Implementation of core activities of the Forum would not have been possible without these generous contributions, which are gratefully acknowledged.

Table 1
Contributions to the trust fund, 2021
 (United States dollars)

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Total</i>
Republic of Korea	20,201
United States of America	300,000
Subtotal, contributions	320,201
Opening balance, 1 January 2021	1,902,678
Refund to donors ^a	(34,681)
Total	2,188,198

^a In 2021, unexpended funds were refunded to Finland.

III. Expenditure of the trust fund in 2021

4. In 2021, staffing and consultancy costs funded from extrabudgetary resources accounted for around 88 per cent of expenditures, while operating expenses accounted for around 11 per cent. It is important to note that owing to travel restrictions related to the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, many of the Forum-related meetings, capacity development workshops and key international events scheduled for 2021 had to be held in a virtual format. Further information on the expenditure of the trust fund is presented in table 2 and the related figure.

Table 2
Expenditure of the trust fund, 2021
 (United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Staffing and consultancy costs ^a	277,397
Travel related to capacity development ^b	(18,916)
Travel of representatives and experts ^c	(6,860)
Staff travel	0
Contractual services	2,540
Operating expenses ^d	35,326
Subtotal	289,487
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	37,627
Total	327,114

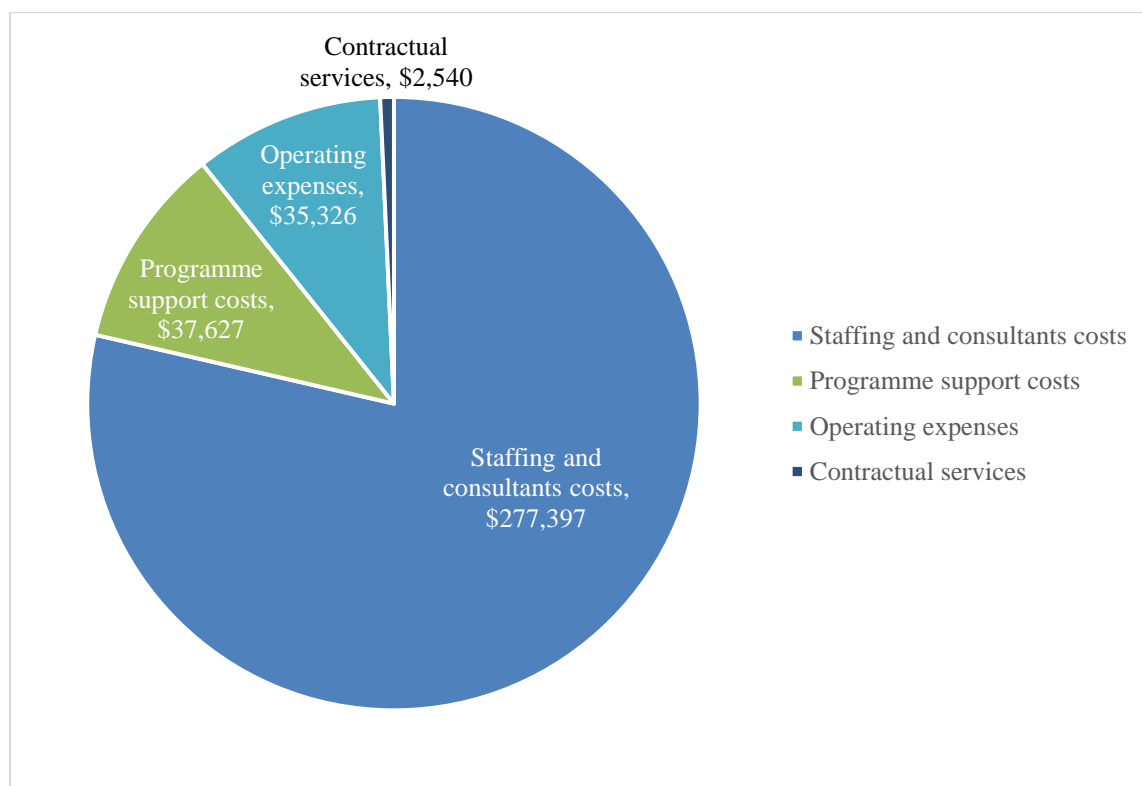
^a Includes staff posts funded from extrabudgetary resources, other staff-related expenses and consultants' fees.

^b Credit is due to cancellation of travel.

^c Credit is due to cancellation of travel.

^d Includes rental of premises, information technology, conference-servicing costs and bank fees.

Expenditures of the trust fund, 2021



5. During 2021, extrabudgetary funds were used to supplement funds from the regular budget (programme 7, Economic and social affairs, subprogramme 8, Sustainable forest management). These contributions funded a significant part of the work of the Forum secretariat in 2021, including the following:

(a) **Secretariat staff and consultants and technical experts to support Forum activities.** In order to implement mandated activities in 2021, two posts at the P-3 level – were funded from extrabudgetary resources. In 2022, it is expected that two P3 posts and a G5 post will be funded from extrabudgetary resources. In 2021, extrabudgetary resources were also used to engage consultants and technical experts to support work related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, the second assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on forests and the forest sector, monitoring frameworks, the Global Forests Goals Report 2021 and other mandated activities;

(b) **Travel related to capacity development.** Owing to the operational challenges and travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not feasible for capacity development workshops to be held in person, and many planned meetings were held in a virtual format. Furthermore, owing to refunds on cancelled travel, there were no net expenditures in this category in 2021;

(c) **Travel of representatives and experts.** Owing to the operational challenges and travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Forum-related meetings could not be held in person and were conducted in a virtual format. Furthermore, owing to refunds on cancelled travel, there were no net expenditures in this category in 2021;

(d) **Travel of staff.** Owing to the operational challenges and travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the key international forest-related events, such as meetings and conferences related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional coordination, major groups and capacity development were either held in a virtual or hybrid formats or were postponed until 2022. Accordingly, there were no expenditures in this category in 2021;

(e) **Contractual services, conference servicing and operating expenses.** During 2021, extrabudgetary funds were used to cover costs relating to individual contractors, rental of premises, information technology, bank fees and conference servicing costs for virtual meetings.

IV. Achievements and results

6. The following achievements and results are attributable to contributions made to the trust fund:

(a) Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, in April 2021 the sixteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests was held virtually and successfully adopted its resolution on the “Programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2022–2024”;

(b) Resources from the trust fund were used to support intersessional activities including virtual expert group meetings held in preparation for the seventeenth session of the Forum. These included: UNFF Expert Group Meeting on Preparations for the IAF midterm review, held in November 2021; UNFF Expert Group Meeting on Reporting on progress towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan on Forests 2030 (UNSPF) in December 2021 and the UNFF Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening the Engagement of the United Nations Forum on Forests with Regional Partners, Major Groups, and other Stakeholders, also held in December 2021.

(c) Fund resources were used to supplement funds from the regular budget and the regular programme of technical cooperation for the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. The successful launch of first phase of the clearing house of the Network, through the development of its website and three databases, was carried out with funding for human resources from the trust fund. Further details on the activities of the Network are contained in the note by the Secretariat on the means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network ([E/CN.18/2022/3](#));

(d) Resources from the fund were essential in supporting work related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including by covering human resources costs for the development of a global core set of forest-related indicators and the launch of the “Global Forests Goal Report 2021”, the Forum’s first flagship publication on the progress made towards the global forest goals and targets of the UN strategic plan for forests. Further details on key activities are contained in the note by the Secretariat on monitoring, assessment and reporting, regarding progress towards the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including the United Nations forest instrument, and voluntary national contributions ([E/CN.18/2022/4](#));

(e) Resources from the trust fund were used to support the development of the CPF’s workplan for the period 2021–2024 and its joint statement on “Challenges and Opportunities in Turning the Tide on Deforestation”, both of which were presented during the sixteenth session of the Forum. Further details on the activities of the Partnership are contained in the note by the Secretariat Policy discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: activities in support of the thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022 ([E/CN.18/2022/2](#));

(f) The trust fund continues to be a critical source of supplementary funding for meeting the staffing needs of the Forum secretariat, which is still the smallest division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In 2021, the fund covered the staffing costs of two staff members at the P-3 level.

V. Priorities and challenges

7. Since the Forum was established, its mandates and outputs have grown, however the budgetary allocations from the regular budget have not increased at the same pace. The human and budgetary resources needed by the secretariat to support the Forum and its member States have been highlighted and well recognized in resolutions, including Economic and Social Council resolution [2015/33](#). Voluntary contributions to the trust fund play an essential role in supplementing funds from the regular budget and without these contributions the secretariat would face challenges in fully delivering on its core functions.

8. Securing sufficient human and financial resources to scale up the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network continues to be a major limiting factor in the work of the Network.

The development of the clearing house of the Network was done in a cost-effective manner leveraging IT services from within the UN, however these expenditures also depended entirely on the availability of voluntary contributions.

9. Travel was severely curtailed in 2021 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and did not incur any costs in 2021. However, once in-person meetings resume, securing dedicated contributions for the travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition will once again become a pressing challenge. Funding for such travel is entirely dependent on dedicated contributions to the trust fund. To date, there has been a trend of declining contributions, and should this continue, it will be extremely difficult for the Secretariat to facilitate balanced representation of developed and developing countries at future Forum-related meetings.

10. Sustained and adequate human and financial resources continue to be critical in enabling the secretariat to support the implementation of the UN strategic plan for forests and the achievement of the six Global Forest goals and the 26 associated targets. These resources are vital to ongoing activities related to all areas of the work of the Forum and its secretariat. This includes activities in preparation for the midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF), capacity development; forest financing; monitoring, assessment and reporting; enhancing cooperation and coordination; promoting regional collaboration, communication and outreach; and strengthening stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector.

Table 3

Estimated expenditures from the trust fund for 2022

(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2022</i>
Staffing costs ^a	475,000
Consultants, experts and contractual services ^b	200,000
Travel of representatives and experts ^c	80,000
Travel of staff	30,000
Subtotal	785,000
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	102,050
Total	887,050
Closing balance, 31 December 2021	1,861,543
Expected contributions, 2022	500,000
Total expected funds, 2022	2,361,543

Note: Estimated expenditures refer to funds required to implement the current programme of work of the Forum secretariat; they do not include funding for any additional activities that may be decided upon by the Forum at its seventeenth session.

^a Estimate based on the cost of funding two P-3 posts and one G-5 post from extrabudgetary resources in 2022.

^b Includes costs of engaging consultants to support preparations for the eighteenth session of the Forum, in 2023, and the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network.

^c Includes travel costs of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to participate in Forum-related meetings in the second half of 2022, including intersessional activities on the mid-term review of the International Arrangement on Forests.