

**United Nations Forum on Forests  
Minutes of the First Meeting of UNFF19 Bureau  
12 May 2023, 11:30am-12:30pm  
Room S-26MM2, UNHQ**

**Participation**

**Bureau Members:** Ambassador Zéphyrin Maniratanga (Burundi), Mr. Ismail Belen (Türkiye), Ms. Leticia Zamora Zumbado (Costa Rica), Mr. Jaroslav Kubista (Czechia)

**UNFF Secretariat:** Ms. Juliette Biao, Mr. Hossein Moeini-Meybodi, Ms. Yan Lang, Mr. Michael Thein, Ms. Nadine Souto

**UNFF Secretary:** Mr. Ziad Mahmassani, Ms. Jori Joergensen

**Key Actions/Decisions**

**The Bureau decided:**

- a. To convene the UNFF19 High-Level Segment on 9 May 2024 during UNFF19, with participation of high level and senior representatives from governments, UN entities, private sector, and civil society.
- b. That the outcome of the UNFF19 High-Level Segment would be a declaration, to be negotiated and agreed preferably before UNFF19.
- c. That the Chair would communicate the decisions of the Bureau on its vision for UNFF19, its High-Level Segment, and outcome, to UNFF members and partners as soon as possible.

## **Provisional Agenda**

- 1- Adoption of provisional agenda
- 2- Brief analysis of the work of UNFF18, and lessons-learned
- 3- Preparations for UNFF19
  - a. Dates, venue, and modality of UNFF19
  - b. Main issues on the agenda of UNFF19
  - c. Main outcomes of UNFF19
  - d. Format and outcome of UNFF19 High Level Segment
- 4- UNFF intersessional activities on the preparations for the IAF midterm review
  - a. Preparations for the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group (AHEG) on the preparations for the IAF midterm review, its program, and outcome
  - b. Next step after the conclusion of AHEG
- 5- Other matters

## **1. Adoption of the provisional agenda**

Ambassador Maniratanga, Chair of the UNFF19 Bureau opened the meeting, welcomed the Bureau members, the UNFF Secretariat and the UNFF Secretary to the first meeting of UNFF19 Bureau, and emphasized the importance of UNFF19, and the need for its timely and sound preparations. He introduced the provisional agenda for the meeting, which was adopted by the Bureau.

## **2. Brief analysis of the work of UNFF18, and lessons learned**

The Chair expressed his satisfaction about the deliberations, discussions and outcome of UNFF18, and thanked all members of the Bureau, UNFF Secretariat and UNFF Secretary team for their support in the smooth running of UNFF18. All Bureau members also spoke and shared the same sentiments about the success of UNFF18, and the diversity of actors involved in parts of the session, in particular, the panels. The Director of the UNFF Secretariat reflected on the rich discussions resulting from the diversity of speakers and stakeholders present. She explained that the Secretariat will hold an all-staff meeting on the following Monday to reflect on the things which can be further improved during the next session. She indicated that while most member states respected the time limits and made interventions on the issues under consideration, there were some instances when some delegations did not focus on the issues under consideration and made long interventions. She invited the Bureau to consider how to mitigate such situations when chairing respective meetings.

In response to the observation by Mr. Jaroslav Kubista that one member state was unable to locate the issued version of the draft decision on dates and venues for UNFF19, the Secretary of the Forum informed that both draft decisions about the date and venue of UNFF19, and its provisional agenda, were circulated through the Bureau to the respective regional groups, e-deleGATE to all Permanent Missions, as well as the UNFF-NFPs well in advance of UNFF18. The documents were also linked in the Journal programme for the Forum's meeting and could be accessed in the six languages through the UN's online documentation portal (<https://documents.un.org/>). He reminded that it is not the practice of the UN anymore to distribute hard copies of the draft decisions due to its low-carbon policy.

## **3. Preparations for UNFF19**

All Bureau members and the Secretariat emphasized the significance of early and sound preparations for UNFF19, and the importance of regularly keeping member states and UNFF partners informed of all relevant information about UNFF19, and the relevant decisions by the Bureau.

### **a. Dates, venue, and modality of UNFF19**

The Secretariat reminded of the decision agreed at UNFF18 on the date, and venue of UNFF19. Accordingly, UNFF19 will be held from 6 to 10 May 2024 in UNHQ in New York in an in-person format. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Kubista and Ms. Zamora about hybrid meetings, the Secretariat clarified that the requests for hybrid meetings by some members during UNFF18 were in relation to the intersessional meetings of the IAF midterm review and not the UNFF sessions itself. The Secretariat and Secretary of the Forum also provided detailed information that the formal meetings of the Forum could not be held in a hybrid format as no decision can be taken during hybrid meetings. The Secretary of the Forum also indicated that hybrid meetings would reduce the duration of each meeting under the entitlement and had possible budgetary implications. He further added that the UNFF, as a subsidiary body of the ECOSOC, should align its working modalities to that of the ECOSOC and other similar subsidiary

bodies. He added that the Council has not taken any decision to turn the regular session of its functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies into a hybrid format, and on the contrary, these meetings were being held fully in-person.

#### **b. Main issues on the agenda of UNFF19**

UNFF Secretariat informed that the main items for consideration by UNFF19 are the IAF midterm review, the quadrennial programme of work of UNFF for 2025-2028, and the convening of the high-level segment. In response to a query from Ms. Zamora, and Mr. Kubista, the secretariat also informed that the important issues related to other routine agenda items of the UNFF sessions such as monitoring, assessment and reporting, as well as means of implementation for sustainable forest management will be addressed in the context of the IAF midterm review, consideration of proposals in the Chair's summary of UNFF18, and in the context of other items in the agenda of UNFF19. Mr. Belen also suggested that UNFF19 to include a panel with the participation of credible TV broadcasters and journalists from different parts of the world, and exhibitions and fairs by the private sector, governments, and non-governmental organizations. He also suggested the Bureau, or the Secretariat to take an initiative to put greater emphasis on dryland forestry and industrial plantations.

#### **c. Main outcomes of UNFF19**

UNFF Secretariat reminded that UNFF19 is a policy session and is expected to adopt an omnibus resolution to include, inter alia, the decision of the Forum on the outcomes of the IAF midterm review, including on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2024, the result of consideration of UNFF19 of the Chair's proposals contained in UNFF18 Chair's summary, and any other issues that the Forum considered appropriate for inclusion in the resolution. The Secretariat indicated that UNFF19 would include a high-level segment and invited the Bureau to reflect on the nature of its outcome. The Secretariat provided the examples of previous high-level segments and their outcomes.

#### **d. Format and outcome of UNFF19 High Level Segment**

The Bureau members emphasized the importance of planning for a high-level roundtable discussion during this segment, with participation of head of states, and other senior officials from member states, UN, heads of the CPF member organizations, and senior private sector CEOs, as well as representatives from major media and press, and Major Groups. In this respect, the Bureau agreed that the Chair of UNFF19, and the UNFFS Director would jointly approach countries and relevant partners and encourage their high-level participation in the high-level segment of UNFF19. In addition, UNFF19 Chair will also send invitation letters to countries and organizations for their high-level participation in the UNFF19 high-level segment at a later stage.

The Bureau discussed the nature of the outcome of the high-level segment and agreed to a concise negotiated declaration as the main outcome for this segment. The process for collecting initial views from Members of the Forum on the building blocks for this declaration will be discussed at the next meeting of the Bureau and will be communicated to Members in due course. The Bureau indicated its preference to conduct and conclude consultation on the declaration, in a hybrid format, before UNFF19 due to the tight schedule of UNFF19. The Bureau also agreed to hold the one-day high level segment on 9 May 2024 during UNFF19.

The UNFF Secretariat reflected on the positive result of the Chair letter sent to members on the

modality and organizational issues of UNFF18 in December 2022. In this respect, the Bureau agreed with the suggestion of the UNFF Secretariat that a letter by the UNFF19 Chair to be sent to Members of the Forum and UNFF partners on the modality of UNFF19, its outcomes, and the vision and the decisions of the Bureau regarding UNFF19 high level segment as soon as possible.

#### **4. UNFF intersessional activities on the preparations for the IAF midterm review**

##### **a) Preparations for the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group (AHEG) on the preparations for the IAF midterm review, its program, and outcome**

The Bureau emphasized the importance of the ongoing intersessional work related to the midterm review of the IAF, in particular, AHEG and the need to provide relevant information about AHEG to Member States and UNFF partners well in-advance of the meeting. The UNFF Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the progress in the intersessional activities in preparations of the IAF midterm review regarding the upcoming expert group meeting in Nairobi, and the AHEG. Considering the discussions during UNFF18 and the request from several member states to hold the Nairobi meeting in a hybrid format, the Secretariat followed up on this matter, and it is now confirmed that the meeting in Nairobi will be held in a hybrid format. The Secretariat would send the notification on this matter to members and partners the following week.

Regarding AHEG, which is scheduled to be held from 10 to 13 October in UN Office in Vienna, Austria in an in-person format, the Secretariat informed that the notification had been sent out to Members of the Forum and UNFF partners specifying the date, venue, and modality of the AHEG and the process for nomination and registration of the experts. The UNFF Secretariat reminded that AHEG was established by ECOSOC resolution to review the results of the intersessional work on ten areas contained in the annex to this resolution. In accordance with the provision of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, six of these areas should be discussed in intersessional meetings in advance of AHEG. Accordingly, the assessment reports on four assessment areas have been already reviewed and discussed in the Bangkok and Rome meeting in January and February 2023, namely, input to the 2030 Agenda, involvement of regional partners, involvement of major groups, and the CPF. Two more areas, namely, GFFFN, and implementation of the UNSPF will be discussed in the Nairobi meeting. The assessment reports of the consultants for all these areas and the Co-Chairs summaries of the Bangkok and Rome meetings are available on the UNFF webpage and will be submitted to AHEG.

UNFF Secretariat also informed that there will be dedicated time at the beginning of AHEG for experts to review and discuss the remaining consultants reports on four assessment areas, namely, UNFF and its members, UNFF Secretariat, UNFF Trust Fund, and Communication and Outreach Strategy of the UNSPF. Based on these discussions, and the Co-Chairs summaries of the previous meetings, the Co-Chairs of AHEG will share their own summary and proposal on the IAF midterm review with participating experts during AHEG for discussions. Co-Chairs summary of AHEG will not be a negotiated text, and after discussions and finalization during AHEG will be submitted to UNFF19. The Co-Chairs of AHEG, as per the past practice, will be elected from among the participating experts at the meeting, with due regard to gender and regional balance. Regarding the concept note and program of AHEG, the Secretariat informed this text is under development, and need to consider the outcome of the Nairobi meeting in June. In this respect, the concept note and program of AHEG will be shared with members and UNFF partners by mid-July 2023 at the latest.

**b) Next step after the conclusion of AHEG**

The Secretariat referred to the provision of ECOSOC resolution on the next step after AHEG. Accordingly, the Bureau is requested to conduct informal consultations with members of the Forum to produce the zero-draft resolution for UNFF19 on the midterm review of the IAF in advance of UNFF19. In this respect, the Bureau will inform Members of the Forum of the planned informal consultation at a later stage and after the conclusion of the AHEG. The Bureau also recognized the need to conduct such consultation in a participatory manner, and in a hybrid format.

**5. Other matters**

The Bureau agreed to convene its next meeting, in a hybrid format, during the first half of July 2023. The specific date for the meeting will be agreed and communicated in due course.

***The meeting finished at 12:30pm***