

UN Forum on Forests Country-Led Initiative (CLI) hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India

26-28 October 2023, Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun, India

Concept Note

I. Background

The nineteenth session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF19) will be held from 6 to 10 May 2024 at United Nations Headquarters, New York. As a policy session, UNFF19 discussions will focus on the UNFF18-UNFF19 thematic priorities, which is the Global Forest Goal 2 and Global Forest Goal 3, along with the three cross cutting Global Forest Goals (GFG4, GFG5 and GFG6)^[1]. In accordance with ECOSOC resolution 2021/6, UNFF19 should also decide on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF).

In this context, the government of India decided to host a country led initiative (CLI) to contribute to the discussion of the UNFF19. The CLI will focus on two thematic areas, namely, forest fires/ wildfires and forest certification & sustainable forest management. The CLI will promote sharing of good practices on the thematic areas to support global actions in advancing the Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF). The CLI also aims to tap into the experience gained and the lessons learnt in the thematic areas to identify recommendations for global forest policy for the consideration of the Forum in the context of the IAF midterm review at UNFF19.

Thematic area I: Forest Fires / Wildfires

In recent years, the world has witnessed an alarming increase in the scale and duration of forest fires^[2]/ wildfires, leading to profound impacts on biodiversity, ecosystem services, human well-being, livelihoods, and national economies. Forested areas have been particularly affected, with approximately 100 million hectares, equivalent to 3% of the world's forest area, affected by fires every year (François-Nicolas Robinne, 2020). The severity of these fires has been exemplified by numerous high-profile incidents, resulting in unhealthy air quality and significant loss of human lives, wildlife and property. Given the escalating frequency and intensity of such events, it has become imperative to develop a comprehensive and long-term strategy to combat forest fires/ wildfires and initiate ecosystem restoration in fire-affected areas. In this regard, this CLI provides an opportunity to foster collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the development of strategies for effective forest fire prediction, prevention, monitoring and management, including thinning, hazardous fuels through controlled burns, traditional knowledge from indigenous groups and local communities, and ecosystem restoration, after catastrophic events, contributing to a sustainable and resilient approach to forest fire management.

The G20 Environment and Climate Ministers' meeting held at Chennai, India on 28th July 2023 highlighted that forest fires/ wildfires contribute to global carbon emissions and air pollution and that high intensity forest fires/ wildfires may affect the conservation and regeneration of ecosystems and their functions and services can exacerbate climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss. The G20 recognized the importance of preventing and

managing forest fires/ wildfires and restoring forest fire/ wildfire impacted land as appropriate to help achieve SDG 15, and global land degradation targets.

Accordingly, there is a need to scale up efforts to enhance collaboration and action at local, regional, and international level on the prevention, where appropriate and feasible, and reduction of impacts of forest fires/ wildfires and the restoration of forest fire/ wildfire impacted land.

Thematic area II: Forest certification and Sustainable Forest Management

Forest certification has received growing global attention in the recent years. The total forest area under a certification scheme has increased by 35 percent (or 120 million ha) since 2010. Between 2020 and 2021, the certified forest area increased by 27 million ha, which is mainly led by the increase in Europe and Northern America (FAO, 2022). Developing countries, small stakeholders and marginal forest managers continue to face several challenges with the certification process. This includes high costs in certification, audits and compliance process, inaccessibility to forest owners in remote or economically disadvantaged regions and lack of capacity due to complexity of various certification standards.

The UNFF in its UN Forest Instrument adopted several policy measures^[3] to encourage sustainable forest management through promoting and implementing, in a transparent manner, voluntary instruments, such as voluntary certification systems or other appropriate mechanisms. However, some countries consider the measures and requirements for certification as creating trade challenges for their forest products. On the other hand, some other countries consider compliance with certification requirements, as an effective means to ensure SFM, sustainability of forests, and a tool for preventing deforestation. The other concern is that most of the consumer markets are recognizing certification from a few certifying bodies, at the expense of other certification schemes. This CLI provides an opportunity to discuss all these aspects. It will also provide an occasion to discuss how to align voluntary certification systems with trade rules.

II. Objective

The objective of the CLI is to provide an opportunity for experts from Members of the Forum, CPF and its members, regional and sub-regional partners, and major groups to:

1. reflect on issues of forest fires/ wildfires and best practices on prevention and restoration by taking into account recent technological developments, innovation and methods, including recent global framework and mechanisms on forest fire management;
2. discuss challenges associated with forest certification and identify key issues and recommend measures that ensure forest certification aligns with trade rules

III. Format and modality

The CLI will be held from 26-28 October 2023 in a hybrid format. The programme of the CLI will include two days of deliberations and exchange on guiding themes and a one-day field trip. The daily meetings will be held from 0900-1300 Hrs and 1430 - 1700 Hrs. The agenda and programme of work of the CLI is contained in the annex to this concept note. The meeting will be conducted in English. The meeting will be chaired by India. Specific time will be allocated for experts to present their presentations on thematic areas. These presentations

will be followed by interactive discussions among participants regarding the best practices, policy issues and suggestions on the issues under consideration.

IV. Expected outcome

The outcome of the CLI will be a concise summary by the Co-chairs on the discussion held at the CLI. The outcome of the CLI will be submitted to the UNFF19 for consideration.

V. Participants, meeting registration, and travel support

The meeting will bring together designated experts from Members of the Forum, Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) member organizations, regional and sub-regional entities, as well as Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders. Accordingly, Members of the Forum, CPF member organizations, regional and sub-regional partners, and major groups are kindly invited to nominate their respective experts to the government of India by 8 September 2023 through an official communication.

The nomination from members of the Forum should be sent to the government of India from relevant ministries of the country; for the member organizations of the CPF and regional/sub-regional partners by the respective head of entity on the entity's official letterhead, and for major groups by the respective group focal point. The nomination letter should clearly indicate whether the nominated participants will be attending in person or virtually, and it should include the participants' titles and email addresses. Participants who are attending in person, should also fill out and submit the **Registration Form** enclosed.

Limited financial resources will be provided by the government of India to support the travel and accommodation of one expert from eligible countries, and eligible stakeholders on a first-come, first-served basis. Requests for travel and accommodation support should be included in the official nomination letter and sent to the government of India by no later than **8 September 2023**. The travel support for the CLI will include round-trip economy air tickets provided by the host country. Due to administrative constraints, requests for travel support received after the above-mentioned deadline cannot be considered.

All CLI-related communications should be sent to the designated liaison officer of the Government of India, **Mr Jitesh Kumar at forestpolicy-moefcc@gov.in** with cc to Ms. Richa Misra, Head (Silviculture & Forest Management) at: **cli.unff23@gmail.com** and **dir_fri@icfre.org**.

VI. Health insurance coverage, and visa-related matters

Those experts who are planning to participate in the CLI are responsible for making all necessary arrangements to obtain their visas. Experts are also expected to be in good health to travel and to ensure that they have their own (international) health insurance arrangement, including experts whose travel will be financed by the government of India. No health insurance coverage or visa-related fees or services will be provided by the government of India or the United Nations.

VII. Contact Persons

For all issues related to the registration and travel support please contact the government of India designated liaison officer of the Government of India, Mr Jitesh Kumar at **forestpolicy-moefcc@gov.in** with cc to Ms. Richa Misra, Head (Silviculture & Forest Management) at: **cli.unff23@gmail.com** and **dir_fri@icfre.org**.

Provisional Agenda/Organisation of Works

26th – 28th October 2023

Day 1: 26th October 2023

0900 to 1000 Hrs Inaugural Session

1030 to 1300 Hrs: 1st Plenary Session	
Theme: Forestfires/ Wildfires	
1030-1115 Hrs	Panel discussion (Panellist TBC)
1115-1200 Hrs	Panel discussion (CPF members)
1200-1300 Hrs	Interactive discussions

1300-1430 Hrs	Lunch
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1430 to 1700 Hrs: 1st Plenary Session	
Theme: Forest Fires/ Wildfires	
1430-1630 Hrs	Interactive discussions
1630 -1645 Hrs	Concluding remarks by Chair

Day 2: 27th October 2023

0900 to 1130 Hrs: 2nd Plenary Session	
Theme: Forest Certification and Sustainable Forest Management	
0900-0930 Hrs	Panel discussion
0930 -1120 Hrs	Interactive discussions
1120 -1130 Hrs	Concluding remarks by Chair

1130-1200 Hrs	Break
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1200 to 1300 Hrs: Closing Session	
1200-1205 Hrs	Distribution of draft summary on CLI
1205-1235 Hrs	Discussion of the draft summary

1235-1240 Hrs	Input by the Bureau of UNFF19/ Director UNFF
1240-1245 Hrs	Address by Additional Director General of Forests
1245-1255 Hrs	Special Remarks by Director General of Forests
1255-1300 Hrs	Closing Remarks by Secretary, Environment, Forest and Climate Change

1300-1430 Hrs	Lunch
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Site Visit FRI Campus

1430-1700 Hrs	FRI campus and museum
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1830 Hrs	Dinner reception
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Day 3: 28th October 2023

Field Visit: 0800 Hrs

Please come equipped for the field trips. Leave for the field trips from the workshop venue at 8 AM immediately after the breakfast in the morning.

Field trip: Wild Life Management areas at Rajaji National Park

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REGISTRATION FORM FOR INPERSON PARTICIPANTS

S. No.	Item	Details
1.	Name	
2.	Gender	
3.	Mobile No.	
4.	Phone No.	
5.	E-mail	
6.	Date of Birth	
7.	Ministry/Institute/Organization	
8.	Designation	
9.	Country	
10.	Delegation Status-(HoD/Member)	
11.	Type of Passport	
12.	Passport Issuing Date	
13.	Passport No.	
14.	Passport Issuing place	
15.	Passport Expiry Date	
16.	Citizenship	
17.	Flight/Estimate Arrival Date and Time	
18.	Flight/ Estimate Departure Date and Time	
19.	Hotel/ Accommodation	

*Roundtrip Air Tickets in economy class to the eligible countries on first come first serve basis will be provided/issued by Government of India till the availability of financial resources/ deadline of the registration.

^[1] Further information about the thematic priorities of the UNFF18-19 is available at <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/UNFF18-19-Thematic-Priorities-web.pdf>

^[2] Forest fires include wildfire, bushfire, wildland fire which is an unplanned, uncontrolled, unpredictable fire occurring in natural vegetation.

^[3] UNFI policy measure b, g and x. The UNFI is available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/documents/un-forest-instrument/index.html>