



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 February 2024
Advance Unedited Version
Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Nineteenth session
New York, 6-10 May 2024
Items 5 & 7¹ of the provisional agenda

Midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives & Quadrennial Programme of Work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for 2025-2028

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In accordance with its programme of work for 2022-2024, the United Nations Forum on Forests at its nineteenth session (UNFF19) should consider the outcome of the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and make decision on the future steps to be taken by the international arrangement on forests beyond 2024. The nineteenth session should also adopt the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025-2028.

The present note provides the background information and highlights the intersessional activities undertaken since the eighteenth session of the Forum regarding the preparations for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025-2028. The note serves as the basis for discussion during the nineteenth session of the Forum on agenda items 5 and 7.

¹ *E/CN.18/2024/1

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its programme of work for 2022-2024, adopted through ECOSOC resolution 2021/6, the United Nations Forum on Forests at its nineteenth session should consider the outcome of the preparations for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, and decide on the future steps to be taken by the international arrangement on forests beyond 2024. The nineteenth session should also adopt the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025-2028.

2. The present note has been prepared to serve as the basis for discussion on the above-mentioned issue(s) under agenda items 5 and 7 of the provisional agenda of the nineteenth session of the Forum. The note provides an overview of the intersessional activities on both items undertaken since the eighteenth session of the Forum.

II. Background

3. In its resolution 2015/33, the Economic and Social Council strengthened and extended the international arrangement on forests to 2030. The Council further requested the United Nations Forum on Forests to undertake a midterm, and final review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives in 2024, and 2030.

4. In accordance with resolution 2015/33 and the programme of work of the Forum for 2022-2024², the seventeenth session of the Forum, which took place in May 2022, considered, and decided on the actions to be taken in preparation for the midterm review in 2024. These actions are contained in ten sections in the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 2022/17:

- A. Actions related to the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and its members
- B. Actions related to the Forum secretariat
- C. Actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)
- D. Actions related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN)
- E. Actions related to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests
- F. Actions related to the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017–2030
- G. Actions related to the contributions of the Forum to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- H. Actions related to the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017–2030
- I. Actions related to the involvement of regional and subregional partners
- J. Actions related to the involvement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders

5. In accordance with the same resolution, the activities in preparation for the midterm review of the IAF included:

- a) Preparation of assessment reports on the above-mentioned ten areas (A to J)
- b) Organization of intersessional meetings to review the findings in the assessment reports on sections C, D, F, G, I, and J, and,
- c) Organization of an Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) before the end of 2023 to review all the assessment reports and outcomes of the preparatory intersessional work, including intersessional meetings, with a view to making proposals to the Forum at its nineteenth session on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF, including the future steps to be taken by the IAF beyond 2024.
- d) Informal consultations to be conducted by the Bureau of UNFF19, following the conclusion of AHEG, with the view to producing zero a draft resolution regarding the IAF midterm review.

III. Progress on the preparations for the Midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, and the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025-2028

A. Preparations for the IAF midterm review

² Please see ECOSOC resolution 2021/6 <https://undocs.org/E/RES/2021/6>

6. In line with the guidance provided in resolution 2022/17, the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Forum secretariat) undertook the following preparatory activities, between the seventeenth and the eighteenth session of the Forum:

- a) Carried out eleven assessment reports regarding the areas identified in the annex to Council resolution 2022/17.
- b) Organized an expert group meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, in January 2023 to review and discuss the assessment reports on section G of the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 2022/17 on the contribution of the Forum to the 2030 Agenda, Section I on the involvement of regional and subregional partners, and Section J on the involvement of major groups. The suggestions and proposals emanating from this expert group meeting were compiled in the Co-Chairs' summary of the discussions of the expert group meeting.³
- c) Organized jointly with FAO, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) organization-led initiative, in February 2023 in Rome, Italy to review and discuss the assessment reports on section C of annex to resolution 2022/17 on actions related to the CPF. The suggestions and proposals emanating from this meeting were compiled in the Co-Chairs' summary.⁴

7. Since the conclusion of the eighteenth session of the Forum, the Forum secretariat organized two intersessional meetings in preparation for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests, in line with the guidance in resolution 2022/17. These were:

- a) An expert group meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya, in June 2023, to review and discuss assessment reports on Section D on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), and Section F on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests. Two assessments were prepared and discussed regarding Section D: i) an assessment on the status of existing resources for forests available from all sources, including private funding, as well as the gaps and constraints regarding gaining access to such funds, and ii) an assessment of the performance, impacts and resource sufficiency and longevity of the GFFFN, and other measures to strengthen its work. For Section F, one assessment report was considered on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests. In addition, and in line with resolution 2022/17, the Forum secretariat prepared a short note in which it proposed a road map and timeline for the next voluntary national reporting cycle, in conjunction with the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment cycle. The suggestions and proposals emanating from the expert group meeting in Nairobi were compiled in the Co-Chairs' summary.⁵
- b) The Forum Secretariat also organized the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad hoc Expert Group (AHEG) on the preparations for the IAF midterm review from 10 to 13 October 2023 at the UN Office in Vienna, Austria, to review and discuss the assessment reports on Section A on UNFF and its Members, Section B on Forum Secretariat, Section E on UNFF Trust Fund, and Section H on Communication and Outreach Strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests. AHEG also reviewed all assessments and outcomes of the expert group meetings related to the IAF midterm review, as outlined in the annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, and explained in paragraphs 6 and 7 of this note. The Co-Chairs summary of discussions of AHEG contains proposals on the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, which will be submitted to the nineteenth session of the Forum. The proposed actions are compiled in Section VII of the AHEG Co-Chairs' summary.⁶

8. In further implementing the provisions of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, and following the successful conclusion of AHEG, the Bureau of the Forum delegated its authority to the AHEG Co-Chairs to prepare the zero draft outcome on the IAF midterm review, in consultation with the Bureau, and conduct related informal consultations. Accordingly, the zero-draft outcome on the IAF midterm review was circulated to UNFF members and partners in early December 2023. The zero-draft took into account the proposed actions included in the AHEG Co-Chairs' summary and set the stage for discussions among UNFF members during the informal consultations.

³ <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Co-Chairs-Summary-Bangkok-EGM.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CPF-OLI-Co-Chairs-Summary.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Co-Chairs-Summary-NairobiEGM-06072023.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AHEG-Co-Chairs-Summary-021123-Final.pdf>

B. Quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025-2028

9. Through its resolution 2015/33, the Council requested the Forum to operationalize the UN strategic plan for forests through quadrennial programmes of work that set out priority actions and resource needs. Accordingly, the first quadrennial programme of work of UNFF for 2017-2020 was adopted by the Council through its resolution 2017/4.

10. In light of the global outbreak of COVID-19, the second quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2021-2025 was adopted in two stages. Accordingly, the Council adopted the programme of work of the Forum for 2021 and for 2022-2024 respectively through its resolutions [2020/14](#) and [2021/6](#).

11. The annex to ECOSOC resolution 2020/14 contains important guidance on the programme and method of work of the Forum during the quadrennium. Accordingly, the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2021-2024 included two thematically linked bienniums: 2021-2022 (sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the forum) and 2023-2024 (eighteenth and nineteenth sessions). Thematic priorities for each biennium were decided by the Bureau in consultation with members of the Forum, based on the global forest goals and targets, and taking into account the post-2020 programme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and relevant international forest-related developments. The sixteenth session of the Forum in 2021 was a technical session that included an interactive exchange of experiences and lessons learned on thematic priorities among members of the Forum, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, its member organizations, regional and subregional organizations and processes, and major groups and other relevant stakeholders. The sixteenth session of the Forum considered and adopted the programme of work of the Forum for the period 2022-2024, by way of resolution 2021/6.

12. In accordance with the programme of work of the Forum for the period 2022-2024, as contained in resolution 2021/6, the nineteenth session of the Forum should adopt the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025-2028, under agenda item 7. The zero-draft of the quadrennial programme of work for 2025-2028 was prepared under the guidance of the UNFF19 Bureau, and with the support of the Forum secretariat. The zero draft of the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025-2028 was shared with UNFF members and partners in early December 2023. In preparing the zero-draft, the Bureau considered the inputs submitted by Forum members and partners, and took into account the global intergovernmental forest-related developments.

C. Informal consultations

13. In implementing the provisions of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, the Bureau of UNFF19 decided to organize three rounds of virtual informal consultations at the end of January, February and March 2024 to discuss the zero draft outcome of the IAF midterm review and the zero draft of the quadrennial programme of work for 2025-2028. The informal consultations will be open to all Forum members, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional partners, and major groups.

14. Through these consultations, the Bureau aims to forge consensus among members of the Forum on the content of both drafts and address any potential differences in advance of UNFF19. In this respect, after each round of informal consultations, the zero drafts will be revised, taking into account the views and suggestions expressed during the consultations. The revised drafts will be shared with Forum members and partners, in advance of the next round of consultations. Following the conclusion of the informal consultations, the draft will be tabled as official draft for issuance as L. document in the UN official languages, for final consideration and agreement at UNFF19.

IV. Conclusion

15. The nineteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests in 2024 will consider the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and adopt the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025-2028. In this respect, UNFF19 represents an opportunity to shape the future direction of the international arrangement on forests and its interlinkages with other forest-related global processes. By identifying current gaps and recommending future steps and required adjustments, the nineteenth session has the potential to make an important contribution toward the achievement of the Global Forest Goals and accelerating progress towards the SDGs, as well as other globally intergovernmentally agreed forest-related goals and commitments.