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Item 6 of the provisional agenda¹

High-level segment, including a forest partnership forum with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, non-governmental organizations and private sector chief executive officers.

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In accordance with the programme of work of the Forum for the period 2022–2024, the Forum at its nineteenth session will convene a high-level segment, including a forest partnership forum with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, non-governmental organizations and private sector chief executive officers, under agenda item 6 of the provisional agenda of the nineteenth session of the Forum. The present note has been prepared to serve as the basis for the deliberations by Members of the Forum on the high-level segment of its nineteenth session.

¹ E/CN.18/2024/1

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the programme of work of the Forum for the period 2022–2024, the Forum at its nineteenth session will convene a high-level segment, including a forest partnership forum with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, non-governmental organizations and private sector chief executive officers, under agenda item 6.
2. The present note has been prepared to serve as the basis for the deliberations by Members of the Forum on the high-level segment of its nineteenth session of the Forum.

II. Background

3. In accordance with its programme of work for the period 2022–2024, the Forum will convene a high-level segment at its nineteenth session. The Bureau of the nineteenth session of the Forum has decided that the high-level segment of that session will be held on 9 May 2024 with the objective of providing the senior officials from governments and the United Nations the opportunity to share their strategic vision to address the threats to forests, enhance contribution of forests to addressing pressing global challenges, and strengthen political commitment to sustainable management of all types of forests. The segment will include a forest partnership forum with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, non-governmental organizations and private sector chief executive officers.
4. Ministers and other senior officials who will attend the high-level segment of the Forum's nineteenth session are expected to adopt a declaration. In order to facilitate the adoption of the declaration at the nineteenth session of the Forum, consultations on the draft were conducted prior to the session in an open, inclusive and transparent manner.

III. Major global forest-related developments

5. The high-level segment of the nineteenth session of the Forum will be convened at a critical time when forests and nature-based solutions are under spotlight globally within and beyond the UN system to fully deliver on intergovernmental global agreements, particularly the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
6. A series of major forest-related meetings and conferences were convened since the eighteenth session of the Forum, including the Sustainable Development Goal Summit and the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The following section contains an overview of their outcomes and interlinkages to forests and to the discussions of the high-level segment of the nineteenth session of the Forum, including those of the forthcoming major forest-related meetings and conferences scheduled to take place in 2024.

2023 and 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development

7. The 2023 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development was held from 10 to 19 July 2023 under the auspices of the Council under the theme “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”².
8. The 2023 session supported the mid-term review of the implementation of the SDGs and the preparations for the 2023 SDG Summit, as well as reviewed in depth Goals 6 on clean water and sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals.
9. At the voluntary reviews held during the ministerial segment of the high-level political forum, countries highlighted the need to deliver strengthened and comprehensive climate action. Mitigation strategies,

² E/HLPF/2023/7

reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the building of climate resilience, reforestation and the scaling up of climate finance were some of the areas in which countries reported to have concentrated their efforts.

10. The 2024 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Council will be held from 8 to 17 July 2024 at United Nations Headquarters under the theme "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions"^{3,4}.

11. During the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, over 42 Member States will present voluntary national reviews of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The high-level political forum will also review in-depth Sustainable Development Goal 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

12. In a letter dated 10 November 2023, soliciting input from the functional commissions of the Council, the President of the Council invited the Chair of the nineteenth session of the Forum to provide substantive input to the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development by 1 March 2024, on the following points: (a) Impacts of multiple crises on the implementation of SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 from the vantage point of the Forum; (b) three key areas where sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2024, considering the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets; (c) three examples of specific actions, policies and measures that are most urgently needed to effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to eradicate poverty and reinforce the 2030 Agenda, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs; (d) follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by the Forum to support implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit; (e) recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development.

13. In response to the letter from the President of the Council, the Bureau of the nineteenth session of the Forum prepared its input in consultation with members of the Forum for submission to the President as the input of the Forum to the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development. The input of the Forum will be made available on the websites of the high-level political forum and the Forum⁵⁶.

14. In February 2024, the intergovernmental process to review arrangements contained in A/RES/75/290 A and 75/290 B and their annexes on the strengthening of the Council and the review of the high-level political forum on sustainable development started.⁷

15. At the first informal consultation to be convened on 15 February 2024, delegations are invited to provide views on the substantive issues for inclusion in the zero draft to be prepared at a later stage. The second informal consultation is scheduled to be held on 7 March 2024. The process of informal consultations is expected to be finalized by the end of April or early May 2024.

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

16. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held the second part of its fifteenth meeting from 7 to 19 December 2022 in Montreal, Canada, and from 19 to 20 October 2023 in

³ A/DEC/77/553

⁴ Information on interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2024 is contained in E/CN.18/2024/2.

⁵ See <https://hlpf.un.org/2024>.

⁶ Information on interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2024 is contained in E/CN.18/2024/2.

⁷ See the letter from the President of the General Assembly dated 12 January 2024 and the letter from the co-facilitators of the process dated 11 January 2024, available at <https://www.un.org/pga/78/2024/01/12/pga-letter-ecosoc-hlpf-review-process/>.

Nairobi. During the Conference, the Parties adopted 35 decisions, including on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework⁸.

17. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework includes four long-term goals to be achieved by 2050 and 23 action-oriented targets to be achieved by 2030 in support of a vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050, building on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

18. All four goals and 23 targets of the framework are linked to forests, particularly target 2 on restoration of 30 per cent of all degraded ecosystems, and target 10 that aims at sustainably managing areas under forestry along with other areas under agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries. In addition, targets 14 to 23 encompass actions for implementation and mainstreaming, including quantified targets for resource mobilization.

19. In particular, target 19 of the framework aims to substantially and progressively increasing the level of financial resources from all sources to at least USD 200 billion per year by 2030, including by increasing transfer from developed to developing countries to at least USD 20 billion per year by 2025, and at least USD 30 billion per year by 2030.

20. The sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention will be held from 21 October to 1 November 2024 in Colombia. The Parties will be tasked to review the state of implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, present the alignment of their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans with the Framework, and further develop the monitoring framework and advance resource mobilization for the Global Biodiversity Framework.

2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit

21. The 2023 SDG Summit took place from 18 to 19 September 2023 at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. Convened by the President of the General Assembly, the Summit marked the half-way point to the deadline set for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs⁹.

22. During the summit, participants expressed confidence that the attainment of the SDGs would remain within reach if game-changing policies and solutions are translated into action. In this regard, the importance of climate action and the urgent need to tackle biodiversity loss and environmental degradation continued to be emphasized as key priorities.

23. Member States adopted a political declaration at the Summit reaffirming their shared commitment to end poverty and hunger everywhere, combat inequalities within and among countries and build peaceful societies that leave no one behind, emphasizing a strong backing of the vision of the 2030 Agenda and its Goals¹⁰.

24. In particular, world leaders committed to achieving a world in which humanity lives in harmony with nature, to conserving and sustainably using our planet's marine and terrestrial resources, including through sustainable lifestyles, and sustainable consumption and production, to reversing the trends of environmental degradation, to promoting resilience, to reducing disaster risk, and to halting ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss. The commitment includes conservation and sustainable use of oceans and seas, freshwater resources, as well as forests, mountains and drylands and protection of biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife.

25. During the Summit, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests held its high-level event and launched its Joint Call to Action for Forests towards 2030 to bolster their efforts in the areas of implementation and action, data, science and innovation, finance for forests, communication and awareness-raising¹¹.

⁸ See <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/COP-15-Resumed>.

⁹ See <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/SDGSummit2023>.

¹⁰ A/RES/78/1

¹¹ Further information on the Collaborative Partnership on Forests event is contained in E/CN.18/2024/2.

Twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

26. The twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held from 30 November to 13 December 2023 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates¹². Parties at the twenty-eighth session concluded the first global stocktake of progress made under the Paris Agreement to address climate change with the aim of limiting the global temperature rise within 1.5°C¹³.

27. Parties agreed on a decision on how to accelerate action across all areas by 2030 from reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to strengthening resilience to a changing climate, to getting the financial and technological support to vulnerable countries¹⁴.

28. In particular, the decision on the global stocktake emphasized the importance of conserving, protecting and restoring nature and ecosystems towards achieving the Paris agreement temperature goal through protecting terrestrial and marine ecosystems acting as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases and by conserving biodiversity, including halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 in alignment with the Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030, noting the need for increased support and investment to sustainably manage forests.

29. The decision also called on the Parties to consider forests and other ecosystems in the next round of the nationally-determined contributions due by 2025. Such a pledge and focus on forests highlighted the critical role of forests and the urgency of scaling up forest-based actions.

30. During the session, donor countries pledged their contributions to the second replenishment of the Green Climate Fund to support the implementation of national climate action in developing countries, bringing the total pledges to USD 12.8 billion from 31 countries. In addition, a number of initiatives and partnerships on forest conservation were announced, including through the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership and the Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance coalition.

31. The twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held from 11 to 22 November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The parties are expected to establish a new climate finance goal, reflecting the scale and urgency of the climate challenge, prepare for the new nationally determined contributions towards the thirtieth session of the Conference.

Theme of the International Day of Forests in 2024

32. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests selected the theme of "Forests and innovation" for the International Day of Forests in 2024. The theme was selected to promote innovative high- and low-tech solutions for sustainable forest management, conservation, halting deforestation and forest products.

33. The theme encompasses technical and social innovation in developing sustainable value chains and products, as well as monitoring and reporting methodologies and traditional forest knowledge. The theme links to the theme of the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions" and the theme of the World Congress 2024 of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations "Forests and Society Towards 2050" that will focus on innovation in forest research, markets and industrial development, and cross-sectoral collaboration¹⁵.

¹² See <https://unfccc.int/cop28>.

¹³ FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.17

¹⁴ See <https://unfccc.int/cop28/outcomes>.

¹⁵ See <https://iufro2024.com/>.

34. Detailed information on this theme is provided in the note by the Secretariat on 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 2023–2024¹⁶.

Summit of the Future

35. The Summit of the Future will be held from 22 to 23 September 2024 at United Nations Headquarters, New York, under the theme “Summit of the Future: multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow”^{17, 18}. The main purpose of the summit is to strengthen international cooperation to deliver fully and fairly on existing agreements, while responding effectively to new threats and opportunities for present and future generations.

36. The Summit is expected to adopt a concise, action-oriented outcome document entitled “A Pact for the Future” to be agreed in advance by consensus through intergovernmental negotiations. The scope of the summit and its outcome document will encompass the following elements: Sustainable development and financing for development; International peace and security; Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation; Youth and future generations; and Transforming global governance.

37. Through the discussions of the summit and its outcome document, it is critically important for the General Assembly to reaffirm and take concrete steps to accelerate the full achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the implementation of other intergovernmentally-agreed commitments related to forests, particularly the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and its Global Forest Goals, in light of the critical contributions and potential of forests for transformations required for sustainable development.

IV. Turning challenges to opportunities

38. The world is battling against the effects of multiple global crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollutions, global economic inflation and increased commodity prices, and armed conflicts and instability, exacerbating poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and gender and socioeconomic inequalities, with negative impacts on natural resources, including forests, and human health and well-being, particularly in the most vulnerable communities.

39. In the face of these interlinked crises, there is growing recognition in various intergovernmental fora of the need to accelerate action to halt and reverse continued trend in deforestation and forest degradation, unsustainable consumption and production practices as they continue to threaten the essential economic, social, environmental and cultural values of forests, compounded by the economic and financial tolls of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and climate disasters.

40. Most recently, increasing occurrences of forest fires and wildfires in many countries and regions and their intensifying impacts on livelihoods, conservation and regeneration of ecosystems, climate, land and biodiversity serve as a clarion call, including through the Country-led initiative by the Government of India in support of the Forum, to scale up efforts to address drivers of deforestation, particularly unsustainable conversion and harvesting of forests.

41. Despite the growing awareness and recognition of the importance to take forest-based action in response to ongoing crises, the forest area continues to shrink as deforestation persists at the estimated rate of 10 million hectares per year. In addition, forest health is deteriorating as the severity and occurrence of wildfires and pests are increasing owing to the effects of climate change.

42. At the national and global levels, forests and forestry issues are often addressed in a fragmented manner with the involvement of different ministries, institutions and organizations with varying mandates that focus on environmental or socioeconomic aspects of forests, inadvertently creating space for illegal practices and

¹⁶ E/CN.18/2024/2

¹⁷ A/RES/76/307

¹⁸ See <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>.

lack of law enforcement, as well as underestimating market and non-market values of forest products and services, resulting in insufficiency of funds and resources to sustainably manage forests.

43. In order to address these impediments, it is imperative to strengthen political engagement, cross-sectoral collaboration, cooperation, coordination, and coherence and synergies, while reducing fragmentation at all levels on forest and forestry issues, particularly by facilitating partnerships among partners and stakeholders, raising awareness on full contributions of sustainable forest management to addressing key global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation.

44. In doing so, support and investment needs to be enhanced, particularly for the most vulnerable groups and communities, through international technical, technological and financial collaboration among countries, regions and partners. Such cross-sectoral support and coordination is instrumental to build capacity required to sustainably manage forests, and knowledge and data for science-based policy decisions and actions on the ground across sectors.

45. At the nineteenth session of the Forum, the midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests presents a critical opportunity for the international community to take stock of progress, challenges, gaps and priorities in advancing sustainable forest management worldwide. This midterm review will also chart the course towards 2030 to ensure accelerating progress towards the Global Forest Goals, the SDGs, and other globally agreed forest-related goals and commitments. The high-level segment of the nineteenth session of the Forum will provide a timely opportunity to respond to key concerns and opportunities related to forests and their interlinkages.

46. The high-level segment will bring together senior officials from Members of the Forum, the UN system, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional entities, and Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders.

47. During the high-level segment, a series of roundtable discussions and dialogues will be held to enable high-level officials to report on progress made in sustainable forest management, to showcase forests as nature-based solutions, and set out concrete voluntary commitments, partnerships and actions for the accelerated implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and its Global Forest Goals.

48. At time of writing, the themes and modalities for the roundtable discussions and dialogues of the high-level segment have yet to be finalized by the Bureau of the nineteenth session of the Forum and are expected to be finalized in March 2024 in preparation for the session.

V. Conclusion

49. The world is facing an array of socioeconomic and environmental crises, raising doubts to the business-as-usual approaches to sustainability. The lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, worsening effects of climate change and biodiversity loss, growing social and economic inequalities, trade tensions and armed conflicts, and rising debts in developing countries continue to expose fundamental shortcomings and can each significantly set back hard-fought development gains for forests and forest-dependent communities. These interlinked crises have also exposed unequal coping and resilient mechanisms among counties, societies and communities, deepening divides among them.

50. At the same time, these troubling developments emphasize the critical role that forests plays in underpinning sustainable development in all its dimensions, including through supporting the livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities through wood and non-wood forest products, in various intergovernmental fora.

51. In particular, many of the recent forest-related developments highlight the crucial importance to promote and enhance a coherent approach to address many of the pressing global challenges, most notably biodiversity loss, climate change, and land and ecosystem degradation. Despite their importance, however, the full potential of forests has yet to be tapped, harnessed and realized globally.

52. Such realization of contributions and benefits of forests will entail the implementation of an integrated approach to prevent, manage, and address the drivers of deforestation through policy interventions and collaboration to safeguard, protect, conserve, sustainably manage and restore forests, including through reforestation, afforestation, tree planting, assisted natural regeneration and agroforestry activities in line with the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 and its Global Forest Goals.

53. Enhancing awareness on the social, economic and environmental benefits of forests is important to leverage efforts to address deforestation and forest degradation as well as to support the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs.

54. As the Forum undertakes the midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests, the high-level segment of the nineteenth session of the Forum must signal a genuine turning point to mobilize the political commitment and breakthroughs for people and forests that can put the Global Forest Goals on track to their achievement by 2030.

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