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Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In accordance with ECOSOC resolution 2021/6, the United Nations Forum on Forests at its nineteenth session will consider the agenda item on 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 2023. 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.

Since its inception, the Forum's mandates and outputs have grown, however the budgetary allocations from the regular budget have not increased at the same pace. Sustained, predictable and adequate resources, both human and financial, continue to be critical in enabling the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to support and promote the implementation of the UN strategic plan for forests and the achievement of the six Global Forest goals and the 26 associated targets.

* [E/CN.18/2024/1](#).

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 nineteenth 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 2023. The present note is submitted for information purposes. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as of 12 February 2023. 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 resolutions 2015/33, 2022/17, and 2020/14, as well as annex to its resolution 2021/6.

II. Contributions to the trust fund in 2023

3. In 2023, four 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 US \$948,031, 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, 2023
(United States dollars)

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Total</i>
China	287,410
Germany	243,429
Republic of Korea	17,192
United States of America	400,000
Subtotal, contributions	948,031
Opening balance, 1 January 2023	2,443,375
Total	3,391,407

III. Expenditure of the trust fund in 2023

4. In 2023, capacity development related travel accounted for around 30 per cent of expenditures from extrabudgetary resources and staffing costs, including staff posts, other staff-related expenses and consultants' fees funded accounted for around 24 per cent of expenditures. 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, 2023

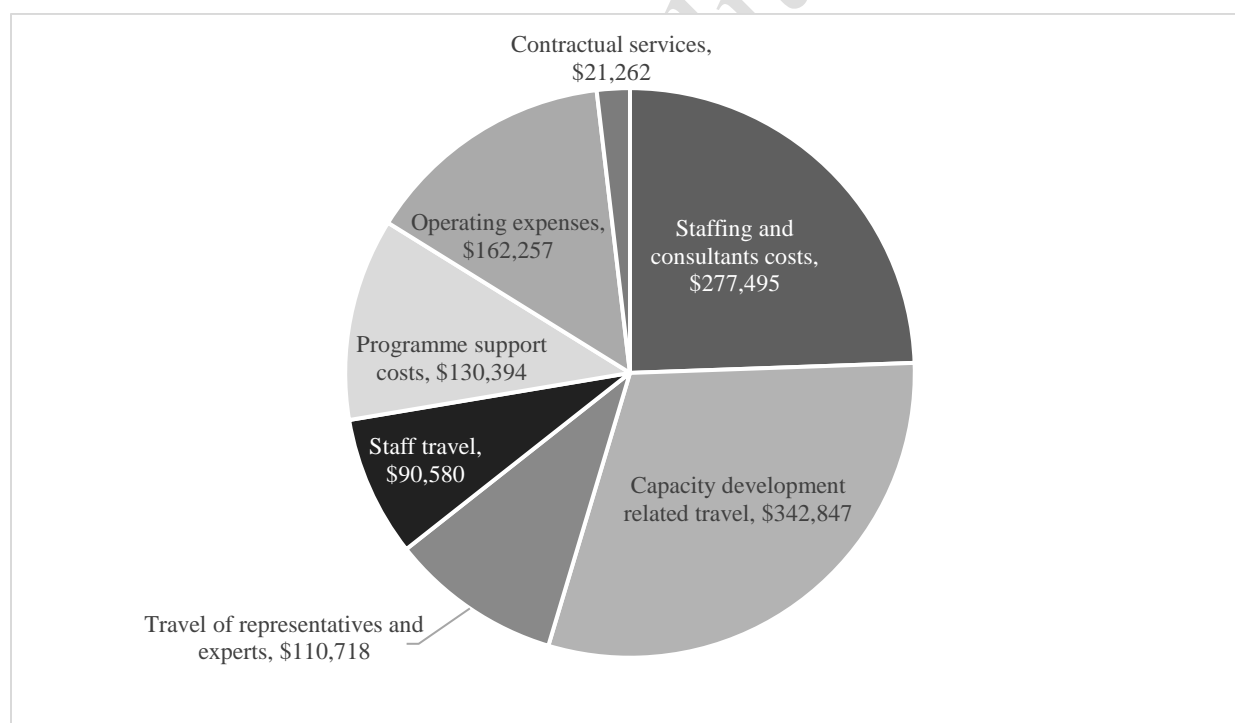
(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Staffing and consultancy costs ^a	277,495
Capacity development related travel	342,847
Travel of representatives and experts	110,718
Staff travel	90,580
Contractual services	21,262
Operating expenses ^b	162,257
Subtotal	1,005,159
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	130,394
Total	1,135,553

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

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

Expenditures of the trust fund, 2023



5. During 2023, 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 2023, including the following:

(a) **Secretariat staff and consultants and technical experts to support Forum activities.** In order to implement mandated activities related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) and its Clearing House, one post at the P-3 level was funded from extrabudgetary resources in 2023. Extrabudgetary resources were utilized to engage consultants and technical experts to support the work related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. These resources were also used to support the intersessional activities on the preparations for the midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF).

(b) **Capacity development related travel for support to member States.** In 2023, the secretariat continued provision of technical support by the GFFFN to several members of the Forum, namely, Algeria, Benin, Burundi, Liberia, Mozambique, Togo and Uzbekistan using extrabudgetary resources. As part of this support, capacity development workshops were held in the above-mentioned countries, to enhance capacity in developing project proposals and national forest financing strategies, as well as to validate draft project proposals and strategies. The Organization-Led Initiative on the Assessment of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (OLI) in February 2023, the Global Workshop on Reporting on Progress towards the Global Forest Goals and Targets of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 in March 2023, the expert group meeting on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, and Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 in June 2023 and the Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) on the preparations for the midterm review of the IAF in October 2023 were all funded using extrabudgetary resources. Organization of meetings and workshops, including the travel of participants, consultants and secretariat staff.

(c) **Travel of representatives and experts.** Travel assistance was provided to facilitate the participation of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition in Forum related meetings in 2023, including the eighteenth session of the UN Forum on Forests in May 2023 and the Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) on the preparations for the midterm review of the IAF in October 2023.

(d) **Travel of staff.** Fund resources were used to supplement regular budget funds to cover the travel costs of secretariat staff participating in key international and intergovernmental forest-related events, including the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other meetings related to the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations.

(e) **Contractual services, conference servicing and operating expenses.** During 2023, extrabudgetary funds were used to cover costs relating to rental of premises, information technology, training, conference-servicing costs and bank fees.

IV. Achievements and results

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

(a) The eighteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (8-12 May 2023) took stock of progress towards the Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 and identified key opportunities and challenges in this regard. This included opportunities related to interlinkages with the SDGs under review at the 2023 HLPF and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMBF), emerging issues related to forests, energy and livelihoods, challenges related to mobilizing increased financing for forests and the need to strengthen cooperation and collaboration in the context of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and sub-regional entities and stakeholders, amongst others.

(b) Resources from the trust fund were used to support a series of intersessional activities held as part of the preparations for the midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) in 2023. This included the open-ended intergovernmental Ad hoc Expert Group (AHEG) on the preparations for the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) midterm review (10-13 October) which reviewed the full set of assessments and outcomes of preparatory intersessional work related to the IAF midterm review. The outcome of the meeting was a set of proposals by the AHEG Co-Chairs on the midterm review of the

effectiveness of the IAF including the future steps to be taken by the IAF beyond 2024, which were put forth for consideration by the Forum at its nineteenth session in May 2024.

(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. This included further development of the online Clearing House (CH), the production of the Forest Financing Quarterly Highlight, which were carried out with funding for human resources from the trust fund. In addition, the expert group meeting on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, and Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 in June 2023 was organized with resources from the trust fund. Further details on the activities of the Network are contained in the Note by the Secretariat on the policy discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: Means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (E/CN.18/2024/3).

(d) Resources from the trust fund were used to support intersessional activities on the preparations for the midterm review (MTR) of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (IAF). Further details on key activities are contained in the Note by the Secretariat on Midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives and Quadrennial Programme of Work of United Nations Forum on Forests for 2025-2028 (E/CN.18/2024/5).

(e) Resources from the fund were essential in supporting work related to monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR), including organization of the Global Workshop on Reporting on Progress towards the Global Forest Goals and Targets of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 in March 2023 and the expert group meeting on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, and Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 in June 2023. Further details on key activities on MAR are contained in the Note by the Secretariat on the policy discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: Monitoring, assessment and reporting (E/CN.18/2024/4).

(f) Resources from the trust fund were used to support the update of the CPF's workplan for the period 2021–2024, including organization of the Organization-Led Initiative on the Assessment of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (OLI). Further details on the activities of the Partnership are contained in the Note by the Secretariat on the 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 2023–2024 (E/CN.18/2024/2).

(g) The trust fund continues to be a critical source of supplementary funding for meeting the staffing needs to manage the growing mandate the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In 2023, the fund covered the staffing costs of one staff member at the P-3 level to support the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. In 2024, it is expected that three P3 posts and one G-5 post will be funded from extrabudgetary resources to support the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR), development of the new Forum website and new information services and products.

V. Priorities and challenges

7. Since its inception, the Forum's 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 play an essential role in supplementing resources from the regular budget, especially in light of the ongoing liquidity crisis which has resulted in significant reductions in non-post resources from the regular budget.

8. The scaling up of the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network continues to be limited by the availability of adequate resources. The development of the clearing house of the Network is being done in a cost-effective manner leveraging IT services from within the UN, however these expenditures also depend on the availability of voluntary contributions.

9. Securing dedicated contributions for the travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition is also critical. To date, there has been a trend of declining contributions, which, if continued, would limit the capacity of the Forum Secretariat to facilitate balanced representation of developed and developing countries at future Forum-related meetings.

10. Sustained, predictable and adequate resources, both human and financial, continue to be critical in enabling the secretariat to support and promote 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 strengthen the impact of the work of the Forum and its secretariat. This includes activities in 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 2024
(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2024</i>
Staffing costs ^a	600,000
Consultants, experts and contractual services ^b	150,000
Travel of representatives and experts ^c	375,000
Travel of staff	80,000
Subtotal	1,205,000
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	156,650
Total	1,361,650
Closing balance, 31 December 2023	2,411,258
Expected contributions, 2024	855,000
Total expected funds, 2024	3,266,258

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 nineteenth session.

^a Estimate based on the cost of funding one P-3 post (GFFFN) for the full year, two P-3 posts (MAR and Communications) for half of the year, and a G-5 post (Information Assistant) from extrabudgetary resources in 2024.

^b Includes costs of engaging consultants to support preparations for the twentieth session of the Forum, in 2025, 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 during 2024, including intersessional activities.