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## United Nations Forum on Forests

### Eighteenth session

8–12 May 2023

Items 3 (a), 3 (b) (i), (ii), 3 (d), 3 (e) and 5 of the provisional agenda\*

#### Technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030:

**Thematic priorities for the biennium 2023–2024, in  
support of the implementation of the United Nations  
strategic plan for forests 2017–2030**

**Contributions of members of the Forum to implementing  
the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030**

**New announcements of voluntary national contributions**

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**Interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets  
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development in 2023, the work towards the post-2020  
global biodiversity framework and other international  
forest-related developments**

**Implementation of the communication and outreach  
strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests  
2017–2030, including activities regarding the  
International Day of Forests in 2023**

#### Emerging issues

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\* E/CN.18/2023/1.



**Technical 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**

**Note by the Secretariat**

*Summary*

In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution [2021/6](#), the United Nations Forum on Forests, at its eighteenth session, will hold technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. The present note provides background information to facilitate technical discussions and highlights the results of the intersessional activities conducted since the seventeenth session of the Forum. The note also serves as the basis for discussion at the eighteenth session of the Forum on agenda items 3 (a), 3 (b) and its sub-items (i) and (ii), 3 (d), 3 (e) and 5.

## I. Introduction

1. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2021/6, the United Nations Forum on Forests, at its eighteenth session, will hold technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030.

2. The present note serves as the basis for discussion on agenda items 3 (a), 3 (b) and its sub-items (i) and (ii), 3 (d), 3 (e) and 5. Under agenda item 3 (a), the Forum will discuss its thematic priorities for the biennium 2023–2024 in support of the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. Under agenda item 3 (b), the Forum will consider the contributions of members of the Forum to implementing the strategic plan, including new announcements of voluntary national contributions (sub-item (i)) and updates on voluntary national contributions and their follow-up related to the thematic priorities (sub-item (ii)). Under agenda item 3 (d), the Forum will consider 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 2023, the work towards the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and other international forest-related developments.<sup>1</sup> Under agenda item 3 (e), the Forum will consider the implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the strategic plan, including activities regarding the International Day of Forests in 2023. Under agenda item 5, the Forum will discuss the emerging issues.

3. The note also provides an overview of the results of intersessional activities and developments since the seventeenth session of the Forum and includes some proposals for discussion by the Forum at its eighteenth session.

## II. Background

4. At its eighteenth session, the Forum will hold technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2021/6, the technical discussions will include an interactive exchange of experiences and lessons learned on thematic priorities among members of the Forum, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional and subregional organizations and processes, and major groups and other relevant stakeholders. The interactive exchange will include consideration of the science-policy interface and cross-sectoral and emerging issues and will take into account youth, gender and regions perspectives.

5. According to the above-mentioned resolution, the thematic priorities of the Forum for each biennium shall be based on the global forest goals and targets, taking into account the post-2020 programme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and relevant international forest-related developments. The Bureau of the Forum shall decide the thematic priorities for each biennium in consultation with members of the Forum.

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<sup>1</sup> The post-2020 global biodiversity framework was adopted as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

### III. Thematic priorities for the biennium 2023–2024, in support of the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

#### A. Thematic priorities of the Forum for the biennium 2023–2024

6. For the biennium 2023–2024, the Bureau of the Forum took note of the growing call for the halting of deforestation, the increased level of inequality and poverty around the world, issues relating to food and energy insecurity, and increased prices of food and goods, as well as the roles that forests can play in addressing many of these challenges.

7. In this respect, the Bureau considered global forest goal 2 (enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits) and global forest goal 3 (increase the area of protected forests and the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests) along with the three cross-cutting goals, i.e. global forest goals 4, 5 and 6, and their interlinkages with the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum in 2023 and 2024, as well as international forest-related developments, and decided that the thematic priorities for the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions would be as follows: (a) enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits; (b) increasing significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests; and (c) mobilizing financial resources and strengthening scientific and technical cooperation, promoting governance frameworks to advance implementation and enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence for sustainable forest management. The interlinkages between the thematic priorities of the Forum for the biennium 2023–2024, the global forest goals, the Sustainable Development Goals and international forest-related developments are shown in the table below.

8. In order to facilitate the technical discussions of the Forum at its eighteenth session, the Forum secretariat commissioned two background studies on thematic priorities (a) and (b), respectively, and their accompanying policy briefs.<sup>2</sup>

#### Interlinkages between the thematic priorities of the Forum for the biennium 2023–2024, the global forest goals, the Sustainable Development Goals and international forest-related developments

<i>Thematic priorities of the Forum for the biennium 2023–2024</i>	<i>Global forest goals</i>	<i>Linkages and contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in-depth by the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development</i>	<i>Linkages and contributions to other Sustainable Development Goals</i>	<i>International forest-related developments</i>
Enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits	2	6, 9	1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 12, 15	2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development Sustainable Development Goals Summit Summit of the Future
Increasing significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of	3	7, 17	12, 14, 15	Twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Forestry of the Food

<sup>2</sup> The concept note on the thematic priorities for the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions of the Forum, as well as the background analytical studies and policy briefs for the eighteenth session of the Forum, are available on the Forum website at <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/index.html>.

<i>Thematic priorities of the Forum for the biennium 2023–2024</i>	<i>Global forest goals</i>	<i>Linkages and contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in-depth by the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development</i>	<i>Linkages and contributions to other Sustainable Development Goals</i>	<i>International forest-related developments</i>
sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests				and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030)
Mobilizing financial resources and strengthening scientific and technical cooperation; promoting governance frameworks to advance implementation; and enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence for sustainable forest management	4, 5, 6	17	1, 2, 5, 10, 12, 15, 16	Decade of action and delivery for sustainable development Twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity Themes of the International Day of Forests in 2023 and 2024

## 1. Enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits

9. The background study on the first thematic priority and the voluntary national reports of countries submitted for the fifteenth session of the Forum indicate that countries took a wide range of institutional, legislative, technical and financial actions to enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits in order to mitigate and address the impact of ongoing crises, such as recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.<sup>3</sup> These national actions created a unique opportunity to further invest in, expand and promote sustainable forest management practices. Investments in sustainable forest management and jobs in forestry offer opportunities for a green and sustainable recovery as healthy forests build resilience against the occurrence of future pandemics.

10. Countries also implemented several programmes and activities that promote employment, empowerment and poverty eradication, particularly in rural areas, demonstrating that forests can help meet subsistence needs and serve as safety nets in times of crisis. Such programmes and activities include the development and implementation of national policies, strategies and plans that leverage forests for food security, including through the promotion of non-wood forest products, agroforestry, agricultural diversification and the use of forest plantations, as well as the establishment of community forests and shelterbelts.

11. Several countries took concrete steps to establish institutions and networks, create institutional bodies and implement measures that revised laws, regulations and policies, to strengthen small-scale forest business enterprises and to promote their

<sup>3</sup> The findings in this section are based on the country reports submitted by the members of the Forum at its fifteenth session, the *Global Forest Goals Report 2021* and the background analytical study for the eighteenth session of the Forum, which are available on the Forum website. For more information on progress made towards achieving global forest goal 2, please see the *Global Forest Goals Report 2021* and the background study.

access to financing. These actions helped small businesses to gain direct access to funding to kick-start their forest projects and build capacity through training and access to information on funding and its processes.

12. Various actions were taken by countries to strengthen the contributions of the forest industry, other forest-based enterprises and ecosystem services to sustainable development. These actions included the adoption of legislation, policies, strategies, plans and public-private partnerships to promote the marketing of wood and non-wood forest products, as well as enhance the productivity of forestry.

13. Country actions in support of biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation ranged from the expansion of protected area systems and other policies and plans to conserve and sustainably use forest biodiversity to the implementation of national forest strategies, including the strategies to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and promote the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD-plus).

14. Countries identified several issues hindering their progress towards achieving the targets of global forest goal 2. The most common issues raised included, inter alia, insufficient public and private funding, inadequacy of the public funding to meet the needs of the forest sector, difficulties in accessing information on funding sources and application processes, weak forest governance, the lack of technical capabilities and the impact of natural disasters and socioeconomic challenges.

15. Despite the many actions taken by countries, as a result of the challenges in collecting data for this goal and the lack of methodologies and comparable data, progress made towards the achievement of global forest goal 2 and its targets remains unclear. For instance, much work remains to be done to effectively measure progress towards the eradication of poverty in the highly vulnerable groups of forest-dependent people and communities.

## **2. Increasing significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests**

16. The background study carried out on the second thematic priority and the voluntary national reports of countries to the fifteenth session of the Forum indicate that many countries took concrete measures to make progress in the conservation and management of forests and have made some progress towards achieving global forest goal 3.<sup>4</sup> A number of countries developed and implemented legislation, codes and policies, which had specific provisions addressing protected areas, sustainable forest management and the promotion of markets for products from sustainably managed forests. These actions contributed to the expansion of forest areas designated as protected areas to approximately 18 per cent of forest areas globally, thereby achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 11.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The findings in this section are based on the country reports submitted by the members of the Forum at its fifteenth session, the *Global Forest Goals Report 2021* and the background analytical study for the eighteenth session of the Forum, which are available on the Forum website. For more information on progress made towards achieving global forest goal 3, please see the *Global Forest Goals Report 2021* and the background study.

<sup>5</sup> Aichi Biodiversity Target 11: “By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.”

17. Globally, a growing proportion of forests is under long-term forest management plans, and the supply of forest products increasingly comes from sustainably managed forests in many countries and regions. Building on such trends, awareness-raising initiatives and programmes can harness further public support towards sustainable forest management, including protected areas.

18. In addition to ongoing efforts to expand the coverage of the protected areas, it is imperative to sustainably manage the existing protected areas, as they are often understaffed and underfunded, in order to maintain the quality of the areas in the face of such challenges as sectoral competition within the government. Further coordination and stakeholder engagement, especially the co-management of the protected areas with local communities, is considered a key tool for success.

19. Owing to the limited capacities and resources of countries, gathering and maintaining statistics and data of good quality remain a serious challenge to most countries. The lack of sufficient, complete, up-to-date, standardized and comparable data hinders the management, monitoring, assessment and reporting of progress in sustainable forest management, particularly with regard to forests under effective and quality sustainable management practices, as well as the products produced and brought to market from sustainably managed forests.

20. Among the challenges, developing countries tend to be constrained by pressure on forests from other land uses, as well as by the lack of funding, capacity, political commitment, development of markets and adaption to forest certification. Developed countries tend to face challenges related to a lack of support from the public and from business with respect to sustainable forest management, the lack of land for additional forest development, ageing owners of forests and contending interests among forest stakeholders.

### **3. Mobilizing financial resources and strengthening scientific and technical cooperation; promoting governance frameworks to advance implementation; and enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence for sustainable forest management**

21. The background studies carried out on the first two thematic priorities and the voluntary national reports of countries to the fifteenth session of the Forum indicate that while countries made efforts to advance and diversify financing and to promote cooperation and partnerships across all levels of governance in support of forest objectives, financing for forests remains well below the level needed to achieve the global forest goals, especially in developing countries.<sup>6</sup>

22. The majority of reporting countries developed and implemented financial strategies to achieve sustainable forest management, putting forth and reviewing legislation and policies on investment and finance. These actions signal a growing commitment to increasing, mobilizing and improving access to forest financing at the national and international levels.

23. Despite the progress made, almost all developing countries face a lack of resources, especially financial resources, as a major challenge to the attainment of the global forest goals. Over a quarter of developing countries submitting national reports indicated that inadequate funding hindered their progress towards achieving the goals.

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<sup>6</sup> The findings in this section are based on the country reports submitted by the members of the Forum at its fifteenth session, the *Global Forest Goals Report 2021* and the background analytical study for the eighteenth session of the Forum, which are available on the Forum website. For more information on progress made towards achieving global forest goals 4, 5 and 6, please see the *Global Forest Goals Report 2021*.

24. With regard to promoting governance frameworks to advance implementation, countries increasingly recognize the contribution of forests to national sustainable development strategies, making strides towards improved cross-sectoral coordination in government agencies and expanded stakeholder engagement in policy formulation, planning and implementation, including through national forest programmes and national land use planning processes.

25. In relation to enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence for sustainable forest management, countries continue to expand stakeholder involvement in reaching forest-related goals and objectives in close collaboration with civil society, the private sector and local authorities at the national and local levels. Many of these collaborative actions have been implemented through cross-sectoral mechanisms, including programmes implemented through the United Nations system.

26. At the international level, the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests continues to help advance progress towards goal 6. Achieving forest policy coherence and complementarity at the international level will largely depend on the guidance and resources provided by the governing bodies of the United Nations system entities and the member organizations of the Partnership, many of which largely comprise the same Member States.

## **B. Main international forest-related developments**

### **1. 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development**

27. The high-level political forum on sustainable development, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, will be held from 10 to 19 July 2023 at United Nations Headquarters. The General Assembly, in its resolution [75/290 B](#), defined the theme of the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Council to be “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”.

28. During the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development, 41 Member States will present voluntary national reviews of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The forum will also review in-depth Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation, Goal 7 on affordable and clean energy, Goal 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and Goal 17 on partnerships for the Goals. The forum will take into account the different and specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across these Goals and the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Goals.

29. The high-level political forum under the auspices of the Council in July 2023 will also support the midterm review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and help prepare for the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2023, during which the high-level political forum will be convened under the auspices of the General Assembly on 19 and 20 September 2023.

30. In a letter dated 10 November 2022, soliciting input from the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Council invited the Chair of the eighteenth session of the Forum to provide his input to the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development by 1 March 2023, on the following points:

(a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 from the vantage point of the Forum, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable



development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets, including the policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs;

(b) Three key areas in which transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful, and three key areas for which support is most urgently needed, with regard to the cluster of Goals under review in July 2023;

(c) Examples of specific action taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerates progress towards multiple Sustainable Development Goal targets, including action identified by the Forum, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the Goals;

(d) Assessment of the situation at the midpoint of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and efforts towards the achievement of the Goals, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the respective areas addressed by the Forum, and policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(e) Key messages for inclusion in the political declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2023.

31. In response to the letter from the President of the Council, the Bureau of the eighteenth session of the Forum plans to prepare its input, in close consultation with members of the Forum, and submit it to the President as the input of the Forum to the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development. At its eighteenth session, under agenda item 3 (d), the Forum will further discuss the interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum. The summary of this discussion will be included in the summary by the Chair for transmission to the President of the Council as an additional input to the 2023 high-level political forum.

32. In preparation for the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, the President of the General Assembly, in his letter dated 20 October 2022, appointed the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations to facilitate consultations with Member States with respect to the identification of the theme for the Council and high-level political forum and the set of Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed by the high-level political forum in 2024.

## **2. Sustainable Development Goals Summit**

33. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [75/290](#) B, the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the General Assembly, entitled the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, will be held on 19 and 20 September 2023. The Summit will constitute the midpoint review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and efforts to achieve the Goals.

34. In preparation for the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, the President of the General Assembly, in his letter dated 20 October 2022, appointed the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations and the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations to lead consultations on the political declaration of the Summit. The co-facilitators were scheduled to convene the first informal consultation on 3 February 2023 to consult with Member States on the scope and substance of the political declaration of the Summit.

## **3. 2024 Summit of the Future**

35. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [76/307](#), the Summit of the Future will be held on 22 and 23 September 2024, in New York, under the theme “Summit of the Future: multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow”. The Summit

will adopt a concise, action-oriented outcome document entitled “A Pact for the Future”, to be agreed in advance through intergovernmental negotiations.

36. In order to facilitate the preparatory process of the Summit, the President of the General Assembly, in his letter dated 18 October 2022, appointed the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations and the Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations as co-facilitators to lead consultations to determine the scope of the Summit, topics and organization of interactive dialogues and the process of negotiations to conclude the outcome document. The co-facilitators will convene the first informal consultation on 14 February 2023 to present their road map towards the preparatory ministerial meeting for the Summit, scheduled for September 2023.

37. The Secretary-General plans to release a series of policy briefs on possible tracks for the Summit in the first semester of 2023, taking into account the outcomes of consultations on “Our Common Agenda”.

#### **4. United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030)**

38. In response to General Assembly resolution 73/284, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) was launched in June 2021 with a view to supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raising awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration.

39. The Decade is intended to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the objectives of the Paris Agreement, the land degradation neutrality targets, the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Bonn Challenge target of restoring 350 million hectares of degraded land by 2030, and other international agreements relevant to the conservation and restoration of ecosystems, including the United Nations strategic plan for forests and its global forest goals.

40. The strategy of the Decade identifies its vision and theory of change, as well as implementation pathways through building a global movement, generating political support and building technical capacity in support of the restoration of forests and trees, rivers and lakes, oceans and coasts, farmlands and grasslands, mountains and peatlands, among other ecosystems.<sup>7</sup>

41. As part of the Decade, 10 “World Restoration Flagships” were selected in December 2022 to receive United Nations-backed promotion, advice or funding.<sup>8</sup> These flagship initiatives aim to restore over 68 million hectares and create nearly 15 million jobs. The selected initiatives are: Trinational Atlantic Forest Pact, Abu Dhabi Marine Restoration, Great Green Wall for Restoration and Peace, Ganges River Rejuvenation, Multi-Country Mountain Initiative, Small Island Developing States Restoration Drive, Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative, Central American Dry Corridor, Building with Nature in Indonesia and Shan-Shui Initiative in China.

#### **5. Decade of action and delivery for sustainable development**

42. In 2019, the Secretary-General called upon all sectors of society to mobilize for a decade of action to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The areas of action include: global action to secure greater leadership, more resources and smarter solutions for Goals; local action embedding the needed transitions in the policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks of governments, cities and local authorities; and people action, including by youth, civil

<sup>7</sup> See <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/31813/ERDStrat.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/un-recognizes-10-pioneering-initiatives-are-restoring-natural-world>.

society, the media, the private sector, unions, academia and other stakeholders, to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformations.

43. The Secretary-General has been convening a Sustainable Development Goals Moment meeting every September since 2020 with a view to keeping the Goals at the top of the political agenda and demonstrating the possibility of transformative changes. The event brings together Heads of State and Government as well as leaders from a range of Sustainable Development Goal partners to set out a vision for a decade of action and recovering better from COVID-19, provide a snapshot on progress towards achieving the Goals, highlight plans and actions to tackle major implementation gaps, and demonstrate the power and impact of action and innovation by Sustainable Development Goal stakeholders.

44. The third Sustainable Development Goals Moment was held on 19 September 2022. The event served to reinforce the continued relevance of the 2030 Agenda and highlighted urgent actions to accelerate the transition to equitable and inclusive development and efforts to address climate change.

## **6. Twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Forestry of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

45. The twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Forestry of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was held from 3 to 7 October 2022 in Rome, in a hybrid format. The agenda items of the session included, among others: the state of the world's forests 2022; forests and sustainable production of wood and non-wood forest products; agriculture and forestry linkages; and forest solutions for combating climate change.<sup>9</sup>

46. The Committee also considered, under item 9.4 of the agenda for the session, the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests and strengthening the contribution of FAO to the international arrangement on forests, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the midterm review in 2024. During the discussions under that item, members of the Committee highlighted the critical importance of FAO and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests accelerating their efforts towards the achievement of the global forest goals. Suggested actions included joint efforts to advance the implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests, and provide input to the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests to be conducted by the Forum at its nineteenth session, in 2024.

## **7. Twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

47. The twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held from 6 to 20 November 2022 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

48. Parties at the twenty-seventh session agreed on a package of decisions that reaffirmed their commitment to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The decisions also strengthened the commitment of countries to take action to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change, while boosting the support of finance, technology and capacity-building to developing countries.

49. The package of decisions included the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan, through which the Conference recalled that in the context of the provision of adequate

<sup>9</sup> The report of the session is available at <https://www.fao.org/events/detail/cofo-26/en>.

and predictable support to developing country parties, parties should collectively aim to slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss, in accordance with national circumstances, consistently with the ultimate objective of the Convention, as stated in its article 2.

50. The Conference also encouraged parties to consider, as appropriate, nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches, taking into consideration United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/5, for their mitigation and adaptation action while ensuring relevant social and environmental safeguards.

51. The first global stocktake of the implementation of the Paris Agreement is currently under way to assess the global progress on mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation and support, and is scheduled to be completed at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held from 30 November to 12 December 2023 in the United Arab Emirates.

52. During the session, 26 countries and the European Union, accounting for over 33 per cent of the world's forests and nearly 60 per cent of the world's gross domestic product, launched the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership, building on the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, signed by over 140 countries, to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030 while delivering sustainable development and promoting an inclusive rural transformation.

53. During the session, the secretariat of the Forum held an event with the following theme: "Towards strengthening forest-based climate actions beyond 2024". The event brought together over 50 delegates from Member States, partners and stakeholders. The event was opened by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and moderated by the Director of the secretariat of the Forum. The event featured a keynote address by the Chair of the eighteenth session of the Forum, and a panel discussion with the participation of senior officials of the European Commission, India, Kenya and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The discussions of the event highlighted the opportunities provided in the ongoing preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests and the first global stocktake of the implementation of the Paris Agreement to promote forest-based climate actions, and stressed the importance of countries and stakeholders accelerating forest-based climate actions in support of the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests and the Paris Agreement, particularly through increasing forest financing and supporting capacity-building in developing countries.

54. During the session, the secretariat of the Forum and FAO jointly held the high-level dialogue of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests on the theme "Turning the tide on deforestation". Detailed information on that event is provided in the note by the Secretariat on enhanced cooperation with partners and the contributions of such partners to achieving the thematic priorities (see [E/CN.18/2023/3](#)).

## **8. Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**

55. The fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held from 7 to 19 December 2022 in Montreal, Canada.

56. Parties adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at the fifteenth meeting. The framework contains four goals and 23 targets to be achieved by 2050 and 2030, respectively, building on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. While all four goals and 23 targets are linked to forests, target 10 specifically mentions forestry to be sustainably managed along with agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries. Other forest-related targets include:

target 2 on the restoration of 30 per cent of areas of degraded ecosystems by 2030; target 3 on the conservation and management of 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine areas by 2030; target 5 on the use, harvesting and trade of wild species; target 6 on the elimination or mitigation of the impacts of invasive alien species; target 9 on the sustainable management and use of wild species; target 16 on the fair and equitable sharing of benefits, making sustainable consumption choices; target 18 on the elimination, phaseout or reform of incentives harmful for biodiversity; target 19 on increasing financial resources; target 20 on capacity-building and development; and target 21 on data, information and knowledge.

#### **9. International Day of Forests in 2023 and 2024**

57. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests selected the theme of “Forests and health” for the International Day of Forests in 2023. The theme of the International Day of Forests in 2024 had not been determined at the time of drafting of the present note and will be proposed by the Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests at the eighteenth session of the Forum. Information about the International Day of Forests in 2022 is provided in paragraphs 65 to 69 below.

### **IV. New announcements of and updates on voluntary national contributions and their follow-up related to the thematic priorities**

58. In accordance with the strategic plan, members of the Forum may, on a voluntary basis, determine their contributions towards achieving the global forest goals and targets, taking into account their national circumstances, policies, priorities, capacities, levels of development and forest conditions. Members may include in their voluntary national contributions, as appropriate, the forest-related contributions they intend to make with regard to other international forest-related commitments and goals, such as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity and actions to address climate change under the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

59. Members may, on a voluntary basis, communicate their progress on the voluntary national contributions to the United Nations Forum on Forests at regular intervals determined by the Forum, in accordance with paragraph 67 of the strategic plan. In order to avoid any additional reporting burden, such voluntary communications on their voluntary national contributions may be part of their voluntary reporting on the strategic plan and the United Nations forest instrument.

60. Since the seventeenth session of the Forum, Malawi has announced its voluntary national contribution.

61. As of February 2023, 24 countries (Australia, Canada, China, Ecuador, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, New Zealand, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Thailand, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uzbekistan) had officially announced their voluntary national contributions. All contributions communicated to the secretariat have been compiled in a publicly accessible and centralized repository on the Forum’s website.

## V. Progress report on the implementation of the communications and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including activities regarding the International Day of Forests in 2023

62. In accordance with the communications and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, raising awareness of the vital contributions of forests to all aspects of global sustainable development, both within and outside the forest sector, is a key component of the work of the secretariat of the Forum. This includes promoting greater understanding of how sustainable forest management can offer a nature-based solution to many of the development challenges that are faced today. In this regard, fostering synergistic and mutually supportive implementation of the strategic plan, the 2030 Agenda, the Rio conventions and other major intergovernmental processes and commitments, is a continuing thread in communication activities.

63. The key communications and outreach methods employed by the secretariat of the Forum primarily include statements, presentations and video messages at key international events, engaging content for social media and the production of policy briefs. Best practices and success stories provide inspiration for taking action towards achieving the global forest goals, and this is an integral part of the secretariat's ongoing work on capacity development, including in particular as it relates to forest financing. As part of the outreach activities of the clearing house of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, a new quarterly newsletter is being produced to provide updates on recent developments in forest financing, and to showcase new learning resources and upcoming financing opportunities.

64. Working in collaboration with partners has been crucial for communications and outreach activities, especially considering the limited human and financial resources available for such activities within the secretariat of the Forum. In this regard, the secretariat relies on partners within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and is also exploring new opportunities for partnership with other Forum-related organizations and stakeholders. The Department's Strategic Planning and Communications Service continues to support the secretariat in website development and in utilizing the Department's communication services, including the monthly newsletter *UN DESA Voice*, while also providing guidance on news stories and content for social media outreach. The Department of Global Communications provides guidance on how best to showcase the role of forests within the broader narrative on sustainable development issues including, in particular, in the context of the global pandemic and climate action, to name but a few. The communication focal points at the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the FAO regional communications networks provide support in amplifying messaging and outreach, including through the annual celebration of the International Day of Forests, on 21 March.

65. The theme of the International Day of Forests for 2022 was "Forests and sustainable production and consumption", which aimed to raise awareness of how the sustainable management of forests is essential to restore balance in our use of natural resources. In his message for the International Day of Forests, the Secretary-General stressed the need for recommitting to "healthy forests for healthier livelihoods", and ending unsustainable consumption and production patterns that jeopardize forests. Activities on the Day were centred around raising awareness of how forests are essential for our health and well-being, how they provide products that sustain us all and how we can all make sustainable choices to benefit forests.

66. Social media messaging was a key component of the public communication and outreach campaign for the International Day. Multimedia products included digital

posters and social media cards for Twitter and Facebook (in the six official languages of the United Nations), suggested messages, and images for Instagram and animated GIFs, all of which were made available on the Trello board for the International Day of Forests in 2022.

67. The Facebook and Twitter social media accounts of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs were the primary channels for disseminating the social media content produced by the secretariat of the Forum. The social media advisory and Trello board were also shared with United Nations system social media focal points, the Forum's national focal points, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional entities and major groups organizations. The campaign hashtag “#IntlForestDay” was widely used and was included in over 20,000 tweets by over 13,000 contributors during the International Day itself, with over 227 million timeline deliveries and over 120 million accounts reached, according to estimates.

68. Owing to the global pandemic, the event customarily held at United Nations Headquarters for the International Day of Forests, was held in a virtual format, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Kyrgyzstan. The event featured opening remarks by the Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan to the United Nations, Aida Kasymalieva, the President of the Economic and Social Council, Collen Vixen Kelapile, the Chair of the Bureau of the Forum, Miriam Mac Intosh, the Special Envoy from the Alliance for the Conservation of Rainforests, Pierre Henri Guignard, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Liu Zhenmin, and the Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and Deputy Director-General of FAO Maria Helena Semedo.

69. The event also featured experts, practitioners and representatives of governments, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, women, the private sector and Indigenous youth, who shared their perspectives on the importance of managing forests for sustaining our daily lives. Representatives of States Members of the United Nations, accredited intergovernmental organizations, United Nations system entities and major groups also joined the event in a general discussion on the theme “Forests hold the key to solving global challenges”.

70. In 2023, the theme for the International Day of Forests is “Forests and health”. The communications and outreach activities planned for the International Day will follow a similar approach as for previous International Days, with a focus on social media-friendly products, and the organization of a special event at United Nations Headquarters in celebration of the International Day of Forests on 21 March 2023.

## **VI. Emerging issues**

71. Forests and their role in addressing challenges have gained more attention in recent years, in particular, at major United Nations intergovernmental meetings and conferences. In September 2023, the high-level political forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the General Assembly (Sustainable Development Goals Summit) will be held in New York. The purpose of the Summit is to review the progress towards achieving the Goals and provide policy recommendations for accelerating their achievement. The Summit offers an opportunity to raise awareness, strengthen political commitment, and catalyse greater action on forests, especially given the critical role of forests in advancing multiple Goals and relevant global agreements, including the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

72. In accordance with its programme of work for 2022–2024, the Forum should consider emerging issues of major concern to forests in each session. The discussions

on emerging issues will provide an important opportunity to highlight the interlinkages between forests and sustainable development, in particular, energy and livelihoods. In this context, the Bureau of the Forum decided that a panel on forests, energy and livelihoods will be organized under agenda item 5, emerging issues, during the eighteenth session of the Forum.

73. To raise awareness on the significance of forests for the Goals, the Bureau will hold a one-day event on forests, energy and livelihoods in New York in April 2023. The event will be used to showcase the important contributions of forests and sustainable management of forests to energy, livelihoods and the Goals, in particular, Goal 1 on ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, Goal 2 on ending hunger, achieving food security improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture, and Goal 7 on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy. In addition, the event provides an opportunity to showcase the nexus between forests and energy, including bioenergy, its pros and cons, and the means to address its negative impacts. The event will also be an occasion for sharing suggestions and proposals to move towards integrated approaches to the forests-energy-livelihoods nexus in support of the Goals. The discussions during this event will feed into the discussions of the panel on emerging issues at the eighteenth session of the Forum.

## **VII. Conclusion**

74. The world is in the midst of cascading and interlinked global economic, health, climate, biodiversity and conflict crises affecting every sector and society, including forests and forest-dependent communities. These troubling developments paradoxically emphasize the critical role of forests in underpinning sustainable development in all its dimensions and promoting a coherent approach to address many of the pressing challenges, in particular biodiversity loss, climate change, and land and ecosystem degradation.

75. The United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 is a global plan of action for countries, the United Nations system, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and all other actors to turn the tide on deforestation and forest degradation while providing the economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits of forests for present and future generations in the face of the global socioeconomic outlook.

76. Available data and information across countries suggest that countries are taking wide-ranging actions to advance the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests with some progress towards the attainment of global forest goals 2 and 3, along with cross-cutting goals 4, 5 and 6.

77. Despite some progress and the breadth of actions and initiatives that the United Nations strategic plan on forests 2017–2030 has inspired, there remains a dire need to accelerate the shift needed to generate the transformation at the scale and speed required to meet the global forest goals and targets by 2030, building on the momentum to accelerate forest-based actions to address the adverse impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, pollution and other environmental degradations.

78. As Member States prepare for the midterm review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations system, its Member States and all relevant partners must take concrete steps, collectively and individually, to accelerate progress towards the achievement of all global forest goals, including goals 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 by 2030.



## **VIII. Suggestions on the way forward for inclusion in the Chair's proposals**

79. The following points are suggested for discussion during the eighteenth session of the Forum and for inclusion in the Chair's proposals for submission to the nineteenth session of the Forum:

(a) Invite Members of the Forum to take concrete steps to accelerate efforts towards achieving global forest goals 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, including through mainstreaming and upscaling of forest-related actions in their national development programmes, as well as developing joint initiatives and partnerships on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan on forests;

(b) Invite Members of the Forum that have not done so to announce their voluntary national contributions in support of the global forest goals and targets, and further encourage those members that have already announced voluntary national contributions to update the Forum on their progress;

(c) Encourage the integration of forest-based actions in the nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement and national biodiversity strategies and action plans for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;

(d) Encourage Members of the Forum, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and relevant partners and stakeholders to share their best practices, success stories and learning materials related to forest financing, as well as their communication materials in support of the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan on forests 2017–2030 to showcase them on the Forum website and through the clearing house of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network.