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Technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: update on the preparations for the 2024 midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, including the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

Update on the preparations for the midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In accordance with its provisional agenda, the United Nations Forum on Forests, at its eighteenth session, should receive an update on the preparations for the 2024 midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, including the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. The present note contains an update on the activities undertaken, since the seventeenth session of the Forum, to implement the relevant provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution [2022/17](#) on the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests. It is intended to serve as the basis for consideration by the Forum of the update under item 3 (h) of the provisional agenda.

* [E/CN.18/2023/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its provisional agenda, the Forum, at its eighteenth session, should receive an update on the preparations for the 2024 midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, including the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030.
2. The present note contains that update, including information on the progress made in the implementation of the intersessional activities in preparation for the midterm review since the seventeenth session of the Forum and on the remaining activities to be carried out before the nineteenth session.
3. It is important to recall that the Forum will carry out the actual midterm review of the international arrangement on forests at its nineteenth session, which is a policy session, in 2024. As its eighteenth session is a technical session, the Forum will not take any decision, nor does it expect to adopt any resolution, under item 3 (h) of the provisional agenda; the Forum will only receive an update on the progress made in the implementation of the preparatory activities for the midterm review.

II. Background

4. Through its resolution [2015/33](#), the Economic and Social Council strengthened the international arrangement on forests and established the composition¹ and objectives thereof. In the same resolution, the Council decided that the Forum should undertake a midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives in 2024, as well as a final review in 2030, on the basis of which the Forum should submit recommendations to the Council regarding the future course of the arrangement.
5. In its resolution [2021/6](#), the Economic and Social Council decided that the Forum, at its seventeenth session, should consider and decide on the actions required in preparation for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.
6. Accordingly, at its seventeenth session, the Forum considered and agreed on the actions to be carried out in preparation for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests during the period following the conclusion of the seventeenth session of the Forum and before its nineteenth session. The recommendations of the Forum were subsequently adopted by the Council, in its resolution [2022/17](#).
7. In the annex to its resolution [2022/17](#), the Economic and Social Council set forth a comprehensive list of actions to be carried out by the Forum in preparation for the midterm review of the international arrangement for forests (sects. A–J). These actions are focused on 10 areas, namely: (a) actions related to the United Nations Forum on Forests and its members; (b) actions related to the Forum secretariat; (c) actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; (d) actions related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network; (e) actions related to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests; (f) actions related to the implementation of

¹ The international arrangement on forests is composed of the Forum and its member States, the secretariat of the Forum, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the trust fund for the Forum. In its resolution [2015/33](#), the Economic and Social Council identified interested international, regional and subregional organizations and processes, major groups and other stakeholders as partners involved in the international arrangement on forests.

the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030; (g) actions related to the contributions of the Forum to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (h) actions related to the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030; (i) actions related to the involvement of regional and subregional partners; and (j) actions related to the involvement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

8. The activities in preparation for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests include an assessment of each of the 10 substantive areas, taking into account the elements specified under each area identified in the annex to resolution 2022/17. Pursuant to the resolution, a number of these assessments are to be further discussed in intersessional meetings.

9. Furthermore, according to paragraph 30 (a) of resolution 2022/17, all assessments and outcomes of the preparatory intersessional work, including intersessional meetings, should be reviewed by an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests, to be convened by the Forum secretariat towards the end of 2023. The secretariat was also requested to submit the report of the ad hoc expert group to the Forum at its nineteenth session for its consideration.

10. In paragraph 30 (d) of the same resolution, the Council indicated that the actions set out in the annex to the resolution should be implemented in a transparent and independent manner and in close consultation with members of the Forum, as well as member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other relevant stakeholders, including through questionnaires, where appropriate.

III. Progress made in the implementation of the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 2022/17 on the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests

11. Following the conclusion of the seventeenth session of the Forum, and pursuant to paragraph 30 (d) of Council resolution 2022/17, the secretariat of the Forum developed a concise questionnaire² to seek additional feedback on the implementation of the provisions set out in resolution 2022/17, and on the independence of the implementation process. Members of the Forum, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional partners, major groups and other stakeholders were all invited to respond to the questionnaire.

12. A total of 11 responses were received, from Australia, Colombia, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Pakistan, the United States of America, the Global Environment Facility, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization and the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community.³ Respondents' suggestions included having external experts conduct the relevant assessments, not limiting the means of collecting input to online questionnaires, having consultants speak directly with people involved in relevant areas of work of the international arrangement on forests in order to obtain feedback, and referring to other relevant existing mechanisms for good practices. All the feedback received was shared with the consultants so that they could take it into account in the preparation of their assessment reports.

² Available at www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/MTR-Concise-Questionnaire-May-2022.pdf.

³ See www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Responses-MTR-concise-questionnaire.pdf.

13. With a view to ensuring that the assessments specified in the annex to Council resolution 2022/17 were conducted in an independent and transparent manner, several vacancy announcements for consultants were published on the website of the United Nations Forum on Forests. On the basis of the expressions of interest received, several consultants were selected and hired, with due consideration for their expertise and competence in the various areas of work.

14. Once the team of consultants had been established, the consultants developed and compiled a questionnaire entitled “2022 questionnaire on the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests”⁴ to solicit views on the 10 substantive areas of work of the midterm review, as outlined in the annex to Council resolution 2022/17, for use in their respective assessments. The questionnaire was shared by the Chair of the eighteenth session of the Forum with the members of the Forum and other stakeholders, by means of a letter, in August 2022. The aim was to encourage more input from Member States, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional partners, major groups and other stakeholders. The names and contact information of the consultants were also provided in the letter to ensure the transparency of the process.⁵

15. A total of 26 responses were received from 20 member States, 3 members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, 2 regional partners and 1 major group.⁶ All these responses were immediately and duly shared with the consultants. The secretariat also regularly shared the responses with members of the Forum and stakeholders. The responses received were posted on a dedicated Forum web page on the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests.⁷

16. To ensure efficiency and reduce duplication, there were several coordination meetings among the consultants. The consultants undertook their respective assessments in an independent manner. The secretariat facilitated the work of the consultants by providing logistical support, background documents and contact information for the national focal points and stakeholders of the Forum, as well as factually based information. Of the 10 assessment reports that are to be prepared, 6 have been completed and posted on the dedicated web page for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests. The remaining four assessment reports on sections B, D, E and H of the annex to Council resolution 2022/17 are expected to be completed and posted on the web page soon.

17. In line with the requirement in sections G, I and J of the annex to Council resolution 2022/17 to discuss the assessment reports prepared under these sections at an intersessional meeting, the secretariat organized an expert group meeting on the Forum’s contributions to the 2030 Agenda (sect. G), the involvement of regional and subregional partners (sect. I) and the involvement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders (sect. J). The meeting was held at the headquarters of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok from 11 to 13 January 2023.

⁴ Available from the dedicated web page for the midterm review at www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/preparations-for-iaf-midterm-review/index.html.

⁵ The list of consultants is also available at www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/preparations-for-iaf-midterm-review/index.html.

⁶ Twenty responses from member States: Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Switzerland, Thailand and United States of America; three responses from members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests: International Union of Forest Research Organizations, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its regional forestry commissions, and International Tropical Timber Organization; two responses from regional entities: Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization and Forest Europe; and one response from a major group: children and youth major group.

⁷ Available at www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/preparations-for-iaf-midterm-review/index.html.

18. The objective of the expert group meeting was to provide an opportunity for experts from members of the Forum, regional and subregional partners, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and major groups to review and discuss the findings of the consultants, as reflected in their assessment reports on sections G, I and J of the annex to Council resolution 2022/17. During the meeting, which was held in a hybrid format and well attended by experts, participants reviewed the findings in the consultants' assessment reports and shared their views and suggestions on how to further enhance the work of the Forum in these three areas. A summary of these discussions is contained in a concise Co-Chairs' summary. The summary also includes proposals that emerged from the discussions during the expert group meeting. The Co-Chairs' summary will be presented to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests referred to in paragraph 30 of Council resolution 2022/17. The complete set of background documents and the Co-Chairs' summary of the expert group meeting are available at the dedicated Forum web page on the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests.

19. In accordance with section C of the annex to Council resolution 2022/17, the result of the assessment on actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests should be discussed at an organization-led initiative of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, with a view to making proposals regarding the Partnership to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests. In this respect, the Forum secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with other member organizations of the Partnership, are jointly organizing the organization-led initiative at FAO headquarters in Rome from 22 to 23 February 2023.

20. The objective of the organization-led initiative is to provide an opportunity for experts from members of the Forum, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its members, regional and subregional partners and major groups to review and discuss the findings of the consultants, as reflected in their assessment report on section C of the annex to Council resolution 2022/17, and provide input. The outcome of the organization-led initiative will be a concise Co-Chairs' summary of the discussions, which will be presented to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests. The complete set of background documents of the expert group meeting are available on the dedicated Forum web page on the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests. The Co-Chairs' summary, once ready, will be posted on the same page.

21. In accordance with sections D and F of the annex to Council resolution 2022/17, the result of the assessments on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 should be presented at an intersessional meeting for discussion, and the outcome of those meetings should be submitted to the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group. Given the tight schedule of meetings, the intersessional meeting on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the intersessional meeting on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 are expected to be organized after the eighteenth session of the Forum and prior to the convening of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group.

22. The convening of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group is being planned for the third quarter of 2023. The secretariat is currently working to identify the venue and dates for the meeting. Those details are expected to be announced during the eighteenth session of the Forum.

23. The preparation of the assessment reports and the organization of the intersessional meetings are highly dependent on the extrabudgetary resources provided by donor countries to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests. In that regard, the generous contributions from the Governments of Australia, China, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland and the United States of America to the trust fund are highly appreciated.

IV. Conclusion

24. Comprehensive guidance on the intersessional work required in preparation for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests was provided in Economic and Social Council resolution [2022/17](#). Since the seventeenth session of the Forum, there has been steady progress in the implementation of the provisions of that resolution regarding the preparations for the midterm review. Members of the Forum and stakeholders have been actively involved in the intersessional activities, with tremendous efforts made by the consultants and support from the secretariat to ensure independent, transparent and inclusive intersessional activities, in line with the guidance provided in the resolution. More specifically, Members of the Forum and stakeholders provided valuable feedback through their response to the questionnaires, as well as during the intersessional meetings, and in their interactions with consultants. The remaining period leading up to the nineteenth session of the Forum is critical to complete the remaining preparatory work, so as to enable the nineteenth session of the Forum to take an informed, meaningful and effective decision on the midterm review. In that respect, it is imperative for all members of the Forum and stakeholders to continue to be involved in the remaining preparatory activities and share their constructive ideas and suggestions.

25. In view of the remaining financing gap for the upcoming intersessional expert group meetings and the work of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group, and to echo paragraph 31 of Council resolution [2022/17](#), members of the Forum that are in a position to do so are invited to provide voluntary contributions to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests to enable the secretariat to organize inclusive intersessional meetings and the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group, with wide participation of members of the Forum and stakeholders.
