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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests**Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests****Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

In accordance with the programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for its eighteenth session (Economic and Social Council resolution 2021/6, annex), the Forum, at its eighteenth session, will consider the 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 2022. The generous contributions of donor countries to the trust fund are gratefully acknowledged. Without them, the implementation of many of the mandated activities of the Forum would not have been possible.

* E/CN.18/2023/1.



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 the programme of work of the Forum for its eighteenth session (Council resolution [2021/6](#), annex), the Forum will consider the item on its trust fund.

2. The present note provides an overview of the amounts contributed, the sources of these contributions and the expenditures of the trust fund for 2022. It is submitted for information purposes. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 8 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 non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, and resolutions pertaining to the Forum, including Council resolutions [2015/33](#), [2022/17](#) and [2020/14](#), as well as the annex to Council resolution [2021/6](#).

II. Contributions to the trust fund in 2022

3. In 2022, five donor countries contributed to the trust fund in support of the mandates, sessions and intersessional activities of the Forum, as well as the work of the Forum and its secretariat (see table 1). The contributions amounted to \$975,838, inclusive of programme support costs. The 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, 2022
 (United States dollars)

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Total</i>
Australia	143 266
China	314 990
Republic of Korea	17 079
Switzerland	100 503
United States of America	400 000
Subtotal, contributions	975 838
Opening balance, 1 January 2022	1 860 949
Total	2 836 788

III. Expenditure of the trust fund in 2022

4. In 2022, travel related to capacity development accounted for around 21 per cent of expenditures from extrabudgetary resources, and staffing costs, including staff posts, other staff-related expenses and consultants' fees accounted for around 53 per cent of expenditures. Further information on the expenditure of the trust fund is presented in table 2 and the related figure.

Table 2
Expenditures of the trust fund, 2022

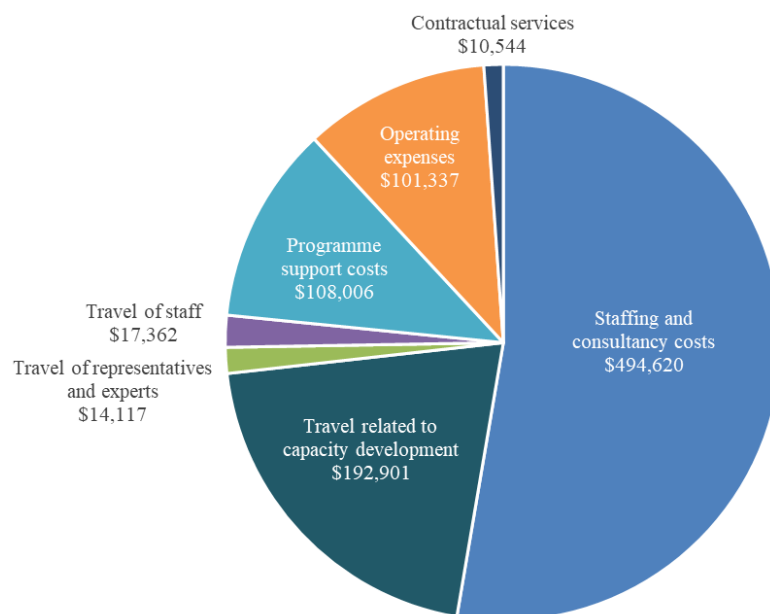
(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Staffing and consultancy costs ^a	494 620
Travel related to capacity development	192 901
Travel of representatives and experts	14 117
Travel of staff	17 362
Contractual services	10 544
Operating expenses ^b	101 337
Subtotal	830 882
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	108 006
Total	938 888

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

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

Expenditures of the trust fund, 2022



5. During 2022, 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 2022, 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 and its clearing house, one post at the P-3 level was funded from extrabudgetary resources in 2022. Extrabudgetary resources were

used to engage consultants and technical experts to support the work in 2022 related to the Network and the second assessment of the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on sustainable forest management. The assessment included surveys, stakeholder consultations, analytical studies and the organization of a virtual global expert group meeting. Extrabudgetary resources were also used to support the intersessional activities, agreed upon by the Forum at its seventeenth session, leading up to the midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, including the preparation of assessment reports relating to the actions set out in the annex to Council resolution [2022/17](#);

(b) **Travel related to capacity development.** In 2022, the secretariat continued to provide technical support, through the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, to several members of the Forum, namely, Algeria, Benin, Ethiopia, Liberia, Togo and Zimbabwe, using extrabudgetary resources. As part of such support, the Network held capacity development workshops in those countries, in order to enhance the capacity of national experts to develop project proposals and national forest financing strategies, as well as to validate draft project proposals and strategies developed for the countries. The workshops, including the travel of participants, consultants and secretariat staff, were funded from extrabudgetary resources;

(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 held in 2022;

(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 fifteenth World Forestry Congress, and other meetings related to the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations;

(e) **Contractual services, conference services and operating expenses.** During 2022, extrabudgetary funds were used to cover costs relating to individual contractors, the rental of premises, information technology, training, bank fees and conference services for virtual meetings.

IV. Achievements and results

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

(a) The seventeenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests was held in a hybrid format. The Forum successfully adopted an omnibus resolution that featured commitments made and actions to be taken by the Forum in its key areas of work, including 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; monitoring, assessment and reporting; and preparations for the midterm review;

(b) Resources from the trust fund were used to support intersessional activities, including virtual expert group meetings held in preparation for the seventeenth session of the Forum. Activities included the virtual expert group meeting on the assessment of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on forests and the forest sector, which was held from 2 to 4 February 2022. The meeting provided an opportunity for experts to discuss and share their views on the challenges involved in addressing the impacts of the pandemic on forests and the forest sector, the strategies and recovery measures being adopted and the best practices adopted by countries and

other stakeholders to reduce the impact of the pandemic on forests. The findings, analysis and suggestions for the way forward that emerged from the assessment and expert meeting were presented to the Forum at its seventeenth session;

(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. These activities included further development of the first phase of the online clearing house: as at January 2023, the total number of data entries in the clearing house had increased to over 250 – which included approximately 130 entries on financing opportunities – an increase which was possible as a result of funding for human resources from the trust fund. In addition, a new communication product, “Forest financing quarterly highlight”, was launched in 2022, as part of the information services provided by the clearing house. Further details on the activities of the Network are contained in the note by the Secretariat on the means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network ([E/CN.18/2023/4](#));

(d) Resources from the trust fund were used to support intersessional activities related to the preparations for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, including the preparation of assessment reports. Further details on key activities are contained in the note by the Secretariat on the update on the preparations for the midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests ([E/CN.18/2023/6](#));

(e) Resources from the fund were essential in supporting work related to monitoring, assessment and reporting. Further details on key activities are contained in the note by the Secretariat on monitoring, assessment and reporting ([E/CN.18/2023/5](#));

(f) Resources from the trust fund were used to support the updating of the workplan of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests for the period 2021–2024. Further details on the activities of the Partnership in 2022 are contained in the note by the Secretariat on the contributions of, and enhanced cooperation with, partners to achieve the thematic priorities ([E/CN.18/2023/3](#));

(g) The trust fund continues to be a critical source of supplementary funding for meeting the staffing needs of the secretariat of the Forum, which is still the smallest division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In 2022, the fund covered the staffing costs of one staff member at the P-3 level. It is expected that three P-3 posts in the secretariat will be funded from extrabudgetary resources in 2023 (see table 3).

V. Priorities and challenges

7. Since the Forum was established, its mandates and outputs have grown, but the 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 Council resolution [2015/33](#). Voluntary contributions to the trust fund play an essential role in supplementing funds from the regular budget; without these contributions, the secretariat would face challenges in fully delivering on its core functions and expanding mandates.

8. Securing sufficient human and financial resources to scale up the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network continues to be a major factor limiting the work of the Network. The development of the clearing house was done in a cost-effective manner that leveraged information technology services from within

the United Nations; however, covering these expenditures was dependent on the availability of voluntary contributions.

9. Funding for the travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition is entirely dependent on dedicated contributions to the trust fund. To date, there has been a trend of declining contributions, and should this continue, it will be extremely difficult for the secretariat to facilitate the balanced representation of developed and developing countries at future Forum-related meetings.

10. Sustained and adequate human and financial resources continue to be critical in enabling the secretariat to support and promote the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests and the achievement of the six global forest goals and the 26 associated targets. The resources are vital to ongoing activities related to all areas of the work of the Forum and its secretariat, including activities in preparation for the midterm review; capacity development; forest financing; monitoring, assessment and reporting; the enhancement of cooperation and coordination; the promotion of regional collaboration, communication and outreach; and the strengthening of stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector.

Table 3
Estimated expenditures of the trust fund for 2023

(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2023</i>
Staffing costs ^a	400 000
Consultants, experts and contractual services ^b	150 000
Travel of representatives and experts ^c	375 000
Travel of staff	100 000
Subtotal	1 025 000
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	133 250
Total	1 158 250
Closing balance, 31 December 2022	2 468 817
Expected contributions, 2023	550 000
Total expected funds, 2023	3 018 817

Note: Estimated expenditures refer to funds required to implement the current programme of work of the secretariat of the Forum; they do not include funding for any additional activities that may be decided upon by the Forum at its eighteenth session.

^a Estimate based on the cost of funding one P-3 post for the full year, and two P-3 posts for part of the year, from extrabudgetary resources in 2023.

^b Includes costs of engaging consultants to support preparations for the nineteenth session of the Forum, in 2024, 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 2023, including intersessional activities on the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests.