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United Nations Forum on Forests

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Items 5 and 7 of the provisional agenda*

Midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives

Adoption of the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2025–2028, including consideration of priority actions and resource needs

Midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives and quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025–2028

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In accordance with its programme of work for the period 2022–2024, the United Nations Forum on Forests, at its nineteenth session, should consider the outcome of the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and decide on the future steps to be taken by the international arrangement beyond 2024. In addition, the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025–2028 should be adopted at the session.

The present note provides the background information and highlights the intersessional activities undertaken since the eighteenth session of the Forum regarding the preparations for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement and the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025–2028. The note serves as the basis for discussion on agenda items 5 and 7 during the nineteenth session of the Forum.

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



I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its programme of work for the period 2022–2024, adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution [2021/6](#), the United Nations Forum on Forests, at its nineteenth session, should consider the outcome of the preparations for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, and decide on the future steps to be taken by the international arrangement beyond 2024. In addition, the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025–2028 should be adopted at the session.
2. The present note has been prepared to serve as the basis for discussion on the above-mentioned issues under agenda items 5 and 7, during the nineteenth session of the Forum. The note provides an overview of the intersessional activities on both items undertaken since the eighteenth session of the Forum.

II. Background

3. In its resolution [2015/33](#), the Economic and Social Council strengthened and extended the international arrangement on forests to 2030. The Council further requested the United Nations Forum on Forests to undertake a midterm review in 2024, as well as a final review in 2030, of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives.
4. In accordance with resolution [2015/33](#) and the programme of work of the Forum for 2022–2024 (resolution [2021/6](#)), at the seventeenth session of the Forum, held in May 2022, the actions to be taken in preparation for the midterm review in 2024 were considered and decided upon. The actions are organized into 10 sections in the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution [2022/17](#):
 - (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 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;
 - (j) Actions related to the involvement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.
5. In accordance with resolution [2022/17](#), the preparatory activities for the midterm review included:
 - (a) Preparation of assessment reports on all of the above-mentioned areas ((a) to (j));
 - (b) Organization of intersessional meetings to review the findings of the assessment reports on actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the

Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, the implementation of the strategic plan, the contributions of the Forum to the 2030 Agenda, and the involvement of regional and subregional partners and of major groups and other relevant stakeholders;

(c) Establishment of an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the preparations for the midterm review, convened in October 2023, to review all the assessment reports and outcomes of the preparatory intersessional work, including intersessional meetings, with a view to making proposals to the Forum at its nineteenth session related to the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement, including the future steps to be taken by the international arrangement beyond 2024;

(d) Informal consultations, to be conducted by the Bureau of the Forum, following the outcome of the ad hoc expert group, with a view to producing a zero draft of the resolution on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2024.

III. Progress on the preparations for the midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, and the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025–2028

A. Preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement

6. In line with the guidance provided in resolution [2022/17](#), the secretariat of the Forum undertook the following preparatory activities between the seventeenth and the eighteenth sessions of the Forum:

(a) Preparation of 11 assessment reports regarding the areas identified in the annex to resolution [2022/17](#);

(b) Organization of an expert group meeting in Bangkok, in January 2023 to review and discuss the assessment reports on the contribution of the Forum to the 2030 Agenda, and on the involvement of regional and subregional partners and of major groups; the suggestions and proposals emanating from the meeting were compiled in the relevant Co-Chairs' summary;¹

(c) Organization, jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests organization-led initiative, in February 2023 in Rome, to review and discuss the assessment reports on actions related to the Collaborative Partnership; the suggestions and proposals emanating from the meeting were compiled in the Co-Chairs' summary.

7. Since the conclusion of the eighteenth session of the Forum, the Forum secretariat has organized two intersessional meetings in preparation for the midterm review of the international arrangement, in line with the guidance in resolution [2022/17](#), as follows:

(a) An expert group meeting held in Nairobi in June 2023 to review and discuss assessment reports on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, and on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests. Two assessments were prepared and discussed regarding the Network: an assessment of the status of existing resources for forests available from all sources, including private funding, as well as the gaps and constraints in gaining access to such funds; and an

¹ The Co-Chairs' summaries of the meetings referred to in paras. 6 and 7 above are available at <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/preparations-for-iaf-midterm-review/index.html>.

assessment of the performance, impacts and resource sufficiency and longevity of the Network, and other measures to strengthen its work. One assessment report was considered regarding the implementation of the strategic plan for forests. In addition, and in line with resolution [2022/17](#), the Forum secretariat prepared a short note in which it proposed a road map and timeline for the next voluntary national reporting cycle, in alignment with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Global Forest Resources Assessment cycle. The suggestions and proposals emanating from the expert group meeting were compiled in the Co-Chairs' summary;

(b) The Forum secretariat also organized a meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the preparations for the midterm review, held from 10 to 13 October 2023 in Vienna, in order to review and discuss the assessment reports on the Forum and its members, on the Forum secretariat, on the trust fund, and on the communication and outreach strategy of the strategic plan for forests. The ad hoc expert group also reviewed all assessments and outcomes of the expert group meetings related to the midterm review, as outlined in the annex to resolution [2022/17](#) (see paras. 6 and 7 above). The Co-Chairs' summary of the discussions of the ad hoc expert group contains proposals on the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and will be submitted to the Forum at its nineteenth session. The proposed actions are outlined in section VII of the Co-Chairs' summary.

8. In further implementing the provisions of resolution [2022/17](#), and following the successful conclusion of the work of the ad hoc expert group, the Bureau of the Forum delegated its authority to the Co-Chairs of the ad hoc expert group to prepare a zero draft outcome on the midterm review, in consultation with the Bureau, and conduct related informal consultations. Accordingly, the zero draft outcome was circulated to Forum members and partners in early December 2023. The zero draft took into account the proposed actions included in the ad hoc expert group Co-Chairs' summary and set the stage for discussions among Forum members during the informal consultations.

B. Quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025–2028

9. In its resolution [2015/33](#), the Council requested the Forum to operationalize the United Nations strategic plan for forests through quadrennial programmes of work that set out priority actions and resource needs. Accordingly, the first quadrennial programme of work of the Forum, for 2017–2020, was adopted by the Council in its resolution [2017/4](#).

10. In the light of the global outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the second quadrennial programme of work of the Forum, for 2021–2024, was adopted in two stages. Accordingly, the Council adopted the programme of work of the Forum for 2021 and for 2022–2024 in its resolutions [2020/14](#) and [2021/6](#), respectively.

11. Annexes I and II to Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/14](#) contain important guidance on the programme and method of work of the Forum during the quadrennium. Accordingly, the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2021–2024 included two thematically linked bienniums: 2021–2022 (sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Forum) and 2023–2024 (eighteenth and nineteenth sessions). Thematic priorities for each biennium were decided upon by the Bureau in consultation with members of the Forum, based on the global forest goals and targets, and taking into account the post-2020 programme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and relevant international forest-related developments. The sixteenth session of the Forum in 2021 was a technical session that included 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. At the sixteenth session, the Forum considered and adopted the programme of work of the Forum for the period 2022–2024, by way of Council resolution [2021/6](#).

12. In accordance with the programme of work of the Forum for the period 2022–2024, as contained in the annex to resolution [2021/6](#), the Forum, at its nineteenth session, should adopt the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025–2028. The zero draft of the quadrennial programme of work for 2025–2028 was prepared under the guidance of the Bureau of the nineteenth session of the Forum, and with the support of the Forum secretariat. The zero draft of the quadrennial programme of work was shared with Forum members and partners in early December 2023. In preparing the zero draft, the Bureau considered the inputs submitted by Forum members and partners and took into account the global intergovernmental forest-related developments.

C. Informal consultations

13. In implementing the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution [2022/17](#), the Bureau of the nineteenth session of the Forum decided to organize three rounds of virtual informal consultations in January, February and March 2024 to discuss the zero draft outcome of the midterm review and the zero draft of the quadrennial programme of work for 2025–2028. The informal consultations are open to all Forum members, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional partners, and major groups.

14. Through these consultations, the Bureau aims to forge consensus among members of the Forum on the content of both drafts and address any potential differences in advance of the nineteenth session. In this respect, after each round of informal consultations, the zero drafts will be revised, taking into account the views and suggestions expressed during the consultations. The revised drafts will be shared with Forum members and partners in advance of the subsequent round of consultations. Following the conclusion of the informal consultations, the drafts will be issued as negotiating drafts for final consideration and agreement at the nineteenth session of the Forum.

IV. Conclusion

15. At its nineteenth session, the Forum will consider the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and adopt the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025–2028. In this respect, the nineteenth session will serve as an opportunity to shape the future direction of the international arrangement on forests and its interlinkages with other forest-related global processes. By identifying current gaps and recommending future steps and required adjustments, the Forum, at its nineteenth session, has the potential to make an important contribution towards the achievement of the global forest goals and the acceleration of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other globally intergovernmentally agreed forest-related goals and commitments.