

UN FORUM ON FORESTS WORKING GROUP ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FORESTS AND PROGRAMME OF WORK 2017-2020: 16-20 JANUARY 2017

The Working Group of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) met at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 16-20 January 2016. The Working Group was established in accordance with ECOSOC resolution 2015/33 on the International Arrangement on Forests beyond 2015, with a view to developing proposals on (a) replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in paragraph 1(b) of the UN forest instrument, with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals and targets; and (b) the strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020.

Over 175 participants from 82 countries attended the Working Group meeting, as well as 20 organizations representing the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and representatives and Major Groups.

The Working Group reviewed the zero-draft of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests for 2017-2030 (the Strategic Plan) and the quadrennial programme of work for 2017-2020 (4POW). On the Strategic Plan, discussion centered on the global forest goals and targets, implementation framework, review framework, and the communication and outreach strategy. The Working Group discussions on the 4POW included the thematic and operational activities and resources required to implement the Strategic Plan and priority actions for even and odd-year sessions within the quadrennium. Although it required several late nights of negotiations, the Working Group was ultimately able to reach consensus, and succeeded in drafting the UN's first comprehensive Strategic Plan for Forests.

On 20 January 2017, immediately following the adjournment of the Working Group meeting, a Special Session of UNFF12 was convened to adopt the report of the UNFF Working Group.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNFF

The UN Forum on Forests was established in 2000, following a five-year period of forest policy dialogue within the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). In October 2000, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in resolution 2000/35, established the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF), including the UNFF as a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, with the main objective of promoting the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

The UNFF's principal functions are to: facilitate the implementation of forest-related agreements and foster a common understanding on sustainable forest management (SFM); provide for continued policy development and dialogue among governments, international organizations and Major Groups, as well as address forest issues and emerging areas of concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner; enhance cooperation, and policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues; foster international cooperation and monitor, assess and report on progress; and strengthen political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION: The UNFF's organizational session took place from 12-16 February 2001, at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates agreed that the UNFF Secretariat would be located in New York, and made progress towards the establishment of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), a partnership of 14 major forest-related international organizations, institutions and convention secretariats.

UNFF1: The first session of UNFF took place from 11-23 June 2001 in New York. Delegates discussed and adopted decisions on the UNFF Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW), a Plan of Action for the implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals

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for Action, and the UNFF's work with the CPF. Delegates also recommended establishing three *Ad Hoc* Expert Groups (AHEGs) to provide technical advice to UNFF on: approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR); finance and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs); and parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests.

UNFF2: The second session of UNFF took place from 4-15 March 2002 in New York. Delegates adopted decisions on, *inter alia*, specific criteria for the review of the effectiveness of the IAF. UNFF2 agreed that specific criteria related to the implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action are the extent to which: countries, the CPF and other actors progressed in implementing the Proposals for Action; countries developed and started to implement national forest programmes or equivalent processes; the IAF facilitated and promoted countries' implementation, focusing on means of implementation (MOI); and countries progressed in assessing the Proposals for Action in order to determine their relevance in their national contexts. Resolution 2/3 outlined specific criteria related to continued policy development, including the extent to which: the IAF enhanced forest policy development and dialogue and worked in a transparent and participatory manner; CPF members responded to the UNFF's guidance; and progress was made in reaching a common understanding of forest-related concepts, terminology and definitions.

UNFF3: UNFF3 met in Geneva, Switzerland, from 26 May - 6 June 2003, and adopted six resolutions on: enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination; forest health and productivity; economic aspects of forests; maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs; the UNFF Trust Fund; and strengthening the Secretariat.

UNFF4: UNFF4 convened in Geneva from 3-14 May 2004 and adopted five resolutions on: review of the effectiveness of the IAF; forest-related scientific knowledge; social and cultural aspects of forests; MAR, and criteria and indicators; and finance and transfer of ESTs. On the review of the IAF, delegates agreed to request that Member States submit a voluntary questionnaire based on the specific criteria agreed to at UNFF2. UNFF4 attempted, without success, to reach agreement on resolutions on forest-related traditional knowledge, enhanced cooperation, and policy and programme coordination.

UNFF5: UNFF5 took place from 16-27 May 2005 in New York. Participants were unable to reach agreement on strengthening the IAF and did not produce a Ministerial Statement or a negotiated outcome. They did agree, *ad referendum*, to four global goals on: significantly increasing the area of protected forests and sustainably managed forests worldwide; reversing the decline in official development assistance (ODA) for SFM; reversing the loss of forest cover; and enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits. They also agreed in principle to negotiate, at some future date, the terms of reference for a voluntary code or international understanding on forests, as well as MOI.

UNFF6: UNFF6 took place from 13-24 February 2006 in New York. Delegates generated a negotiating text containing new language on the function of the IAF, a commitment to convene UNFF biennially after 2007, and a request that UNFF7 adopt a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (NLBI). UNFF6 also set four global objectives on forests (GOFs) for the IAF to: reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through

SFM, including through protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation; enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, and the contribution of forests to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals; increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests; and reverse the decline in ODA for SFM, and mobilize significantly increased new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM.

UNFF7: UNFF7 was held from 16-27 April 2007 in New York. After two weeks of negotiations, culminating in an all-night session, delegates adopted the NLBI and a Multi-Year Programme of Work for the period 2007-2015. Delegates agreed that a "voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework for all types of forests" would be developed and considered, with a view to its adoption at UNFF8.

UNFF8: UNFF8 was held from 20 April - 1 May 2009 in New York. Delegates discussed: forests in a changing environment, including forests and climate change; reversing the loss of forest cover and degradation, and forests and biodiversity conservation; and MOI for SFM. Delegates adopted a resolution on forests in a changing environment, enhanced cooperation and cross-sectoral policy and programme coordination, and regional and subregional inputs. Delegates did not agree on a decision on financing for SFM, and decided to forward "bracketed" negotiating text to the Forum's next session.

UNFF9: UNFF9 took place from 24 January - 4 February 2011 in New York and launched the International Year of Forests 2011. The Forum adopted by acclamation a resolution on forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication, which addressed, *inter alia*: procedures for assessment of progress; increased regional and subregional cooperation; enhanced cooperation, including with Major Groups; and MOI for SFM, particularly the AHEG process on forest financing.

UNFF10: UNFF10 met from 8-19 April 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey. Among other items, delegates adopted the "Resolution on Emerging Issues, MOI and the UNFF Trust Fund," which decided that the effectiveness of the IAF would be reviewed in 2015, and established an open-ended intergovernmental AHEG to review the IAF's performance and effectiveness. The resolution set out the elements to be included in the review and decided that it should have the following components: submissions by countries, the CPF, its members and other relevant organizations and stakeholders; an independent assessment of the IAF; and an AHEG on the IAF review.

UNFF11: UNFF11 was held from 4-15 May 2015 in New York. The Forum forwarded a resolution to ECOSOC recommending, *inter alia*: renaming the NLBI the "UN Forest Instrument"; strengthening and extending the IAF to 2030; deciding that the IAF is composed of the UNFF and its Member States, the Secretariat of the Forum, the CPF, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) and the UNFF Trust Fund; deciding to set clear priorities for the GFFFN in the Strategic Plan 2017-2030; and convening an open-ended intergovernmental AHEG to develop proposals on a replacement for the reference to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the UN Forest Instrument with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, the Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2030, and the 4POW for the period 2017-2020.

ECOSOC approved the UNFF11 recommendations on 22 July 2015 in resolution 2015/33, and the UN General Assembly gave effect to the changes recommended by the Council on 22 December 2015 in resolution 70/199.

AHEG1: AHEG1 met from 25-27 April 2016 at UN Headquarters in New York. Participants explored strategic approaches and actions required to achieve the IAF objectives, including: the mission, vision, communication strategy, possible goals, targets and priority actions, the roles of IAF components, and the organizational structure of the Strategic Plan; suggestions for the 4POW; possible elements for the “framework for reviewing implementation” of the Strategic Plan; and planned follow-up activities leading to AHEG2. Just prior to AHEG1, UNFF12 met briefly to elect its Bureau.

AHEG2: AHEG2 met from 24-28 October 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand. Participants continued discussion of the Strategic Plan and 4POW, and considered several non-papers on: guiding principles for the inclusion of goals and targets; existing intergovernmentally-agreed provisions on forests; forests’ contribution to the SDGs; and forest-related data and baseline information. Broad consensus was reached on many elements of the draft Strategic Plan and 4POW, to be submitted to the UNFF Working Group and Special Session.

WORKING GROUP REPORT

On Monday morning, 16 January, UNFF12 Chair Peter Besseau (Canada) opened the Working Group, urging delegates to create a transformational Strategic Plan that would clearly signal UNFF’s commitment to meeting the forest-related targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The Working Group elected Mohammad Ali Zare (Iran) and Hans Hoogeveen (Netherlands) as Co-Chairs. Co-Chair Zare said the Strategic Plan would advance implementation of SFM and enhance coherence among stakeholders in action at all levels. Co-Chair Hoogeveen urged delegates to be collaborative and decisive in completion of the Strategic Plan and the 4POW.

Delegates then adopted the agenda (E/CN.18/WG/2017/1) and the provisional organization of work.

OPENING STATEMENTS: Co-Chair Zare presented the process that led to the current draft proposal for the Strategic Plan, saying it was built on: the initial ideas and key elements proposed during AHEG1; inputs received from Member States and Stakeholders during a July online consultation; the outcomes of AHEG2; and a consultation with Member States that took place on 12 December 2016 in New York.

UNFF Director Manoel Sobral Filho highlighted the recent downward trend in deforestation and increase in reforestation, noting that the corresponding SDG target on forests could feasibly be achieved.

The UNFF Secretariat introduced: the reports of AHEG1 (E/CN.18/2016/AHEG/3) and AHEG2 (E/CN.18/2016/AHEG/5); and Proposals of the Co-Chairs for the Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020 (E/CN.18/WG/2017/2 and E/CN.18/WG/2017/3).

Eva Müller, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), presented the outcome of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Organization-Led Initiative (OLI) on global forest indicators. She explained that this OLI has received financial support from Norway and Germany, attracted 89 participants from

48 countries and 17 international, regional and non-governmental organizations. She said the global forest indicators should: cover SFM and progress towards the forest-related SDG targets and other internationally-agreed goals on forests, including the UNSPF; be limited to 10-15 indicators that are relevant at both the global and national levels; and cover socio-economic aspects and capacity-building needs.

Malaysia said UNFF should be able to deliver much more after 17 years of deliberations, noting the need to finance SFM through the Global Forest Fund (GFF). Brazil urged including sources of data used to justify the importance of forests to people and the 2030 Agenda.

The European Union (EU) said the UNSPF and 4POW should recognize human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples. He called for clear reference to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and mobilization of resources aligned with the AAAA approach. Brazil, supported by the US, said that at the global level the lack of coordination rather than fragmentation is the constraint to forest governance.

Ghana urged including graphs or data on forest status trends to justify paragraphs on deforestation rates and drivers. The US, with China, further called for elaboration on how the UN General Assembly will be advised to react to the UNSPF.

UN STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FORESTS 2017-2030

The Co-Chairs’ proposals for the Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (E/CN.18/WG/2017/2) was introduced on Monday and discussed throughout the week in the Working Group and an informal group. Delegates made general statements regarding the document as a whole, as well as on each of six chapters. The summary below is organized according to this structure. The final outcome is summarized under the Special Session Report.

GENERAL STATEMENTS: Japan suggested including timber under goods that forests provide. Ecuador urged including the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Japan and Canada expressed reservations with regard to setting new numerical targets and recommended avoiding a detailed discussion on percentages, while the Republic of Korea encouraged making progress on these. Japan expressed concern over linking population growth and an increase in demand for forest goods, while Norway supported the paragraph. India proposed creating a subheading on “trends and challenges” instead of combining this with the “importance of forests.” Papua New Guinea called for adding land security as a thematic area. Indonesia expressed concern with the lack of focus on implementation of the UN forest instrument (UNFI). NGOs noted that children and youth should be included as key forest stakeholders.

Japan, with China and Canada, preferred process-oriented over numerical targets. Brazil said they would accept quantitative targets so long as they are supported by equally ambitious and specific targets for financial support. The Republic of Korea preferred the use of numerical targets.

The US and India supported having six global forest goals (GFGs). The EU expressed flexibility with regard to having either six GFGs, or four GFGs and two “crosscutting strategies.” The US said each GFG should have only three targets. Supported by Australia and Canada, she proposed including the thematic areas in an annex rather in the body of goals. The EU underscored the need to ensure that the targets for each goal speak also to the SDGs and the Aichi Targets.

Russia called for deleting the references to enhanced collaboration on forests across member organizations of the CPF. Iran proposed adding thematic areas on: combating sand and dust storms; sustainable consumption of forest products; and support for capacity building for data collection on forests. The Scientific and Technological Community, on behalf of Major Groups, proposed focusing on well-defined indicators, and to allow countries to set their own targets.

Switzerland and the EU said the UNSPF is a guide for forest-related work for the UN and not limited to the IAF. Mexico said the quantitative targets should be based on existing information and baseline data “where available.” Chile suggested linking the GFGs to poverty reduction, and supported Mexico’s call for inclusion of land degradation within indicative areas for action.

Canada reiterated its strong preference for non-numerical targets, and making it clear that this builds upon the UNFI. India noted the need for a background statement on sources of numerical values attached to targets.

The EU said there is a need to explain the link between the global objectives on forests and the GFGs. India said there is a need for a background statement on sources of numerical values attached to targets.

The Science and Technological Community suggested combining the different thematic areas proposed in order to avoid duplication and proliferation. FAO proposed including thematic areas on halting deforestation and increasing the resilience of indigenous communities. The EU said there is a need to explain the link between the global objectives on forests and the GFGs.

FAO proposed including thematic areas on halting deforestation and increasing the resilience of indigenous communities. Switzerland with the EU, Canada and Australia, suggested moving indicative thematic areas to annexes, and this was agreed.

I. INTRODUCTION: Peru and Norway asked to add clear references to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Paris Agreement in a paragraph of the introduction which mentions the role of the Strategic Plan in fostering synergies among UN bodies. Peru and the Dominican Republic called for including references to “ecosystem services” and “trees outside forests” in the introduction.

Vision and Mission: Switzerland requested the title of this section be “vision and mission” rather than “shared United Nations vision and mission.” Indonesia said that the objectives of the IAF should be summarized in the vision and mission section. The US said IAF should be elaborated in this section. Chile said the mission should reflect Agenda 2030. Ghana called for inclusion of cultural benefits of forests in the vision. Russia called for highlighting that the Strategic Plan supplements agreed international actions in the implementation of forest-related agreements, and that UNFF is the coordinator of all actors working on forests mentioned in the respective section. Peru called for adding “conserve” before “sustainable manage” with regards to the Strategic Plan’s role in providing a global framework for action at all levels to sustainably manage all types of forests.

The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) said the UNFF targets should be harmonized and synchronized with the UNCCD land-degradation neutrality (LDN) target, which will be adopted as part of the UNCCD Strategic Plan in September 2017. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) welcomed

the reference in the text to Aichi Targets 5, 7, 11, 14 and 15, and invited the addition of references to other relevant Aichi Targets, such as those on indigenous knowledge, sustainable consumption and production, and resource mobilization. The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) stressed the need for establishing a formal modality to allow the scientific community to bring its contributions to discussions in a more effective way, including through a science-policy dialogue.

The Dominican Republic said that the ecosystem services provided by forests should facilitate interest in financing the sector. She said that it is “coordination,” and not “coherence,” that is lacking in international forest policy.

The EU said the UNSPF mission should: seek to achieve SFM for “all forests everywhere”; build a coherent, transparent and participatory framework for policy implementation; inspire political commitment; promote SFM; and strengthen the contribution to the SDGs.

On the vision, Switzerland, supported by South Africa, Chile and Mexico, said that it is already acknowledged that the UNSPF pertains to all types of forests, including trees outside forests, so there is no need to refer to forests “everywhere.”

Niger, with Nigeria, South Africa and Mexico, suggested adding “contribution of trees outside forests” in the mission statement. The EU called for deletion of a reference to financial commitments in the mission.

The EU said the vision should include the conservation of forests.

Iran, with South Africa and Malaysia, called for the mission to include strengthening political “financial” commitments, which the EU and the US opposed. Peru, with Ukraine, said the commitments should be strengthened “by all relevant stakeholders” at all levels.

Russia, with China, Brazil, Chile, the EU and Iran, called for deleting text enumerating several of the principles and commitments of the 2030 Agenda, explaining that a specific selection of these would be counterproductive to achieving an agreement. Iran called for reintroducing the reference to strengthening “financial” commitments by all actors at all levels. Brazil proposed the mission read “to promote SFM and the contribution of forests and trees outside forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

Importance of Forests: Peru, Ghana, Ukraine, India and South Africa proposed adding a reference to forests providing ecosystem services. Ghana argued that this section of the Strategic Plan needs to be understandable for various ministries that will be responsible for its implementation. Brazil said forests play an “important” role in climate change mitigation and adaptation, while Ghana preferred retaining “central.” If “central” were to remain in the text, Brazil proposed adding “industry, transportation, and energy” to forests, which Chile opposed. The EU requested reference to the central role that forests have in conserving biodiversity.

Trends and challenges: Iran, with Mexico, urged including poverty eradication as a challenge, based on Agenda 2030 language. Peru, with Mexico, also called for including reference to the local level within coordination challenges to forest governance. China highlighted fragmentation among international agreements, with Brazil favoring the “need for greater coordination” in place of “fragmentation.” Brazil, with the US, called for the deletion of a reference to the need to “reduce

fragmentation” among the many international organizations, institutions and instruments addressing forest issues.

Niger suggested including that in several regions lack of financial resources are constraints to SFM. South Africa, with Chile and Mexico, explained that forest fires are in some cases beneficial for ecosystem management and that the challenge on forest fires should refer to uncontrolled forest fires. Lebanon suggested including the risk of displacement of populations caused by conflict and wars.

The EU and the US called for deleting a paragraph that lists the “lack of successful mobilization and of adequate, predictable and significantly increased new and additional financial resources from all sources, as well as capacity building, technical, technological and scientific cooperation, and innovation” as a risk for SFM. India opposed the deletion.

Brazil, China and Ghana requested the deletion of “poverty eradication” as a driver of deforestation. Ghana explained that poverty alone is a driver and not its eradication, while Brazil noted that poverty is already covered in the document by the references to the three pillars of sustainable development.

The EU and the US called for using the language agreed in the 2030 Agenda with regard to MOI needed for implementing SFM, with the EU further requesting replacing the lack of “adequate, predictable and significantly increased new and additional financial resources” as a risk for SFM with the lack of “financial mobilization of resources from all sources.”

Opportunities for enhanced and value-added actions on SFM: Switzerland, with Peru and Chile, urged including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets on the list of international commitments and initiatives whose momentum the UNSPF can build on. The EU, with Papua New Guinea, said the Global Climate Fund (GCF) should not be mentioned specifically.

Australia, Nigeria and the US called for moving the section on the IAF to a different chapter, besides the first two. India and Malaysia requested adding MOI under the sub-section on trends and challenges in the introduction and in the GFG 4. Nigeria called for adding non-wood products in a paragraph on goods that forests provide.

Russia proposed changes to a paragraph on the engagement of partners and the role of Major Groups in the IAF, noting: that IAF “involves” as partners a variety of international, regional, sub-regional organizations instead of “actively engages;” and the role of the Major Groups and stakeholders is “important” rather than “crucial.”

NGOs called for introducing a paragraph on the role of stakeholders in the introduction.

II. GLOBAL FOREST GOALS AND TARGETS:

Delegates discussed the zero draft of this chapter on Monday, and considered four subsequent revisions throughout the week.

Goal one: Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM: Ukraine said that “reversing the global loss of forest cover” was overly ambitious. Peru suggested “reduction in” rather than “halt” deforestation. Indonesia said that measuring the increase in forest cover requires baseline data. He also called for removing specific reference to indigenous peoples regarding strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity of forest and forest-dependent indigenous peoples and communities. Republic of Korea suggested tracking harvested wood products. Ukraine noted that forest certification should not be conflated with SFM. Peru proposed increasing the area of forest under SFM by 1.5-

2% and the world’s forest carbon stocks by 4%. Mexico said the quantitative targets should be based on existing information and baseline data “where available.”

The EU said the 3% target for an increase in forest land area is not adequately justified. The US and the EU noted a lack of consistency in referencing climate change in this goal. Japan suggested expanding the climate change thematic area to be more specific, “including for action to conserve forest sinks.” Mexico called for adding a thematic area on dryland forests.

China said reference should be made to “forest area” and not “forest land area,” consistent with language used in FAO’s Forest Resource Assessment (FRA). Norway, supported by the US, Brazil and Canada, opposed the target on increasing the world’s carbon stocks by 3%, whereas Peru suggested this be increased to 5%, and to include consideration of the impacts of pollution on forests. Ghana stressed that mining activities must be tackled in order to control deforestation. The EU said enhancing resilience of forests to climate change is narrowly covered, suggesting reference to the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

CBD urged the recognition of the role that the practices of local people and indigenous communities have in natural forest regeneration.

On the target on combating forest fires, supporting Brazil’s comments that forest fires can have beneficial effects, Australia proposed “minimize the harmful effect of forest fires.” Japan called for a new theme on disaster risk reduction.

Chile and Mexico called for inclusion of land degradation as a new thematic area. The EU proposed expanding a thematic area on mitigating the impact of air pollution to include also water and soil pollution.

Goal two: Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits: Canada cautioned that this goal does not differentiate between temporary and permanent loss, and that it should refer to forest area instead of cover, as per the FRA.

On eradicating extreme poverty for all forest-dependent people, Brazil and Switzerland said the threshold of US\$1.25 a day income should not be mentioned. The EU said references to forest-dependent people should use agreed text from Agenda 2030.

Saint Lucia observed that the targets under this goal focus mostly on economic benefits, with little attention to social and environmental benefits, and proposed changes to address that. China said forests’ contribution to local economies should read “local economic development.” The US, supported by Australia, requested that small-scale enterprises are integrated into “markets” instead of credits. China also suggested adding an additional target, to “increase the output of the forestry sector.”

The US called for deletion of the target on equitable share of the benefits arising from the use of forest genetic resources. Japan requested “conservation” instead of “development” of genetic resources. Ukraine and others suggested deleting a specific reference to the importance of boreal forests.

Brazil urged inclusion of thematic areas on agroforestry, ecotourism and research.

FAO suggested acknowledging both direct and indirect contributions of forests, but noted that environmental services can be difficult to assess and measure. She noted that the use of numerical targets requires baselines and historical data, to make projections that are realistic.

India, with Indonesia, said it is premature to measure forest ecosystem services, due to lack of indicators. Ecuador proposed adding reference to land recovery.

Ukraine, supported by Armenia and the EU, stressed that the reference to “forest industry and other enterprises” should read “forest-based industrial and other enterprises” in the targets that refer to them. The US objected, and Farmers and Small Forest Landowners emphasized that the original SDG text does not use the term “forest-based.”

Brazil proposed that the contribution of forests to climate change is enhanced “in accordance with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).” The EU opposed, stressing the need to go beyond existing instruments, and Switzerland urged keeping the text short.

Goal three: Protected and Sustainably Managed Forests: On percentage of forests designated as fully protected, Brazil, with Switzerland and Ukraine, said the term “fully protected” is unclear, and Indonesia called for its deletion. Republic of Korea suggested a definition of the term and taking into account national circumstances. Brazil called for deletion of the target on market access and enhanced competitiveness of SFM products. India proposed deleting a reference to internationally recognized certification schemes in the target to increase forests under sustainable management, while Canada suggested adding “voluntary” before “recognized certification schemes.” The US called for deleting targets on sustainably managed forests used for energy and fuelwood production.

Norway said they could not support the target on designating 20% of the world’s forests as protected areas by 2030. Canada questioned how this percentage was arrived at, with the US adding that it is an unrealistic figure. Ukraine cautioned that NGOs may use this figure to lobby for increased protection of forests, and suggested reducing it to 10%. The EU said appropriate baselines are required for protected areas, and urged for alignment with the Aichi Biodiversity Target to increase protected areas by 17%. Brazil noted that the Aichi Biodiversity Targets aim for 17%, which includes “other areas with conservation measures,” granting recognition for a wide variety of designations, such as indigenous reserves, and not just strictly protected areas.

China urged for maintaining reference to national parks as a way of significantly increasing the area of forests designated as protected areas, citing China’s efforts in this regard. Brazil, supported by Switzerland and the EU, objected saying that since this is a global target, we should not single out individual country initiatives, and expressed a preference for deferring to the Aichi Targets.

Japan, supported by Australia, suggested focusing on increasing the “proportion” of forest products coming from sustainably managed forests. Indonesia suggested combining “promotion of trade in legal products” with “reduction of illegal logging.” The US, with the EU and Australia, also noted that the thematic area on “market access” could trigger trade issues and suggested using the phrase, “promoting trade in legally produced forest products.”

Japan, supported by China, noted that it is hard to determine what qualifies as “SFM” and suggested deferring to the FRA on this issue.

Chile said voluntary certification should not be included as an example of market-based tools. Indonesia queried how SFM would be measured, if not by certification. Peru, supported by

Ecuador, called for including a reference to “forest products traceability,” to ensure that consumers and others are able to verify where their finished wood products come from.

Goal four: Financial Resources: On the target on reversing the decline in ODA for SFM, the EU supported Switzerland’s suggested rephrasing of the goal given that the most recent statistics show that ODA for SFM is not declining. Australia expressed concern with any formulations that could be interpreted as future additional financial commitments. The US and Japan suggested deleting the target. Several countries including Iran, India, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria and Brazil opposed the deletion of reference to ODA.

The UNFF Secretariat presented data on ODA trends from 2002 to 2015 noting an overall slight increase in ODA. Nigeria said that even though ODA levels show a slight increase since 2002, the decrease from 2012 to present is also apparent, and supported “reversing declining ODA for SFM.”

Delegates debated on various formulations of this goal and reached a consensus on “mobilizing significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM.”

On improving forest-related data collection and availability, the EU urged including data accessibility. Japan said forest-related data collection is primarily a governmental exercise and that this target should be moved to GFG 5 on governance.

Switzerland requested adding private investment as a source of funding and, noting that developed countries also require SFM incentives, urged including North-North cooperation. Canada requested adding a reference to public and philanthropic sources of financing. Iran proposed text on funding for innovative forest-based technology for small island developing states and least developed countries.

On a target on increasing forest-related public funding, Ukraine called for adding “national” to the list of sources, in addition to “bilateral, multilateral and triangular.” The EU cautioned that all references to MOI need to be consistent with the AAAA.

The EU, supported by Iran, Nigeria, Switzerland, Brazil and others, called for replacing the target on increasing forest-related public funding and private investments with text from SDG 15b, on mobilization of resources to finance sustainable forest management.

China proposed adding a new thematic area, “Develop programmes for the implementation of UNFI and the Strategic Plan,” which the EU suggested modifying to read, “Programmes for the implementation of UNFI and the Strategic Plan.”

Goal five: Governance frameworks: Canada and others urged replacing “promote sustainable governance” with “promote accountable or transparent governance.” On illegal logging, the US cautioned that it is unrealistic to completely eliminate this, and that the target should be to “significantly reduce” it instead. She also requested that targets be qualified by adding “as appropriate with national law.” Japan said aiming to significantly reduce illegal logging is not ambitious enough, preferring “elimination.”

Australia expressed reservations with regard to the target on improving forest land tenure security. Switzerland called for inclusion of both men and women under land tenure security. Brazil favored deletion of the term “security.”

On combating illegal deforestation, Malaysia suggested replacing “illegal logging” with “associated illegal trade.” Japan, supported by Saint Lucia, suggested, “eliminating” rather than

“reducing” illegal logging. Ukraine, supported by Malaysia, opposed a reference to “illegal deforestation,” with Brazil adding that this is already referenced in the Aichi Targets. Australia said the term illegal refers to criminal activities and, thus, is difficult to “manage,” and suggested “combating illegal logging.” The CBD noted the value of promoting “other systems of compliance,” such as the use of DNA barcoding for traceability.

China proposed strengthening the capacity of national authorities to deal with illegal logging, rather than strengthening forest law enforcement. Iran suggested strengthening “human and institutional capacity.” The EU proposed “effective and transparent institutions developed” consistent with SDG language.

Brazil suggested that forest issues should be “incorporated” instead of “fully considered” in land use planning and development. Switzerland suggested “fully incorporated in land use planning and development” as a way to bridge the UNSPF to address drivers of deforestation.

On forest-related policies and programmes being coherent and coordinated across ministries and authorities, consistent with the law, the EU, with Brazil, Norway, and Ecuador, for Group of 77 and China (G-77/China), proposed adding “and engage relevant stakeholders and indigenous peoples and local communities, in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

Goal six: Coherence and Synergies: Japan called for reference to SDG targets 17.14 (policy coherence for sustainable development) and 17.17 (effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships).

Brazil and Chile noted that the current fragmentation of global forest governance could be reduced through better coordination. Canada requested a target on cross-sectoral collaboration to address deforestation.

The EU called for including a target on building a common international understanding of SFM, including a common set of criteria and indicators and a target on participation of Major Groups in implementation of the UNSPF. Switzerland, supported by the EU and opposed by the US and Brazil, supported including a global set of criteria and indicators for SFM. China suggested “a common understanding for SFM is agreed” without reference to criteria and indicators. Russia called for deleting Major Groups from the title of the goal.

III. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK: Discussions on the chapter on the Implementation Framework began on Monday and continued throughout the week, based on three subsequent drafts.

Roles and responsibilities: On voluntary planned contributions (VPCs), Russia urged for clarification of the concept. Australia expressed openness towards the VPCs, stressing the need to build a shared understanding of the concept. Canada and Argentina expressed concern with regard to the understanding of VPCs, while Switzerland, Norway and the EU cautioned against the possibility of creating an additional reporting burden. Japan, supported by China and Switzerland, said such reporting should be integrated with reports on progress on the implementation of the UNSPF and the Forest Instrument.

In response to a revised draft issued by the Co-Chairs on Wednesday, Switzerland, supported by Brazil, suggested replacing the term VPCs with “UN Forest Actions” with a view to supporting the GFGs and indicative thematic areas for action. In response to a revised draft issued by the Co-Chairs on Thursday,

Switzerland, supported by Canada, the US, and Norway proposed the name, “voluntary forest actions.”

Ukraine called for definite dates for the VPCs. China, the EU, Ukraine, Russia and FAO called for deleting text that required “CPF member organizations and other UNFF partners and stakeholders” make VPCs. The US said VPCs should be seen as an opportunity for increased engagement with Major Groups and other stakeholders. China cautioned the Working Group to not attempt exhaustive discussions on this issue, noting that even UNFCCC discussions on the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are still ongoing. Iran recommended the VPCs be discussed as an agenda item at UNFF12.

On the CPF and its member organizations, the EU suggested text on strengthening the connection with Major Groups. Ukraine said Member States should be encouraged to support the “implementation” of the CPF work plan. Australia urged including disaster risk reduction among the issues to be addressed by the UN bodies and the CPF. Russia said CPF member organizations would have an “important” rather than, “crucial” role in implementing the UNSPF.

On the UN system, Switzerland drew attention to the World Heritage Convention, which is also involved in the designation of protected forests. The EU called for reference to issues covered by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and cooperation with the Rio Conventions for implementation of forest-related initiatives.

On other intergovernmental partners and stakeholders, China called for including the UNCCD on the list of multilateral environmental agreements that should make important contributions to the GFGs. Indonesia called for including the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

On regional and subregional organizations and processes, Switzerland, with the EU, said regional and subregional organizations should not be encouraged to develop interregional networks. Ukraine, with the EU and the US, cautioned against singling out the Montreal Process among the various criteria and indicators processes with which to build synergies. The EU and the US further requested deletion of a reference to the SDG indicators in the same context.

On Major Groups and other stakeholders, Russia stressed the need to ensure that non-governmental stakeholders are not placed on the same level as Member States with regard to their role and accountability. The Science and Technological Community, speaking on behalf of Major Groups, reported that NGOs and Local Authorities have been left off the list. The Women’s Major Group proposed including a reference to the role of the Major Groups Partnership on Forests in implementing the UNSPF.

Means of implementation (MOI): The EU called for referencing only the AAAA as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, while Brazil and Chile called for referencing the entire 2030 Agenda and SDG 17 on MOI.

Ecuador, for the G-77/China, said the UNSPF must replicate the financing commitments in Agenda 2030. He stressed the need for including an increase of financing from all sources, including an increase in ODA, and, supported by Iran, for establishing a new Trust Fund for the implementation of the UNSPF under the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN).

Noting that the section on MOI is not sufficiently balanced, the EU called for: balancing any references to ODA with references to enabling environment, good governance, and countries having the primary responsibility for their development; and expanding the references to private sector funding and partnerships.

In a paragraph on the mobilization of and effective use of financial resources, including new and additional resources from all sources and at all levels, the EU called for deleting “including new and additional resources,” while Nigeria and Iran opposed. Brazil underscored the need to link “new and additional resources” with achieving the goals and targets of the UNSPF and the SDGs. Canada, supported by the US and Brazil, proposed breaking the paragraph into three paragraphs to separately address public, private and international sources of finance.

In a paragraph on the role of international public finance, Brazil, with Nigeria, requested including a reference to ODA.

Ecuador recalled suggestions to replace VPCs with voluntary “national” contributions. Norway said “planned” in “voluntary planned contributions” is unnecessary and proposed renaming them simply “voluntary contributions.” Brazil called for deleting the paragraphs referencing the VPCs in the MOI section.

On the GFFFN, the US and the EU noted the need for clear mandates, while China said the UNSPF should focus on its priorities since the functions are already articulated in the IAF.

Niger and Iran expressed a strong support for a paragraph on the GFFFN facilitating the design of projects and programmes for submission to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other financing mechanisms. Switzerland, supported by Australia, Ukraine and the EU, expressed concern that this exceeds what was agreed to at UNFF11, and is not in line with existing UNFF functions. Iran countered that this is the best way to operationalize additional tasks assigned to countries at UNFF11. Brazil said Africa should not be singled out as requiring special consideration in the GFFFN, favoring deletion or amendment of text to include other regions. Niger preferred amendments rather than deletion of the respective text.

The EU called for deleting specific references to the GEF and the GCF and the request to create a specific GEF thematic area on forests, which Iran and Niger opposed. The GEF proposed developing a GEF “strategy” on the UNSPF rather than a new thematic area on SFM.

China encouraged keeping paragraphs on the GFFFN and the Trust Fund separate.

Switzerland and Ukraine requested the addition of “North-North cooperation” in a paragraph listing forms of international and regional cooperation. With regard to “strengthening” international cooperation, Brazil suggested replacing “North-North, North-South and South-South” with “bilateral.”

Canada proposed adding “on mutually agreed terms” with regard to Member States fostering international cooperation through technology transfer. Chile requested changing the reference to technology transfer “under mutually agreed terms” to read “including on concessional and preferential terms for developing countries, as mutually agreed.”

Brazil called for deleting a reference to the carbon pricing arrangements already developed under the UNFCCC.

The EU deemed as “unnecessary” to have a dedicated sub-section on “multilateral forest funding.”

Brazil and Canada, opposed by Nigeria, called for deleting a paragraph highlighting the different categories of countries with special needs and circumstances.

IV. REVIEW FRAMEWORK: Discussions on this chapter started on Monday and continued throughout the week, in three subsequent revised drafts.

Review of the IAF: Switzerland, supported by Norway, proposed deleting this section, describing it as repetitive and unrelated to the UNSPF. Brazil, supported by Ukraine, Chile, China, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Malaysia and the Dominican Republic, urged retention of the paragraph noting that UNFF is to conduct a mid-term review of the effectiveness of the IAF. China explained that this will help UNFF communicate its work to an external audience. Australia proposed as a compromise to include a short sentence reflecting the intent of this paragraph. The US welcomed either option.

Russia expressed “firm support” for a legally binding instrument on all types of forests, the strengthening of the current arrangement, and the continuation of the current arrangement.

Progress in implementing the UNSPF: The US and Brazil expressed concern with regard to developing new indicators that could pose additional reporting burdens. Brazil stressed that the indicators should speak to the goals and targets without raising additional reporting burdens. She proposed adopting a set of already-agreed indicators, such as the relevant SDG indicators and from the FRA. The EU welcomed the development of a global set of indicators and said this is a technical issue that should be resolved at the level of experts.

India called for greater clarity on the VPCs, and, supported by Malaysia and the Dominican Republic, noted that having the first report by 2018 is “overly ambitious.” Australia, supported by China, suggested waiting until UNFF12 to specify when the first report is due. The EU proposed including an independent external review on implementation.

Contributing to the follow-up and review of the 2030

Agenda: Japan and the US, opposed by the EU, Iran, and Nigeria, suggested deleting a reference to linkages between the SDGs and the SFM criteria and indicators. Brazil also opposed the deletion, further explaining that this is “fundamental” to the UNSPF. Indonesia suggested mentioning the role of stakeholders in this sub-section.

In response to a revised draft issued by the Co-Chairs on Thursday that kept the linkage between the SDG and the SFM indicators, Japan proposed adding to the linkage “and other related work on SFM.” Brazil noted that the Forum’s mandate does not include linking the SDG indicators and criteria and indicators for SFM, while the US emphasized their difficulty in reaching an agreement on the matter.

V. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH STRATEGY:

This chapter was introduced on Monday and discussion continued throughout the week on three draft versions.

Switzerland, supported by Australia and Canada, called for the deletion of the outline of the communication and outreach strategy. Ukraine, with Mexico and Ghana, urged retention of key messages to be addressed in the strategy, and supported by Russia, called for development of an outline of the strategy to be developed for adoption by UNFF12. Switzerland explained that the UNFF11 resolution on the strategy does not specify the need for an outline, noting this can be included in the 4POW.

Switzerland, supported by Japan, suggested that forest biodiversity be recognized for its importance to the Earth, and not just for humankind. Ghana and Dominican Republic encouraged increasing the profile of International Forest Day.

QUADRENNIAL PROGRAMME OF WORK 2017-2020

The discussion on the Quadrennial Programme of Work 2017-2020 (4POW) first took place on Tuesday, and continued Friday following the issuance of a revised draft by the Co-Chairs.

The EU called for aligning the priority thematic areas for each UNFF session with that year's High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) focus and for highlighting SFM. The US proposed: adding clear information on the outputs of each of the UNFF sessions; focusing on "budgetary requirements" for each session rather than on "resource needs"; and adding "and the activities" to a sub-item on the "progress on the operation of the GFFFN" for all the UNFF sessions.

Switzerland requested a report of the Trust Fund be presented at each UNFF session and an agenda item on "emerging issues" for all sessions. Indonesia proposed a slot in UNFF sessions for updates on recent global developments related to forests.

China, Australia, Switzerland, Ukraine, the US and the EU called for including references to the intersessional work that will be conducted, and China suggested that intersessional activities can be decided at each session based on actual needs. The US and Switzerland suggested including country-led initiatives and organization-led initiatives as intersessional activities that can contribute to the implementation of the 4POW and the UNSPF.

Ukraine and the EU called for including more information on the work undertaken at the regional level. Farmers and Small Forest Landowners suggested including regional actions from UNFF14 onwards.

South Africa, Nigeria, and Niger requested increased focus on the GFFFN. Peru suggested including targets and indicators for measures to increase the effectiveness of the GFFFN. Lesotho suggested adding progress reports on mobilization of forest finance from different sources particularly from the GFFFN. The EU noted that specific focus on the GFFFN would make the 4POW unbalanced.

The Scientific and Technological Community recommended adding a reference to Major Groups and other stakeholders, without mentioning "non-governmental stakeholders," and urged identifying issues that would attract the interest of the Business and Industry Major Group.

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR UNFF SESSIONS: UNFF12:

China asked to add more information on the function of UNFF12, given that it is the first Forum following the adoption of the UNSPF, including concrete language on establishing a mechanism for implementation of the UNSPF. Iran supported including an item on resources mobilization for least developed countries and small island developing states to advance SFM and UNSPF implementation.

Ukraine and Ghana noted that if the Member States agree on the VPCs, their format, modalities, context, timetables and template need to be discussed during UNFF12. China said VPCs are an important political decision and that may require a ministerial segment during the UNFF sessions.

On Thursday, the Co-Chairs issued a revised draft in which VPCs were changed to "voluntary national contributions" (VNCs), with sub-items on the "format for VNCs and voluntary announcement, where appropriate" and on VNCs in the voluntary national reporting on the UNSPF implementation. In response to the revised draft, Ukraine, supported by China and Norway, stressed the need to first determine the format of the VNCs. Ghana suggested that UNFF12 will "design" VNCs. The US and

Switzerland proposed, and delegates agreed, that UNFF12 will "format VNCs and voluntary announcements where appropriate."

Russia noted that the technical discussion and the exchange of priority thematic areas should be in accordance with the review cycle of the HLPF. Switzerland and the EU suggested additional thematic areas including biodiversity, sustainable consumption and production, and energy. Iran proposed including a thematic area on the contribution of forests to combating land degradation and sand and dust storms.

UNFF13: The EU called for removing the agenda item on "Enhanced cooperation, coordination, and engagement on forest-related issues," given that the session will be dedicated to discussing policy.

UNFF14: Peru suggested that the technical discussions on priority theme areas for 2019-2020 take into account scientific research. Canada requested adding a sub-item on cross-sectoral engagement.

On an MOI sub-item on the "availability of resources for the GFFFN and its priority actions and resource needs for 4POW 2021-2024," China, with Iran, Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador, called for deleting the reference to GFFFN so that the agenda item refers to the availability of all resources for the 4POW. The EU and the US opposed the deletion. Rather than deleting the reference to the GFFFN, Ukraine proposed adding "considering its priority actions and resources needed" in an agenda item on the "Adoption of the 4POW 2021-2024."

UNFF15: Peru underscored that the policy dialogue on priority themes should include also recommendations. The EU called for removing the agenda item on "Enhanced cooperation, coordination, and engagement on forest-related issues," given that the session will be dedicated to discussing policy.

CLOSING SESSION

At 6:00 pm on Friday, Co-Chair Hoogeveen declared that consensus had been achieved on both the UNSPF and the 4POW, and closed the Working Group.

SPECIAL SESSION REPORT

UNFF Director Manoel Sobral Filho opened the UNFF12 Special Session on Friday afternoon, immediately after the Working Group closed.

Delegates accepted the UNFF12 Bureau as officers for the Special Session, which was chaired by UNFF12 Chair Peter Besseau (Canada).

Delegates adopted the agenda (E/CN.18/SS/2017/1) and the provisional organization of work.

REPORT OF THE UNFF WORKING GROUP: Delegates adopted the draft report of the UNFF Working Group (E/CN.18/WG/2017/L.1), including the UNSPF and the 4POW.

ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE FORUM AT ITS SPECIAL SESSION: Delegates adopted the draft report of the Forum at its Special Session (E/CN.18/SS/2017/L.1).

UNFF Director Sobral congratulated the Working Group and Special Session for successfully accomplishing the task of completing and adopting this historic document. He noted that the process has set the stage for decisive action and creation of a legacy to be proud of.

The US requested that the report register their reservations on the Strategic Plan with regard to market access, noting that World Trade Organization (WTO) is the appropriate forum for discussions on trade issues. She requested that it be noted that the

Strategic Plan does not alter any WTO agreements or decisions, including the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement.

UNFF12 Chair Besseau thanked delegates, urging them to “breathe life into the new Strategic Plan.” He gavelled the session to a close at 6:15 pm.

UN STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FORESTS 2017-2030

The UNSPF is composed of five chapters and an annex containing the indicative thematic areas for action associated with the global forest goals and targets.

INTRODUCTION: The introduction provides the context for the UNSPF, and recognizes forests as the world’s most productive land-based ecosystems, which are essential to life on earth. The introduction states that the UNSPF provides a global framework for actions at all levels to sustainably manage all types of forests and trees outside forests and halt deforestation and forest degradation. It also notes that the UNSPF serves as a reference for the forest-related work of the UN system.

The **vision** of the UNSPF reads, “a world where all types of forests and trees outside forests are sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development and provide economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for present and future generations.”

The **mission** of the UNSPF is to “promote sustainable forest management and the contribution of forests and trees outside forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including by strengthening cooperation, coordination, coherence, synergies and political commitment and actions at all levels.”

On the importance of forests to people and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the introduction states, *inter alia*, that:

- forests cover 30% of the Earth’s land area, or nearly four billion hectares, and are essential to human well-being, sustainable development and the health of the planet;
- forests provide essential ecosystem services, prevent land degradation and desertification and reduce the risk to disasters and contribute substantially to climate change mitigation and adaptation and in conserving biodiversity;
- when sustainably managed, all types of forests are healthy, productive, resilient and renewable ecosystems providing essential goods and services to people worldwide; and
- sustainable management of forests and trees outside forests is vital to integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

On **trends and challenges** the UNSPF states that:

- deforestation and forest degradation continue in many regions, often in response to demands for wood, food, fuel and fibre;
- forests are also at risk from illegal or unsustainable logging, unmanaged fires, pollution, dust, sand and wind storms, disease, pests, invasive alien species, fragmentation and the impacts of climate change;
- continued rapid population growth, as well as rising per capita income, is accelerating the global demand for and consumption of forest products and services and putting pressures on forests;
- there is a need to reduce fragmentation and enhance coordination at the global level among the many international organizations, institutions and instruments addressing forest issues;
- at the national, local and regional levels, cross-sectoral coordination on forests can be weak, and forest authorities and

stakeholders may not be full partners in land use planning and development decisions; and

- the effective implementation of SFM is critically dependent on adequate resources as well as good governance at all levels.

On **opportunities for enhanced and value-added action on SFM**, the UNSPF: comes at a time of unprecedented opportunity for strengthened and decisive action by all actors within and beyond the UN system; and aims to build momentum provided by the 2015 global milestones of the 2030 Agenda, the AAAA and the Paris Agreement.

II. GLOBAL FOREST GOALS AND TARGETS: The UNSPF contains six GFGs.

GFG 1, reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM, includes the following targets:

- increase forest area by 3% worldwide;
- maintain or enhance the world’s forest carbon stocks;
- by 2020, promote the implementation of SFM, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally; and
- significantly strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of all types of forests worldwide.

GFG 2, enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, includes the following targets:

- eradicate extreme poverty for all forest dependent people;
- increase the access of small-scale forest enterprises to financial services;
- significantly increase the contribution of forests and trees to food security;
- significantly increase the contribution of forest industry, other forest-based enterprises and forest ecosystem services; and
- enhance the contribution of all types of forests to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

GFG 3, increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, includes the following targets:

- significantly increase the area of forests worldwide designated as protected areas or conserved through other effective area-based conservation measures;
- significantly increase the area of forests under long-term forest management plans; and
- significantly increase the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.

GFG 4, mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation and partnerships, includes the following targets:

- mobilize significant resources to finance SFM and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance SFM;
- significantly increase forest-related financing from all sources at all levels;
- significantly enhance and increase North-South, South-South, North-North and triangular cooperation and public-private partnerships on science, technology and innovation in the forest sector;
- significantly increase the number of countries that have developed and implemented forest financing strategies and have access to financing; and
- improve the collection, availability and accessibility of forest-related information.

GFG 5, promote governance frameworks to implement SFM, includes the following targets:

- significantly increase the number of countries that have integrated forests into their national sustainable development plans and/or poverty reduction strategies;
- enhance forest law enforcement and governance and significantly reduce illegal logging and associated trade worldwide;
- ensure national and subnational forest-related policies and programmes are coherent, coordinated and complementary across ministries, departments and authorities; and
- fully integrate forest-related issues and the forest sector into decision-making processes of land use planning and development.

GFG 6, enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues, includes the following targets:

- ensure forest-related programmes within the UN system are coherent and complementary and integrate the GFGs and targets, where appropriate;
- ensure forest-related programmes across CPF member organizations are coherent and complementary and encompass the multiple contributions of forests and the forest sector to the 2030 Agenda;
- significantly enhance cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation to promote SFM and halt deforestation and forest degradation at all levels;
- achieve a greater common understanding of the concept of SFM and identify an associated set of indicators; and
- strengthen the input and involvement of Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the UNSPF and in the work of work of the Forum, including intersessional work.

III. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK: Roles and responsibilities: The Implementation Framework provides an overview of roles and responsibilities of actors to achieve the GFGs and targets.

Member States may, *inter alia*: determine their VNCs towards achieving the global forest goals and targets, and communicate their progress on the VNCs to the UNFF.

UNFF is responsible for follow-up and review of the implementation of the strategic plan; and UNFF Secretariat services support the Forum in all matters related to the 4POW and the UNSPF.

The CPF and its member organizations are, *inter alia*: encouraged to integrate relevant GFGs and targets into their forest-related plans and programmes; and invited to support the Forum and its Member States in advancing the GFGs and targets.

Several UN bodies, organizations and specialized agencies not participating in the CPF are invited to use the strategic plan as a reference with a view to building synergies between the GFGs and targets of the UNSPF and their respective policies and programmes; and the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination is also invited to promote its use within the UN system, where appropriate.

Other intergovernmental partners and stakeholders at the international level: Multilateral environmental agreements besides those represented in the CPF are invited to seek opportunities to contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan, where appropriate and consistent with their mandates.

Regional and subregional organizations and processes should, *inter alia*: provide a crucial bridge between international policies and national actions and are important partners in efforts to

implement the strategic plan and achieve its global forest goals and targets; and build and strengthen synergies between the UNSPF and their policies and programmes.

On Major Groups and other stakeholders, the Forum will identify ways to enhance their contributions to the achievement of the GFGs and targets at all levels

MOI: This chapter highlights the review framework. The GFFFN will facilitate access for countries to resources to implement the UNSPF and to achieve its GFGs and targets by:

- promoting and assisting Member States in designing national forest financing strategies to mobilize resources for SFM;
- assisting countries in mobilizing, accessing and enhancing the effective use of existing financial resources for SFM;
- serving as a clearing house and database on existing, new and emerging financing opportunities and as a tool for sharing lessons learned and best practices from successful projects; and
- serving to contribute to the achievement of the GFGs and targets and priorities in the 4POW.

The Trust Fund for the UNFF can also be used to support the activities of the GFFFN.

IV. REVIEW FRAMEWORK: In the review framework, the UNSPF includes, *inter alia*: review of the IAF; assessment of progress in implementing the UNSPF, taking into account VNCs; and contributing to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

V. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH STRATEGY: The communication and outreach strategy is described as an essential component to raise awareness of the UNSPF. Member States are also encouraged to celebrate the International Day of Forests on 21 March annually to promote implementation of the UNSPF.

QUADRENNIAL PROGRAMME OF WORK 2017-2020

The 4POW sets out the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the agenda for each UNFF session from 2017-2020. Odd-year sessions focus on discussions on implementation and technical advice, while even-year sessions focus on policy dialogue, development and decision-making, and odd and even-year sessions for a given biennium are thematically linked. It contains four detailed tables describing priority actions for the next four sessions of the UNFF. These include:

- Implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030;
- Monitoring, assessment and reporting;
- Means of implementation;
- Emerging issues and challenges;
- Enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement on forest-related issues;
- UNFF Trust Fund;
- Progress in the implementation of ECOSOC resolution 2015/33 (56);
- High-level segment including a forest partnership forum with Collaborative Partnership on Forests and non-governmental organizations and private sector chief executive officers ((6 (d))); and
- Adoption of the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2021-2024, considering its priority actions and resources needed.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE UNFF WORKING GROUP AND SPECIAL SESSION

UNFF finds itself at a watershed moment. With the adoption of the UN's first strategic plan on forests, UNFF has the opportunity to join the larger UN sustainable development agenda with an ambitious roadmap for the world's forests. Over the past year since UNFF11 adopted the resolutions that provided the marching orders and much needed momentum, Member States have reached higher and pushed the Forum to go further in achieving its core functions, which are now embodied in the new UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030. The Strategic Plan gives UNFF the opportunity to increase the Forum's profile and send a strong message to the world that UNFF is the primary UN forum for discussions on international forest policy.

This analysis examines the process by which the Strategic Plan was developed, the challenges delegates faced during the negotiations, and what the Strategic Plan indicates in terms of UNFF's role within the broader international forest regime in the years ahead.

DEVELOPING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2015 UNFF11 charged Member States with producing a strategic plan for adoption by UNFF12 in May 2017. The key to achieving this task was ensuring that delegates did not try to reinvent the wheel, but rather consolidate gains made in existing forest-related goals, fragmented among recently concluded sustainable development-related goals contained in the 2015 Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.

UNFF11 mandated two *Ad Hoc* Expert Group (AHEGs) meetings to develop detailed proposals for the construction of the UNSPF and the Quadrennial Programme of Work 2017-2020, which met in 2016. AHEG1, held in April 2016, based its work on a report from the expert panel on the IAF, which met the previous month, to provide building blocks for vision and mission, possible goals and targets, and the implementation framework. A total of six goals were proposed, based primarily on the four GOFs and five IAF objectives. Experts at this meeting also coined the name "UN Strategic Plan for Forests," in a bid to give the plan greater prominence within the UN.

AHEG2 in October 2016 delved deeper in refining the sections of the UNSPF, basing its work on a Co-Chairs' draft proposal and other non-papers, including one on the guiding principles for the inclusion of goals and targets. At this meeting, the term "global forest goals," referring to the six overarching goals, took root. After contemplating the large number of targets and thematic areas, some experts feared they were too ambitious and called for efforts to make a more concise document. One delegate noted, "If it's too ambitious, it's our fault, as we're continuing to add targets and themes."

At the Working Group meeting, most delegates who had followed the trail from UNFF11, revisited old debates and made new recommendations. Meanwhile, the Co-Chairs attempted to streamline the document, including annexing of the indicative thematic areas for action associated with the GFGs and targets, and the removal of several numerical targets. Consensus was reached in the end, but some delegates felt that the final targets are weaker than in the zero-draft, including the removal of all but one numerical target.

OVERCOMING HURDLES

Several stumbling blocks threatened to stall progress in the development of the Strategic Plan. Some issues were easily addressed by deferring to previously agreed language from other processes, but others required lengthy negotiation and concessions in order to achieve consensus.

Means of implementation has always been a contentious issue within UNFF, so it was not surprising that this was a major focus of the Working Group. The ODA debates were another hurdle. While some countries stuck to their guns regarding the need to "increase forest-related ODA," many others argued that ODA has indeed increased over the years and that the Forum should be looking into attracting other sources of funding, such as the GEF and the Global Climate Fund. In the end, a compromise was achieved, where ODA is considered as a means of catalyzing other sources of funding.

Debates on setting ambitious versus realistic goals and targets are also as old as UNFF. The Co-Chairs dared experts to "dream the impossible dream," and come up with bold statements such as "halt deforestation by 2030!" AHEG and Working Group participants, however, preferred to keep their feet on the ground, favoring incremental language that some referred to as "realistic" such as "by 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally." In the same manner, attaching numerical targets to goals had the same fate, with a greater number of delegates joining the proponents of non-numerical targets. Even though data from the Global Forest Resources Assessment was considered by members as acceptable for baselines, views on whether, for instance, to increase protected areas globally by 20% by 2030 caused a general uproar that the figure was too ambitious, with complaints that "we should not come up with figures off the top of our heads." Others said this impasse was a classic example of members' lack of commitment, since current forest cover is 16% and that a 4% increase in 13 years is achievable.

Voluntary contributions, similar to the Paris Agreement's nationally determined contributions (NDCs), were considered as a more plausible means of commitments than numerical targets. The term "voluntary planned contributions" was inherited from the expert panel on the IAF held in Japan in March 2016, traveling through numerous drafts before arriving at the Working Group. The offending term "planned" was debated constantly with many favoring its deletion to be replaced with the final agreed language "Voluntary National Contributions," and a new acronym "VNCs," that may soon attract the world's attention.

Reaching agreement on the use of SDG indicators relevant to GFGs for the assessment of UNSPF implementation was met with great resistance. Some delegates argued that SDG indicators are not as yet validated and are not ready for application in the UNSPF.

In spite of these hurdles, there were neither winners or losers, nor heroes and villains. The development of the Strategic Plan was seen as a highly participatory process leading to joint ownership and shared success.

MOVING FORWARD

The adoption of the UNSPF was met by a feeling of accomplishment and camaraderie at the shared victory in what was referred to by some as, "a historic moment for UNFF."

However, many noted that the UNSPF should not be seen as a feather in the Forum's hat, but as work yet to be done.

The UNSPF opens opportunities for renewed commitments among stakeholders, including finance. One such hope is that UNFF will now attract forest funding from donors that have funded forest-related activities in other MEA processes, including the UNFCCC and the CBD.

The 4POW, although seemingly overshadowed by the attention given to the Strategic Plan, will also play an important role in providing guidance for priority actions for future UNFF sessions and intersessional implementation work. Its focus on continued country-led initiative and organization-led initiative meetings and coordinating with the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development calendar and themes are notable means for maintaining the momentum.

Progress within the Forum has at times moved at a glacial pace, but it is important to recognize what has been achieved over the Forum's 16 years. Previously controversial concepts have now been incorporated into this plan, such as illegal logging and indigenous peoples' rights, once fought tooth and nail as a threat to sovereignty. In addition, Major Groups, previously relegated to poorly attended side events, are now able to participate directly within the Forum.

If executed properly and fully, the UNSPF could contribute to a further evolution of the UNFF, and solidify the Forum's role and help elevate the profile of forests in the UN system. As UNFF Director Manoel Sobral Filho noted during the closing of the Special Session, what lies ahead for UNFF can be summarized by the vision of the Strategic Plan, "A world where all types of forests and trees outside forests are sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development and provide economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for present and future generations."

The Strategic Plan's commitments are quantified and bold. What remains to be seen is whether they will be matched by the funding and the political will required to achieve its potential.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

5th Mediterranean Forest Week: The 5th Mediterranean Forest Week is dedicated to forests and landscape restoration in the Mediterranean basin. It aims to strengthen exchanges and synergies between global stakeholders in the restoration of Mediterranean forests and landscapes, to help achieve SDG 15 (Life on Land) and other globally agreed targets related to forest restoration, and facilitate the adaptation of Mediterranean forest landscapes to climate change. **dates:** 20-24 March 2017 **location:** Agadir, Morocco **contact:** International Association for Mediterranean Forests **phone:** +33-491-90-7670 **email:** contact@medorestweek.org **www:** <http://www.5.medforestweek.org/>

The Global Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon (GSOC17): This scientific meeting will contribute to efforts to end hunger and malnutrition, climate change adaptation, reversing land degradation, and overall sustainable development while linking sustainable soil management and climate change mitigation and adaptation. **dates:** 21-23 March 2017 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** GSOC17 Organizers **email:** GSOC17@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/soil-organic-carbon-symposium/en/>

The XIX Commonwealth Forestry Conference: This meeting is organized by India's Forest Research Institute and the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, with support from the Indian Government and the Commonwealth Forestry Association. The Conference will convene under the theme of "Forests for Prosperity and Posterity." Sub-themes include biodiversity conservation and management, good governance in forestry, forests and climate change, and forests and water. **dates:** 3-7 April 2017 **location:** Dehradun, India **contact:** Dr. Savita, Chief Coordinator **phone:** +91-135-275-5277 **fax:** +91-135-275-6865 **email:** cfc207india@gmail.com **www:** <http://www.cfc2017.in/>

UNFF12: The twelfth session of the UN Forum on Forests will focus on implementation of the Strategic Plan and the 4POW. **dates:** 1-5 May 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNFF Secretariat **phone:** +1-212-963-3401 **fax:** +1-917-367-3186 **email:** unff@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/>

For additional meetings, see <http://sdg.iisd.org/>

GLOSSARY

4POW	Quadrennial Programme of Work
AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development
Agenda 2030	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
AHEG	<i>Ad Hoc</i> Expert Group
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FRA	Global Forest Resources Assessment
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFFFN	Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network
GFGs	Global Forest Goals
GOFs	Global Objectives on Forests
HLPF	UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IAF	International Arrangement on Forests
MOI	Means of implementation
ODA	Official development assistance
OLI	Organization-led initiative
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	UN Forum on Forests
UNFI	UN forest instrument
UNSPF	UN Strategic Plan on Forests 2017-2030
VNCs	Voluntary National Contributions
VPCs	Voluntary Planned Contributions (later changed to VNCs)