

UNFF21 Highlights: Tuesday, 12 May 2026

The second day of the 21st session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF21) dealt with communications and outreach; linkages with other processes; means of implementation; monitoring, assessment and reporting; and the UNFF Trust Fund.

Policy Discussions on the Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017-2030: Activities in Support of the Thematic Priorities for the Biennium 2025–2026

Implementation of the Communication and Outreach Strategy of the UNSPF, Including Activities Regarding the International Day of Forests (IDF) 2026: The Secretariat presented the document (E/CN.18/2026/2), highlighting: redesign of the UNFF Clearing House website; adoption of icons developed for the Global Forest Goals (GFGs); and the 2026 IDF on the theme of Forests and Economies.

Many stressed the importance of the IDF in raising public awareness for sustainable forest management (SFM). Delegates commended the Secretariat for its outreach activities, including participating in the forest pavilion at the 30th meeting of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP 30) and launching the new website.

Cyprus, on behalf of the EUROPEAN UNION (EU), suggested exploring synergies with other pavilions. CANADA supported the proposal for future forest pavilions but, with the UK, cautioned against institutionalizing it in the current fiscal climate.

CZECHIA drew attention to the European Policy Platform on sustainable wood use (WoodPop). MALAYSIA called attention to the Greening Asia Campaign 2021-2025, while the REPUBLIC OF KOREA proposed a UN-led day for sustainable wood. CHINA requested materials in all UN languages in the future. The CONGO suggested a more balanced communication policy that also promotes forest protection.

Members outlined their national outreach efforts and events.

The UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME announced the 2027 IDF theme as: Growing Forests for a Sustainable Future: Advancing Afforestation and Reforestation.

Interlinkages between the GFGs and Targets and the SDGs Under Review by the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2026 and 2027, the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the GBF, the UNCCD, including the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme, and other International Forest-related Developments: Vice Chair Andrés Napuri Pita (Peru) opened the agenda item.

Lotta Tähtinen, UN DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, highlighted UNFF's planned contributions to the HLPF review of SDG implementation in 2026 and 2027.

BRAZIL invited contributions for advancing the COP 30 Presidency Roadmap for Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030, to be launched at the UN General Assembly in autumn 2026.

Rosalie Matondo, Minister of Forest Economy, the CONGO, presented on the 2027-2036 Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation.

The GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF), underlined their support for forest conservation with USD 6 billion invested in SFM across 172 countries since 1991, and USD 1.8 billion in forest-related grants in the GEF-8 cycle leveraging USD 15 billion in co-financing.

CBD Executive Secretary Astrid Schomaker called for synergistic implementation of UNSPF and the GBF, including on monitoring and evaluation, supporting the custodians of forest biodiversity, and addressing harmful incentives.

The INTERNATIONAL UNION OF FOREST RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS highlighted that the concept of bioeconomy shows strong interlinkages with GFGs and the SDGs but cautioned different interpretations of the concept can support or hinder these goals.

The FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UN (FAO) drew attention to the upcoming Global Report on the Contribution of Forests to Food Security and Nutrition.

INDONESIA highlighted mangroves as a key nexus for climate, biodiversity, and sustainability priorities. MEXICO and the UK supported integrated approaches to achieve goals across multilateral environmental agreements. LEBANON underlined SFM's importance to the GFGs and the SDGs.

The EU suggested the omnibus resolution thank Brazil for the COP 30 Presidency Roadmap. NORWAY and SWITZERLAND encouraged continued consultations and engagement to make the Roadmap as useful as possible. CANADA urged inclusion of all deforestation-driving sectors.

PORTUGAL urged coordinated international response on wildfires, storms, and forest pests. COLOMBIA, echoed by PERU, called for concrete synergies between GFGs and other goals.

BRAZIL highlighted the Tropical Forest Forever Facility, calling for integrated fire management and wildlife resilience. MALAYSIA stressed ecosystem-based forest management and upholding the "common but differentiated responsibilities" principle.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA announced a high-level dialogue on forest fire management at the 28th session of the FAO Committee on Forestry in September 2026.

JAMAICA called for streamlining reporting across international processes and integrating biodiversity and land degradation-related financing mechanisms. INDIA emphasized enhanced coordination across international frameworks.

The UNFCCC stressed potential for synergies among climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, combating desertification, and sustainable development.

The INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION highlighted that forests provide food security and job creation while addressing climate mitigation and adaptation. The CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES) drew attention to an upcoming interdisciplinary study on CITES and forests, and the CITES Tree Species Programme.

The UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME called for integrated national and subnational action to tackle underlying drivers across agriculture, land use governance, and finance. MAJOR GROUPS emphasized strengthening coherence among the UNSPF and GFGs and stronger recognition of the UNFF and CPF within the UNFCCC processes.

Means of Implementation: The UNFF Secretariat outlined their note ([E/CN.18/2026/4](#)). He noted the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) has supported 39 countries since 2015.

UNFF Secretariat Director Juliette Biao presented information on the proposed GFFFN office in Beijing, China. She highlighted that the head of the office works directly under the UNFF Secretariat, and there will be no UNFF budget implications associated with the office. She noted an advisory board composed of UNFF members will be established once negotiations reach a conclusion.

GUYANA, PERU, and IRAN called for stronger interlinkages to be accompanied by equally strong means of implementation.

Numerous countries expressed continuing support for the GFFFN's proposed Beijing office. NEW ZEALAND lamented, with SWITZERLAND, continuing delays in concluding the negotiations. CHINA noted six formal rounds of negotiations since 2013.

MEXICO, with SOUTH AFRICA, urged increasing innovative financing mechanisms and, with BRAZIL, including private capital. MALAYSIA underscored ecological fiscal transfers and hybrid capacity-building platforms. BRAZIL, with SOUTH AFRICA, called for demand-driven support and, with the CONGO, rewarding tropical forest countries for conservation.

The UK called for accessible financing for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, cautioning about UN80 reform implications for Clearing House enhancement. SWITZERLAND requested a progress report.

INDIA underscored the GFFFN's role for accessing digital tools, innovative approaches, and technology-enabled systems.

The CONGO called for simplified access to funding for bankable projects and an operational role for the GFFFN.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION stressed that GFFFN financing through the Trust Fund should remain voluntary and cautioned against prolonging discussion on the GFFFN Beijing office. The EU noted financial resources must come from all sources and stressed the need for relevant organizations to collaborate on resource mobilization to avoid duplication. COLOMBIA emphasized predictable, adequate, and sustainable means of implementation.

Director Biao noted that most of the Secretariat's activities are not currently using regular budget resources, but rather voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund. She outlined a severe lack of resources and noted the regular budget for 2025 was USD 4,000, which has not yet been deposited.

Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting: The Secretariat introduced a document ([E/CN.18/2026/5](#)), outlining: the voluntary national report (VNR) cycle for 2024-2026; preparation of the GFGs Report 2026; and an update on the global core set of forest-related indicators. She noted that 48 VNRs were received, four fewer than in the previous cycle.

Many members expressed appreciation for the report, the efforts of the Advisory Group in improving the online format and platform, streamlining efforts, and capacity building efforts by the UNFF Secretariat and CPF. GUYANA, MALAYSIA, MEXICO, CHINA, BRAZIL, and INDIA urged more work on harmonizing and rationalizing national reporting on forest matters to reduce the reporting burden on developing countries and avoid overlap and duplication.

AUSTRALIA expressed concern about the decline in VNRs and supported the Secretariat's recommendation that the omnibus resolution request the Secretariat and CPF to continue enhancing the capacity of Forum members.

Many members also expressed appreciation for CPF work on the indicators. The EU, with CANADA, said finalization of the indicators should maximize efficiency and effectiveness while minimizing overlap and duplication of work.

The EU and REPUBLIC OF KOREA expressed appreciation for the GFGs Report.

Initial Discussions on the Final Review of the Effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) in

Achieving its Objectives: Vice Chair Javad Momeni (Iran) opened this agenda item. The EU said the omnibus resolution should encourage a participatory process and facilitate engagement of all stakeholders. GUYANA urged consideration of results-based payments and financing as part of the review. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA called for stronger linkages between the GFGs and the IAF.

The UK, with the FAO for the CPF, prioritized delivery in a resource-constrained environment.

MALAYSIA recommended an enhanced framework similar to the CBD or UNFCCC.

VIETNAM underscored synergy and coherence in international responses to global forest-related challenges and sustainable resources for the Secretariat. AUSTRALIA urged a focused, streamlined approach and, with INDIA, supported an intersessional process with structured, accessible preparations.

CHINA queried the review's timeline, expert team composition, and indicators. The PHILIPPINES called for a forward-looking review, to strengthen forest governance beyond 2030.

Emphasizing the UNFF's role as a universal intergovernmental process, BRAZIL urged consideration of all options for IAF support.

The FAO, for the CPF, committed to collaboration and adaptation, recommending review of performance, strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and "future beyond 2030."

UNFFS Director Biao said the process is evolving to address ongoing UN reform.

Trust Fund: The Secretariat presented the relevant document ([E/CN.18/2026/6](#)) outlining Trust Fund contributions and expenditures. It shows reductions of: 53% in voluntary contributions in 2025; 15% in the regular budget; and 19% in staffing costs, owing to the UN80 reform initiative.

Director Biao outlined the gap between available resources and responsibilities of the Secretariat, calling for significantly increasing the resources of the Fund.

The Secretariat proposed to: invite members to shift to multi-year voluntary contributions; consider the proposals contained in the information paper on Secretariat needs and gaps; and encourage dedicated funding for travel of developing country representatives.

The EU called for broadening the donor base and monitoring the link between allocated resources and their impact. BRAZIL stressed voluntary contributions are not a sustainable solution for permanent mandates. JAMAICA supported the call for multi-year contributions and dedicated funding for travel.

In the Corridors

While the day started on a productive note with discussions on communication and outreach and interlinkages between the GFGs and the SDGs, the mood swiftly changed when the agenda shifted to means of implementation and the Trust Fund. Although the availability of resources had already been discussed during UNFF20, participants expressed surprise at the severity of the funding situation when Director Biao announced that the regular budget for 2025 was only USD 4,000, saying that even that still only exists as a pledge.

Some expressed hope that the report on the Trust Fund will serve as a wake-up call to incentivize increased contributions. While funding issues are not unique to the UNFF process, the impacts are more severe due to the small size of its Secretariat. With several proposals put forward, it remains to be seen whether the donor base will be expanded or contributions will start to increase again.