

UNFF21 Highlights: Thursday, 14 May 2026

The fourth day of the 21st session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF21) continued informal negotiations on the draft omnibus resolution, which will dictate follow-up through 2028 on the matters discussed by UNFF21 in the first two days.

Informal Consultation on the UNFF21 Omnibus Resolution

Vice Chair Abderrahim Houmy (Morocco) presented a revised draft of the omnibus resolution, noting it incorporated the previous day's comments. He stressed that in collaboration with the Bureau, the Secretariat used previously agreed language where possible. He called on members to avoid introducing new paragraphs at this point.

Country-led Initiatives (CLIs): Delegates debated on using the term “wildfire,” “wildland fire,” or “forest fire”.

One developed country, supported by others and opposed by many developing countries, suggested technology collaboration should happen “on voluntary and mutually agreed terms.” A developing country, supported by several others, and opposed by one developed country, suggested also strengthening technology transfer.

A regional group proposed adding that implementation of the Vienna Call for Action from the Global Summit on “Advancing Sustainable Forest-based Bioeconomy Approaches,” as it highlights the contribution of sustainable forest management (SFM) in sustainable bioeconomy approaches, the three pillars of sustainable development, and resource efficiency. They also proposed to note “with appreciation” the outcome of the Summit. Another member expressed discomfort in singling out the outcome of one CLI, proposing instead to take note with appreciation “the convening” of the Summit.

Enhanced Cooperation with Partners: Several delegations preferred to “welcome,” rather than “take note,” of progress by Major Groups and other stakeholders in implementing the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF). One suggested deleting reference to progress “including through the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) Major Group internal coordination mechanism.” A delegation proposed to “invite Major Groups to report on progress at UNFF22.” Another asked to add “international” and “non-governmental organizations and processes with forest-related programmes” to the invitation to consider integrating the UNSPF and the Global Forest Goals (GFGs) into their workplans and another added “partners.”

Communication and Outreach: A participant asked to include activities by Major Groups in an acknowledgement of communication and outreach activities.

Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting: In the paragraph on the use of forest data and information, several delegations requested adding reference to other relevant “nationally validated” sources, although another objected.

A participant requested reference to “international organizations and processes” regarding further streamlining of forest-related reporting.

Interlinkages of GFGs and Major Global Forest-related Developments: A developed country, supported by another, requested the resolution take note of global initiatives “in relation to” the multilateral environment agreement (MEA) processes, rather than “under” the MEA processes.

A developing country asked for the acceleration of implementation of the UNSPF to be “subject to the availability of means of implementation by countries, and their national circumstances, priorities, and capabilities,” rather than “as appropriate.” They also requested removal of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP30) Presidency initiative to advance the Roadmap on Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030, claiming it was not a consensually agreed document. This was supported by a couple of other developing countries but opposed by a developing country, several developed countries, and a regional group. They also proposed text on activities being in accordance with World Trade Organization rules, but this was strongly opposed by a regional group.

A stakeholder representative asked to specifically mention the forest pavilion and participation at the Rio conventions, but this saw some opposition for being too specific. A developing country proposed text on ensuring awareness-raising on forest-related issues across the COPs of the three Rio conventions.

A paragraph welcoming efforts in support of the GFGs under the COP 30 Action Agenda was to be considered in informal consultations in a small group.

A regional group, supported by a developed country, requested the Secretariat to merge text on the UN Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation and on awareness raising of forest-related issues across other venues.

A developing country proposed language encouraging more widespread participation of organizations in observing the Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation.

There was recurring discussion on use of the term “forest degradation,” with proponents of using it claiming it is well-defined and outlined in GFG 1, while others disagreed and said it is thus not useable. There was a brief discussion on whether the technical term needs a politically-agreed definition.

Means of Implementation: A paragraph on Indigenous knowledge, land tenure, and rights was discussed at some length. One delegation suggested also referring to “Peoples of African Descent.” Others disagreed, saying the application is regional and the reference new to the process. One regional group suggested using language agreed in the [UNFF19 omnibus resolution](#) that, among others, refers to “Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and relevant stakeholders.” Another proposed language from the [UNFF19 High-Level Declaration](#) “invit[ing] the Forum to strengthen collaboration across sectors and facilitate partnerships to promote sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches and restoration of forest ecosystems, contributing to improved livelihoods, including through building capacities of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities.”

Several participants stressed the “urgent” need to strengthen provision and mobilization of resources, adding they should be “adequate, timely, and accessible.” One favored “addressing” rather than “halting and reversing” deforestation and forest degradation.

A regional grouping called for reference to new resources from all sources and “at all levels”, and, with another delegate, replacing “including public resources” with “as well as the central role of national policies, domestic resources, and development strategies,” although several delegates from developing countries objected to this. The paragraph was forwarded to a small group for further discussion.

One delegate, on behalf of a grouping of tropical forest countries, reiterated, while slightly modifying, a previously proposed paragraph that UNFF21 “welcomes the launch of the Tropical Forest Forever Facility as an innovative global financing initiative, encourages countries in a position to do so to consider investing in it, and invites developing tropical forest countries to engage with it, as appropriate and in accordance with their national circumstances, as a collective platform to mobilize long-term, predictable, and accessible finance for the achievement of the UNSPF.”

Initial Discussion on the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) Final Review: Some developed countries proposed adding text allowing for analysis of the report on the IAF final review intersessional consultation and allowing for time to discuss it during UNFF22. A few developing countries objected, referencing past decisions that set the discussion of the final review to begin at the policy-focused UNFF23.

Impacts of the UN80 Initiative Pertaining to the Forum and its Secretariat: This session saw delegates from developed and developing countries debate over recommending that the UN General Assembly maintain the current ability of the Secretariat to support the Forum. Some countries recommended removing “maintain” and “current” so as not to limit a potential increase in the future. One member, supported by most, suggested bypassing time-bound quantifiers and recommended “ensuring the provision

of adequate, stable, and predictable resources, commensurate with the Forum’s mandate and workload.”

Several developed countries proposed to replace “decides” with “invites” or “encourages” appropriate resourcing to be reviewed within the context of the preparatory process of the 2030 IAF final review.

A developing country strongly opposed making prescriptive text changes about UN80, explaining it is not up to the Secretariat to counter the impacts.

In a paragraph urging Forum members in a position to do so to contribute to the Trust Fund, one regional group suggested, with several developing countries objecting, “encouraging members and others in a position to do so, to consider contributing on a voluntary basis.”

Afternoon Plenary

At 5:00 pm, the plenary reconvened to take stock of the negotiations on the draft omnibus. Delegates heard that most issues in the text had been resolved, with the most contentious paragraphs considered by a small informal group, co-facilitated by Brazil and the European Union, developing compromise language on a few issues and developing alternative paragraphs on each outstanding issue for the Bureau to consider.

Chair Ismail Belen (Türkiye) told Forum members that the Bureau would work out “bridging text” overnight for all outstanding issues and circulate a final text by email for approval on Friday morning. Members questioned whether the text would be considered take-it-or-leave-it or could be further revised. The Secretariat explained that since the UN Headquarters is requiring the Forum to conclude by 1:00 pm on Friday, there will not be sufficient time for major renegotiation of text.

In the Corridors

Hopes that the Forum would conclude omnibus resolution negotiations early faded as talks became mired in to-and-fro on longstanding points of contention in UN forums and international conventions, such as the terms for technology transfers, how to refer to Indigenous People and local communities, and what adjectives to use for the mobilization of resources. “We do this dance over and over in international negotiations, year after year” noted a seasoned delegate, “and everyone has their own favorite ‘previously agreed language’ ready to back up their stance.”

Negotiations picked up speed in the afternoon with a small group—that ended up including 36 countries—running in parallel with the main informal negotiations of the resolution. One-person delegations had to choose where was the more worthwhile place to be.

With the informal consultations running out the clock, one delegate expressed surprise at the fact that there will be little to no time on Friday to discuss the latest draft proposal. “There is barely time to do anything other than adopt it tomorrow,” he exhaled. Another was quick to suggest, however, that the relatively short draft had already undergone two days of extensive negotiations. “At some point we need to stop and place our trust in the Bureau to wrap up the proposals.”

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis from UNFF21 will be available on Monday, 18 May 2026, at enb.iisd.org/un-forum-forests-unff21