

SECOND MEETING OF THE UN FORUM ON FORESTS' OPEN-ENDED INTERGOVERNMENTAL *AD HOC* EXPERT GROUP ON THE INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENT ON FORESTS STRATEGIC PLAN: 24-28 OCTOBER 2016

The UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) held the second meeting of its Open-ended Intergovernmental *Ad Hoc* Expert Group (AHG2) on Matters Referred to in Paragraph 48 of UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 2015/33 "International Arrangement on Forests Beyond 2015" from 24-28 October 2016 at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. Over 80 participants attended the meeting, including representatives from Member States, Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations, regional organizations and Major Groups.

During AHG2, participants provided input on the Co-Chairs' proposals for the Strategic Plan 2017-2030 (the Strategic Plan) and the Quadrennial Programme of Work (4POW) 2017-2020. They also discussed a number of non-papers on, among others: the guiding principles for the inclusion of goals and targets; existing intergovernmentally agreed targets, objectives, goals and commitment on forests; forests' contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals; and an indicative list of categories of forest-related data where baseline information is available or can be estimated.

Throughout the week, AHG2 participants actively engaged with their tasks, reaching broad consensus on the number of goals to be defined within the Strategic Plan. The guidance they provided on this and the 4POW will be used to refine the Co-Chairs' proposals for consideration by Member States at the upcoming UNFF Working Group and Special Session to be held in New York in January 2017.

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, 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 for Action, and the UNFF's work with the CPF. Delegates also recommended establishing three AHGs to provide technical advice to UNFF on: approaches and mechanisms for monitoring,

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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 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 the required strategic approaches and actions 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 the AHEG1 meeting, UNFF12 met briefly to elect its Bureau.

AHEG2 REPORT

AHEG Co-Chair Hans Hoozeven (Netherlands) opened AHEG2 on Monday morning, emphasizing the need for proposals that are ambitious and actionable, and provide building blocks for transformational action around forests.

Co-Chair Gholamhossein Dehghani (Iran) reminded participants that AHEG2 is tasked with: developing proposals for the Strategic Plan 2017-2030 and the 4POW 2017-2020; and replacing reference to the MDGs in the UN Forest Instrument with an appropriate reference to the SDGs and targets.

UNFF12 Chair Peter Besseau (Canada), said, “We are meeting at a watershed moment,” and have the opportunity to draft the future of the UNFF. He emphasized that the *status quo* must not continue, and urged delegates to have the courage to think outside the box.

UNFF Director Manoel Sobral Filho outlined progress since AHEG1, including: participatory input to develop firmer proposals for the Strategic Plan and 4POW; two expert meetings on enhancing regional and subregional involvement in the IAF; and progress of the GFFFN in facilitating access to forest-related funding.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Co-Chair Dehghani introduced the proposed agenda (E/CN.18/2016/AHEG/4) and associated organization of work, which were adopted. The UNFF Secretariat introduced the documents for AHEG2, including: the revised Co-Chairs’ proposal on the Strategic Plan and 4POW; and the report of AHEG1 (E/CN.18/2016/AHEG/3).

TASKS OF THE EXPERT GROUP

Co-Chair Hoozeven presented the Co-Chairs’ revised proposals for the Strategic Plan and the 4POW. On the Strategic Plan, he urged AHEG2 to consider which of the options proposed for vision, mission and global forest goals would be forwarded to UNFF12.

PRESENTATIONS ON OUTCOMES OF EXPERT MEETINGS: Seyed Jaleddin Alavi Sabzevari, Deputy Secretary General, Economic Cooperation Organization, presented outcomes of the Expert Meeting on Enhancing Regional and Subregional Involvement in the Work of the IAF held on 26-28 September 2016 in Tehran, Iran. He reported on proposals from the regional and subregional groups to strengthen their contribution to the IAF, including through ensuring more visibility in UNFF, establishing an inter-regional coordination mechanism on forests, and prioritizing the financial requirements for capacity building and forest-related projects.

Children and Youth representative Anna Stemmerger reported on the meeting on Strengthening Major Groups and Other Stakeholders’ Engagement in the IAF that took place on 5-6 October 2016 in Ottawa, Canada, with representation from seven of the nine UNFF accredited Major Groups. She said key outcomes from the meeting included underscoring Major Groups’ role in, *inter alia*: being key partners in the IAF; engaging in the development and prioritization of the 4POW; contributing to cross-sectoral outreach; and facilitating the creation of networks on cross-cutting issues such as poverty reduction and trade and

illegal logging. She also highlighted agreement that Major Groups should hold an observer seat on the UNFF Bureau, and establish a multi-stakeholder advisory group.

During the ensuing discussion, participants addressed: the incorporation of the meetings’ outcomes into the Co-Chairs’ proposals; the importance of capacity building; the role regional groups see the UNFF and its partners playing; and support for Major Group initiatives and participation.

Many AHEG participants cautioned against establishing another layer of organization for regional coordination, with Switzerland stressing that UNFF meetings are the place for information sharing, and, supported by Nigeria, coordination. Responding, Sabzevari stated that at the heart of the coordination issue is how to create and enhance coherence and synergies. Brazil underscored the value of the proposals on regional and subregional partnerships at this juncture for the future of the IAF.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2030: This item was addressed by participants from Monday through Wednesday. Delegates initially made general comments on the Co-Chairs’ proposal. Sweden expressed support for designing a Strategic Plan that speaks to the whole UN system and “elegantly” coordinates with existing UN goals and targets. Canada suggested more attention be focused on the Strategic Plan rather than the 4POW, since the Strategic Plan needs to stand up to its 13-year lifespan.

Japan underscored the main drivers of deforestation, and also called for addressing targets outside the forest sector, including how the forest sector can contribute to the Paris Agreement. Slovakia, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States (EU), expressed support for a strategic plan that operationalizes the UNFF11 resolution and provides clear, concrete guidance for the future work of the UNFF.

Venezuela called for a strategic plan that promotes and facilitates SFM implementation. Switzerland emphasized the need to enact synergies among existing goals, targets and indicators, rather than create new obligations for countries, drawing attention to already negotiated forest-related targets under many of the SDGs.

Sweden, Chile, the US and others noted the low level of awareness of the UNFF and the IAF globally. Colombia and India called for a communication strategy to raise awareness. The Africa Forest Forum said that the messages in the Strategic Plan should be universal, stressing that the public is already aware of forest loss and wants it to be addressed. China underscored communicating positive messages on forests and stated that targets should be time-bound and include a set of indicators.

The US said there is a need to recognize the value and appeal of concrete, measureable actions. Germany added that the thematic clustering of targets and linking to targets of other global agreements is crucial in retaining coherence and synergies within UN processes. Australia cautioned that such linkages may reduce applicability for states that are not parties to other treaties.

Ukraine said that intersessional work and CPF activities should be included in the 4POW. Brazil said SFM needs to be more strongly emphasized in the Strategic Plan. New Zealand emphasized the need to ensure the Strategic Plan is endorsed and adopted by the UN.

Introduction: New Zealand called for simpler, more accessible language, including recognition that development can be decoupled from deforestation. The US supported a shorter introduction, and China suggested text boxes be reformulated into paragraphs or moved to annexes. Canada suggested clearer language to communicate the comparative advantages of the IAF.

South Africa, for the African Group, supported by Switzerland, called for more explicit reference to trees outside forests. The EU called for distinguishing between gross and net deforestation, and Pakistan suggested the reference to “10 million soccer fields” of natural forests lost annually be replaced by actual figures.

Mauritius called for mention of ethical reasons for conserving forests, including for future generations and ecosystem services. Brazil supported more clearly expressing that all SDGs link to forests. On SDG 15 (Life on Land), Australia said forests “provide resilience against” rather than “control” floods, landslides and avalanches. On opportunities for enhanced actions on SFM, Australia urged for more reference to mitigation of risks and sustainable livelihoods. Iran called for consistent use of language adopted by the UN General Assembly.

The EU cautioned against referring to the GFFFN as innovative, adding that its modalities are not yet known. Switzerland cautioned on referencing the Green Climate Fund (GCF) as the “single largest global financing source for climate mitigation and adaptation,” since it is not known if this will hold true over the Strategic Plan’s life span.

Farmers and Small Forest Landowners called for enhancing and strengthening the role of non-UN bodies, including the CPF, Major Groups and other stakeholders. The EU supported reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Indigenous Peoples urged inclusion of “Indigenous peoples as rights holders” to be listed as a partner that IAF actively engages with.

Vision and Mission: Co-Chair Hoogeveen presented the four options proposed for the vision and three for the mission. On the *vision*, Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, India, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, Ukraine and Venezuela supported option two (a world where forests everywhere are valued, sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development, and provide economic, social and environmental benefits to all). The US said the vision and mission should be moved to the introduction, and supported a combination of option two with option one (a world where forests are protected and sustainably managed, providing economic, social and environmental benefits for all). Australia favored a combination of option two with option four (a world where forests everywhere are protected and sustainably managed, their economic, social and ecological values are maintained and enhanced for the benefit of present and future generations, and the harmonious and sustainable development of people and nature is realized).

Japan said that the vision should remain short, concise and balanced, and suggested including reference to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Switzerland stated that alternate options are, among other things, either too long or not holistic enough. Colombia urged including reference to the benefit of forests for present and future generations.

On the *mission*, New Zealand supported option one (promote implementation of SFM and enhance the contribution of forests and forest-based goods and services to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including by strengthening cooperation, coordination and political commitment at all levels). Brazil also favored option one, but suggested including language “to enhance cooperation, coordination and political commitment to promote SFM at all levels and enhance the contributions of forests to sustainable development.”

Switzerland supported, in principle, option two (promote implementation of SFM and enhance the contribution of forests and forest goods and services to the realization of the SDGs in the

2030 Agenda), but noted merit in Brazil’s intervention as focusing largely on the SDGs may be too restrictive. Pakistan and Ecuador also supported mission option two.

Chile and Venezuela supported a more concise version of option three (provide a coherent, effective, transparent and participatory global framework for enhanced policy development, policy implementation, policy coordination and political commitment to halt deforestation and forest degradation, achieve SFM and enhance the contribution of all types of forests and trees outside forests to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and its SDGs, for the benefit of present and future generations). Colombia also supported this option.

Slovakia, for the EU, noted his region favors a shortened form of option three.

Canada, China, Ukraine, and the US, supported mission option four (the IAF objectives serve as the mission statement).

Children and Youth supported mission option three, and called for language that acknowledges the environmental, social and economic pillars of sustainable development.

Co-Chair Hoogeveen noted that South Africa, for the African Group, had not reflected their preference on vision and mission. South Africa, for the African Group, requested further time for regional consultations and requested that they provide their input on Tuesday morning. Delegates agreed.

On Tuesday morning, South Africa, for the African Group, supported vision option two, and suggested adding references, supported by Ukraine, to “all types” of forests, “cultural” as well as economic, social and environmental benefits, and “for present and future generations.” He further reported that the African Group also supported mission option three but added that it may not be a realistic objective to halt deforestation, suggesting replacing “halt” with “reduce.”

Global Goals, Associated Targets, Thematic Areas and Priority Actions: On Monday, Co-Chair Hoogeveen introduced this section, suggesting that each aspect be addressed in turn. On the global forest goals, Brazil said her country is happy with maintaining, or enhancing, the current GOFs. On global goal three, she suggested that the present language be amended to place more emphasis on SFM.

New Zealand, with Canada and Venezuela, noted support for option two, which comprises four goals: replication of GOFs 1-3 (reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM; enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits; and increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests); expansion of GOF 4 (reverse the decline in ODA for SFM and mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM and strengthen scientific, technical and technological cooperation and partnerships) to include scientific, technical and technological cooperation; and the inclusion of two cross-cutting strategies (CCS) on promoting governance frameworks to implement the UN Forest Instrument, and enhanced coherence and synergies on forest-related issues. New Zealand further stated that the addition of the two CCS add significant value.

The US, with China and Ukraine, favored option one, which comprises six goals: four goals, which encompass GOFs 1-4; the expansion of GOF 1 to include enhancing the resilience of forests to climate change; the expansion of GOF 4 to include scientific, technical and technological cooperation; goal five on promoting governance frameworks to implement the UN Forest Instrument; and goal six on enhanced coherence and synergies on forest-

related issues. The US suggested giving more prominence to the rationale for the global goals. Australia expressed support for global forest goals option one and two.

The EU stated that the global goals should be associated with the Strategic Plan and the thematic areas for action as a “package,” thus making this a complex issue.

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) strongly supported including reference to strengthening scientific, technical and technological cooperation. Sweden asked for clarification on the introduction of new terminology “global forest goals.” Co-Chair Hoozevee said it is a result of written submissions and proposals during and since AHEG1.

On associated targets for global goal one (reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and enhance the resilience of forests to climate change), Ukraine cautioned against reference to “natural forests,” since countries define this term in different ways. She further suggested committing to efforts to combat fire, rather than guarantee reducing the global area affected by fires.

Finland requested using the original text of already negotiated targets such as the 2030 Agenda and Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Brazil, the EU and Switzerland highlighted the importance of appropriate and measurable indicators for every target.

Japan and the US said the AHEG may not be able to agree on a large set of newly created targets in the limited time available, with the US suggesting a focus on creating a compelling message for wider audiences and ways of achieving existing targets.

Australia suggested quantitative figures in describing the importance of the global goals and associated targets, and suggested country-led targets linked to their Voluntary Planned Contributions (VPCs). Switzerland urged including indicators to link forest-related objectives, targets and commitments. On enhancing forest-based economic, social and environment benefits, Ukraine said many countries already have payment for ecosystem services (PES) systems in place, and the goal should be to increase them.

On Tuesday, Brazil and Austria supported changing the title “global forest goals” to “strategic forest goals,” and Australia suggested “sustainable forest goals.”

Germany noted progress, saying that there is general agreement on six objectives. He asked “what makes a plan strategic and how do you make it strategic?” expressing concern that the current format of the proposed Strategic Plan is regressing back towards plans such as the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) and the IPF/IFF. He called for: flexibility; collaborative thinking on how targets will fit in; and use of currently agreed upon targets. The African Forest Forum, supported by Ukraine, noted the need for significant time for in-depth discussions on indicators. China and Canada said AHEG2 should concentrate on identifying key targets and that a joint technical team should later work on delivering a more detailed proposal with numerical targets. Canada, Brazil, Australia, the US and Argentina suggested that targets and indicators should be removed from the Strategic Plan, leaving only the global goals and thematic areas for action. Brazil requested clarification on whether the Organization-led Initiative (OLI) meeting in November 2016 would address targets. UNFF Director Sobral clarified that the OLI meeting would only deal with indicators.

UNFF Director Sobral cautioned against attempting exhaustive discussions on indicators at AHEG2, remarking that the SDG goals and targets were adopted in spite of the fact that discussions on indicators are still ongoing. Farmers and Small Forest Landowners requested the Swiss non-paper on Forests and

SDGs be circulated and discussed, to help achieve the precision needed on goals and targets for the Strategic Plan. Switzerland highlighted the usefulness of the Ramsar Convention’s strategic plan and accessible communication of its goals, targets, tools, actions, resources, actors and indicators.

India called for clarity and agreement on terminology used. Ukraine said it would be best to use agreed-upon definitions to avoid opening discussions and “wasting time” on definitions. Austria called for using indicators from other processes that have already been negotiated and Sweden called for adhering to the negotiated language from these processes.

South Africa, for the African Group, said the targets for 2020 leave very little time for action, requesting extension to 2030. Ukraine suggested targets for 2020 be moved from the Strategic Plan to the 4POW.

Goal One, and associated targets and thematic areas for action: Canada lamented the vagueness of most of the thematic areas for action, and said land degradation should be more closely linked to forests. Niger supported the proposed thematic area for action on land degradation neutrality, highlighting its importance to enhancing synergies between UNFF and the work of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). South Africa, for the African Group, suggested changing “halt” deforestation to “reduce” deforestation, and opined that afforestation in their context refers to plantations, and is thus not a suitable substitute for reducing deforestation. NGOs disagreed with this terminology change.

Sweden urged inclusion of: climate related targets from SDG 13 (Climate Action) and sections on mitigation and adaptation from the Paris Agreement; and forest-related Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Goal Two, and associated targets and thematic areas for action: Indigenous Peoples suggested including explicit reference to Indigenous Peoples and, supported by Ecuador and Chile, reference to traditional forest-related knowledge. Ecuador also supported inclusion of “community forest management.” Ukraine said thematic areas include awareness raising and capacity building. The US suggested indicators should include the contribution of PES to national economies.

The EU said combating desertification is an important area for inclusion. South Africa, for the African Group, said targets that address contribution of forests to food security should be included and supported the US suggestion for targets addressing poverty reduction.

Children and Youth said SDG target 4.7 (By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development) is applicable in goal two.

Sweden said reference should be made to SDG 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), adding that green economy and green infrastructure concepts are key. Brazil opposed reference to these concepts, preferring the terms sustainable economy and sustainable infrastructure.

Goal Three, and associated targets and thematic areas for action: Ukraine expressed concern about the thematic area on expanding protected forests, saying, “We cannot force the creation of new protected forests.” Serbia said “woody biomass for sustainable forests” should also include aspects of sustainable use of woody biomass.

Goal Four, and associated targets and thematic areas for action: The EU, supported by Switzerland, stated that concrete financial commitments should not be included in the Strategic Plan. Ukraine, supported by Chile, suggested adding, “capacity building” to the thematic area on enhancing North-South, South-

South and triangular cooperation. The US said possible indicators could include ODA, PES and domestic resource mobilization. Japan said the GFFFN objective is not to raise sources of funding but rather to act as a financing catalyst.

Goal Five, and associated targets and thematic areas for action: Farmers and Small Forest Landowners supported gender specific targets and suggested thematic areas include stakeholder “consultation” as well as engagement. The US suggested indicators include cross-sectoral platforms, land tenure and ownership, access to information and legal forest-related trade. Germany lamented that there seems to be a narrowing of the goal, underscoring the importance of SFM as the core of the work of the IAF. He underscored that the UN Forest Instrument is part of the framework and tools for using and implementing SFM.

Goal Six, and associated targets and thematic areas for action: The EU, supported by Switzerland and the US, expressed doubt about, and requested clarification on, the added value of a UN Forest Programme.

Implementation Framework: On Tuesday afternoon, Co-Chair Dehghani summarized the chapter on the Implementation Framework.

South Africa, for the African Group, called for consistency in the use of phrases and terminology citing the need for specificity in statements such as “implementation of the UN Forest Instrument and/or the Strategic Plan.”

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) updated participants on activities of CPF partners including: a high-level dialogue during the World Forestry Congress held on 7-11 September 2015 in Durban, South Africa, where CPF principals met to discuss their vision on forests and forestry; and a high-level retreat in June 2016 for strategic discussions on future direction, priorities and focus on CPF member responses to the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

Iran highlighted that many paragraphs come straight from the UN Forest Instrument and therefore are not new language. On adequate, predictable and sustainable resources, he urged clear language to acknowledge the strong link between implementation and financial resources.

Roles and responsibilities: Canada, with China and the EU, supported streamlining this text. The EU and Brazil further urged against repeating text from UNFF and ECOSOC resolutions.

On Member States, Brazil said the sense of the voluntary nature of VPCs is lost and proposed, supported by New Zealand, rewording the text to emphasize that VPCs are dependent on the capabilities of respective Member States. Mauritius suggested combining text on VPC reporting with that of the FAO’s Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA). Japan called for clarity on the difference between the proposed VPCs and voluntary national reporting currently undertaken.

On the UNFF Secretariat, Brazil questioned the necessity and associated costs of an online registry of VPCs adding that some countries may not want such information shared. The US proposed deleting this section.

On the CPF, the EU asked for the link between CPF activities and UNFF sessions, stating that division of labor and clear timetables are imperative in this regard. He also urged clarifying the role of the CPF at the UNFF technical session.

Brazil urged deleting the section on the UN system, saying other UN bodies should instead be called on or invited to support the Strategic Plan’s implementation. The EU urged clarity on the role of UN conventions with respect to forests.

On regional and subregional partners, Ukraine said it is unclear how the inter-regional coordination mechanism on forests will operate, preferring a more simplified coordination mechanism.

Brazil said a new mechanism is not necessary at the moment. The EU underscored the importance of strengthening the interface between regional actors and UNFF, but cautioned against establishing new structures in this regard.

On Major Groups, Brazil noted that this section should focus on Major Groups’ engagement in implementation of the Strategic Plan, saying the text at present leans toward their relationship with the Forum. Children and Youth recommended additional text to clarify the role of Major Groups as key partners of UNFF, and their inclusion on a rotational basis in the UNFF Bureau. Ukraine said participation of Major Groups’ in the Bureau should be as observers. Chile suggested the UNFF Secretariat keep a roster of both non-governmental and governmental experts. Switzerland added that such a roster should be continually updated.

Means and resources: The EU and others urged streamlining and simplifying the text, and called for more balance when mentioning ODA and other sources of finance. He also urged consideration of other funding sources for SFM, including those from private sources.

On the GFFFN, UNFF Director Sobral summarized the GFFFN’s pilot implementation activities, noting that its establishment was guided by the objectives of the UNFF itself. China noted the AHEG has a mandate to set priorities for the GFFFN in the Strategic Plan.

Japan urged operationalization of the Network, but cautioned that text on monitoring and assessing its performance is not appropriate since the Network is designed to be a catalyst for forest financing. The US suggested this text be moved to the 4POW. Australia cautioned on how the GFFFN is represented in the text, and suggested following the example of the Ramsar Convention’s strategic plan to present a concise paragraph on resources.

On the Global Environment Facility (GEF), GCF and other forest funding institutions, the EU said that GEF’s current cross-cutting forests focal area is functioning sufficiently well. The GEF Secretariat provided an update on the GEF’s SFM activities, noting that resources are running out from the 6th replenishment cycle. The US cautioned against mention of VPCs.

On the UNFF Trust Fund, Switzerland said that language should be amended to clarify that Member States are invited rather than demanded to contribute to the Trust Fund.

Switzerland, with Canada and Japan, said the global forest fund cannot be referenced since it is not yet agreed.

Review Framework: Co-Chair Dehghani introduced the review framework for the Strategic Plan.

On evaluating implementation of the strategic plan, the EU underscored the importance of regular reviews to monitor progress and facilitate revision or updates of the Strategic Plan. Japan said evaluating the “sufficiency of resources” is unnecessary because such assessments will always reveal the “obvious fact that they are not sufficient.”

On reviewing implementation of the UN Forest Instrument and the VPCs, the US said the section can be shortened to include introductory statements on establishing a cycle and format for voluntary national reporting and on data sharing arrangements to reduce reporting burdens.

On contributing to the review, follow-up and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the US noted that the text should be succinct in highlighting the contribution of the Forum to the annual follow-up and review of the SDGs. Switzerland said annual national reports should be based on the annual themes of the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

Communication and Outreach Strategy: New Zealand said the strategy should not be “a shopping list” of communication channels and tools. The US, supported by Canada, South Africa, for the African Group, Ukraine, India and Australia, suggested moving priorities and mechanisms of communication and outreach to the 4POW. Brazil favored retaining this text and developing a more detailed section in the 4POW.

Switzerland said UNFF Member States should be involved in preparing outreach materials. Chile remarked on the ambitious nature of the communication and outreach strategy, citing resources as a constraint to implementation. The EU suggested building on available communication and outreach channels in forest-related networks. Children and Youth said the outreach material can also be channeled through Major Groups.

QUADRENNIAL PROGRAMME OF WORK 2017-2020

(4POW): On Wednesday, Co-Chair Hooegeveen introduced the Co-Chairs’ proposal on the 4POW. The US, supported by Ukraine, Switzerland and Australia, said the 4POW is the appropriate place for many of the paragraphs currently in the Strategic Plan, including those laying out the roles and responsibilities of the UNFF, UNFF Secretariat, CPF, UN system and GFFFN, as well as much of the review framework, and communication and outreach strategy.

Switzerland suggested the Strategic Plan and 4POW be more strongly linked thematically, and Brazil suggested stronger reference to strategically advancing the role of the CPF in strengthening implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Brazil suggested moving guidance on the operation of UNFF Trust Fund forward from 2018 to 2017, and moving data collection synchronization and reporting forward from 2019 to 2018.

Japan, supported by the US, said the new two-year cycle is at the heart of UNFF restructuring and, supported by the EU, suggested a focus on how the new UNFF technical sessions will better engage Major Groups and other stakeholders.

On UNFF’s contribution to the HPLF in 2019, Australia suggested adding reference to the Global Sustainable Development Report, which is a key reporting tool of the 2030 Agenda. The EU reminded delegates that the 4POW cannot be confirmed before the Strategic Plan is finalized, and suggested adding reference to intersessional activities and communication strategy.

NGOs lamented lack of mention of Major Groups in the 4POW, and Farmers and Small Forests Landowners bemoaned that the first meeting of the forest partnership forum scheduled for 2020 should be held sooner, since it is a key element of re-engaging many constituents that used to participate in UNFF.

PRESENTATION ON THE GFFFN: Initial stock-taking and outlook: On Wednesday morning, Markku Simula, GFFFN, discussed the activities and lessons learned since establishment of the Network, including capacity building for finance mobilization and facilitating access to forest finance from the GEF and GCF. He noted that the GFFFN’s competitive advantage lies in its convening power, neutrality in promoting forest financing and the catalytic role it plays in the initial phases of project formulation. FAO cited the CPF sourcebook on SFM funding as a useful information source.

The ensuing discussion focused on, *inter alia*: the need for GFFFN to focus on small developing countries, low forest cover countries, and regional and subregional partnerships; the value of capacity building programmes and assistance from international experts; updating the CPF sourcebook so it continues to be a useful tool; and the potential role of the private sector. Brazil queried the cost-benefit ratio of GFFFN funds and results, and

UNFF Director Sobral responded that it has a very high return since the GFFFN is a concerted effort to maximize countries’ chances of receiving “major” funding for forest projects.

SDGS AND FORESTS: On Wednesday morning, Switzerland introduced a non-paper, developed with Chile, containing a matrix developed to illustrate forests’ contributions to the SDGs. She noted the opportunity to link forests to all SDGs and added that the document may be annexed to the Strategic Plan and/or used for outreach material.

Several participants including Ukraine, Australia, China, and the US preferred the non-paper be used in outreach and awareness building rather than presenting it for negotiation as an annex to the Strategic Plan.

Brazil emphasized the need to retain negotiated language from the SDGs. Switzerland cautioned that UN language in outreach material may not be well understood by target audiences. Children and Youth said concepts such as SFM require simplified explanation, adding that the publication could be disseminated on the International Day of Forests.

FAO drew attention to its emerging work on forests and children’s education, which she hopes will provide another avenue for further information dissemination.

INTERGOVERNMENTALLY AGREED TARGETS, OBJECTIVES, GOALS AND COMMITMENTS ON FORESTS:

On Wednesday afternoon, participants discussed a non-paper on existing intergovernmentally agreed targets, objectives, goals and commitments on forests. Participants suggested including in the list, *inter alia*: long term goals and mitigation commitments under the Paris Agreement; the 2007 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) commitment to increase forest cover by 20 million hectares by 2020; and existing goals and targets corresponding to proposed global goals four, five and six, including financing, technical assistance, governance frameworks, coordination and synergies.

Co-Chair Hooegeveen introduced a non-paper listing forest-related data where baseline information is available or can be estimated, circulated to help inform the AHEG about available baseline data that could be used to measure proposed goals and targets.

Ukraine highlighted that some terms have questionable definitions, such as “natural forests” and “sustainably managed forests,” and India pointed out discrepancies between certain parameters, such as forest area and forest cover. China suggested focusing only on key numerical targets such as forest area and carbon stock, since a consensus would be difficult to reach if using less quantifiable data.

India suggested that the Strategic Plan only contain a very small number of numerical targets, while Switzerland suggested embarking on the long-term challenge of filling some of the data gaps, such as the number of people employed in national forest sectors. Republic of Korea said specific figures on targets will make progress difficult because several parameters remain unresolved or unclear, such as forest area and the definition of natural forests.

Germany preferred discussing non-numerical operational targets and emphasized that time at the AHEG would be best spent on filling those goals that still have gaps.

The US expressed concern about the reporting burden, and UNFF Director Sobral clarified that most of the data is compiled from “recurring FAO processes” such as the FRA.

Participants then discussed a non-paper containing text proposed by Major Groups on the roles and responsibilities of Major Groups and other stakeholders.

South Africa, for the African Group, said it is unclear how a multi-stakeholder advisory group will operate and Ukraine emphasized that this group should not have cost implications for the Forum. Children and Youth explained that the advisory group would allow for more flexibility and broader stakeholder participation.

Canada said observer status on the Bureau for Major Groups needs further elaboration. South Africa, for the African Group, added that changes in Bureau membership involve changing the Forum's organizational arrangements and should not be addressed in the Strategic Plan. He further noted that knowledge dissemination and awareness raising is a role for all members and not limited to Major Groups. Switzerland, supported by China, suggested that a more formal status on the Bureau for Major Groups is not necessary. She celebrated the right of Major Groups to speak on an equal footing with delegates during UNFF meetings, and opined that a multi-stakeholder advisory group does not require formalization to function effectively. The US, supported by Germany, suggested reference to the new UNFF technical sessions as a key opportunity for stakeholder participation in UNFF. She also recommended that text on a multi-stakeholder advisory group and Bureau involvement be moved to the 4POW.

The US, supported by Switzerland, cautioned against using terminology not elsewhere in UNFF, including "rights holders."

Germany supported stronger reference to Major Groups' role in providing feedback from the ground and discussing potential collaboration and project work with CPF members. Australia highlighted that disseminating knowledge is a communication task and could be captured under the Strategic Plan's section on communication.

Co-Chair Hoozeveen said a compilation of all comments made will be shared on Thursday morning to facilitate further discussions.

COMPILATION OF COMMENTS ON GOALS AND TARGETS: On Thursday morning, Co-Chair Hoozeveen introduced a non-paper on the initial compilation of comments on global goals and targets.

Australia underscored the need to consider the context in which these goals and targets are being developed, the target audience they are being developed for and the message that they need to communicate. She further suggested developing guiding principles on addressing them, including leaving SDG targets in their original negotiated language. The US concurred and cautioned against increased reporting burdens. Chile urged for concise text. Brazil noted that fewer targets would enable the targets to be known "by heart."

Nigeria, for the African Group, said the goals should be realizable and fulfil the vision and mission of the Strategic Plan. Pakistan said numerical targets should be based on FAO data.

Switzerland, supported by Ukraine, suggested discussions move to small working groups to discuss and refine the text on the goals.

Children and Youth, with Nigeria, highlighted the need for a clear definition of the vision and mission before agreeing on goals and targets.

The EU supported renaming the global goals "strategic goals."

Brazil, the EU, China for the Asian Group, and NGOs supported focusing on a limited number of targets, with China and NGOs saying they should be numerical. Japan cautioned against new numerical targets because of the difficulty in reaching consensus, urging instead to make maximum use of existing targets. Venezuela said targets should be non-numerical and qualitative, and China, on behalf of the Asian Group, supported

qualitative, time-bound targets for those that cannot be quantified. Brazil urged for a focus on impactful, meaningful targets, and thus suggested avoiding procedural targets. Germany opposed, supporting the inclusion of process-related targets and urged for a balance of targets across all six proposed goals.

With Major Groups, the EU supported keeping the current timeframes for the existing targets. With China on behalf of the Asian Group, the EU supported including thematic areas in the Strategic Plan.

China, on behalf of the Asian Group, supported by the US and NGOs, invited the FAO to comprehensively research available baselines and provide suggestions on a limited number of numerical targets. FAO explained that proposing percentage targets would require analyzing baselines and trends across previous FRAs, and said they will try to complete this work in time for the OLI on developing global forest indicators to be held in November 2016.

China, on behalf of the Asian Group, supported by the US, FAO and NGOs, suggested using existing UN definitions for technical terms such as natural forests, PES, and high-value forests. Ukraine requested UN definitions be made available to the AHEG, where they exist. FAO urged the AHEG to use internationally agreed definitions, including FAO definitions, when using data based on the FRA.

Finland, supported by Sweden, urged reference to the overarching principles of human rights and partnerships, climate change, gender equality, eradication of poverty and empowerment of women and girls, noting these are central elements of the 2030 Agenda.

Co-Chair Hoozeveen noted his optimism on progress and reiterated that the AHEG cannot reformulate UN definitions and must follow the UN guiding principles of working on the basis of already agreed goals and targets, and implementing the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR REFINING GOALS AND TARGETS: In Thursday afternoon, Co-Chair Hoozeveen presented the guiding principles agreed on by participants for the refining of the goals and targets.

The US requested that the CPF, in collaboration with Co-Chairs, work on developing baseline data that can help formulate realizable targets. Farmers and Small Forest Landowners said accredited Major Groups would like to continue making concrete proposals to refine goals and targets.

On the guidelines for the chapeau, Canada suggested a statement on the rationale for choosing the goals and targets and explaining that the framework is the vision and mission of the Strategic Plan. Finland recommended removal of reference to specific paragraphs of the 2030 Agenda in the chapeau.

Goal One: The US said the targets on forest cover and resilience and adaptive capacity of forests should be retained. She urged for new targets linked to carbon issues, such as reforestation and biomass.

Brazil opposed considering targets at this time and cautioned against reference to the New York Declaration on Forests and the Bonn Challenge, since these are not universal documents. China, supported by NGOs, opined that there should be no more than five targets for each goal. Australia reminded delegates that the "thematic areas of action" subsection is a useful way of communicating the purpose of the Strategic Plan.

Children and Youth expressed preference for splitting the first goal into three target areas to include key elements of the SDGs, such as building the climate resilience of forests.

FAO, supported by Switzerland, Ukraine, New Zealand, the US, China, the African Forest Forum, Chile and Pakistan, highlighted that goal one has five components: loss, protection, reforestation and afforestation, degradation, and resilience. She suggested one target for each of these components, the first four of which could be quantifiable, with data taken from the FRA.

China suggested a target on forest cover. Djibouti suggested a target on sequestered carbon per hectare. India, supported by Brazil, suggested removing carbon stocks as an indicator.

Switzerland suggested deleting the target on reducing global area affected by fire. India, supported by Brazil, suggested fire-related commitments be moved to the “thematic areas for action” subsection, and NGOs suggested replacing a quantitative fire target with a qualitative target on resilience.

Goal Two: Ukraine proposed separating targets into economic, social and environmental benefits of forests, and the US suggested including reference to food security, urban forests and education. Venezuela and Indigenous Peoples urged adding explicit reference to “Indigenous Peoples and local communities.”

On communities living in extreme poverty, Switzerland said the statement could be misunderstood to mean that the target is to reduce populations of forest-dependent communities rather than reduce extreme poverty. Brazil said monetary income as a measure of poverty is less applicable for forest-dependent people compared to those in cities. Pakistan said this target could be linked with the one on benefits from genetic resources. China called for coherence with language from the 2030 Agenda. Ecuador supported combining this target with those on increasing capacity and forest-related employment skills.

India, supported by Russia, urged reformulating the text on PES, with China and Switzerland recommending that the target be qualitative. Brazil called for clear reference to the benefits of PES for forest-dependent communities.

On equal pay for men and women in the forest sector, Nigeria, for the African Group, with Brazil and Ecuador, said this target should be excluded since wages and salaries are decided outside the forest sector. Children and Youth proposed mentioning young people and people with disabilities.

Regarding the target on annual revenue, New Zealand, supported by NGOs, said this should not be limited to small and medium forest-based enterprises but broadened to “sustainable forest-based enterprises.”

China suggested including a new target on food security and wood energy. He also suggested, supported by Switzerland, New Zealand and NGOs, a target on urban forests.

Australia urged the use of FAO data on employment and GDP in the forest sector.

Goal Three: Finland noted that text in the non-paper is different from the original web text on this goal, with Switzerland and Brazil stating a preference for the original text. Co-Chair Hoozeven said the text on the internet is erroneous, confirming that the non-paper contains the correct text.

FAO noted goal three encompasses three elements: protected areas, sustainably managed forests, and products from sustainably managed forests. She explained the third category is the most difficult to measure, with possible proxies including products from legally certified forests, such as the EU’s Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade programme.

Regarding favorable public procurement practices that ensure sustainable harvest and production, Brazil remarked on the existence of other practices, saying the focus should be on SFM. Nigeria, for the African Group, said favorable law enforcement and trade practices should also be included.

India, Switzerland and Ukraine said the target on certification of timber-producing forests gave the impression that uncertified forests are not sustainably managed. Brazil said SFM should apply to all types of forests.

Japan remarked that there is no baseline data on wood biomass, saying the related target should be qualitative. Russia preferred deleting the target. Serbia underscored the importance of this target due to the large number of households relying on wood biomass globally.

Australia suggested goal three include links to SDG targets 14.2 (By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts...and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans), 7.2 (By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix) and 12.7 (Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities). NGOs suggested also adding targets from SDG 15 (Life on Land) and, with China, the Aichi Targets on coastal and protected forests. Pakistan highlighted that the Convention on Biological Diversity data includes high-value protected forests. Australia noted FRA data includes data on forest area that is sustainably managed as well as forest area that has some protected status.

Goal Four: Brazil reiterated reluctance to have numerical targets under any goal, but stated that any ambitious numerical targets on substance should be supported by similarly ambitious numerical targets on means and resources.

IUFRO, supported by Japan and Nigeria, for the African Group, reaffirmed the importance of including “strengthening of scientific, technical and technological cooperation partnerships” in either goal four or goal six.

On financing SFM, the US, supported by Nigeria, for the African Group, suggested including national budgets as a source of finance. On ODA for SFM, Ukraine suggested deleting reference to forest-based industries. Japan suggested adding a target on public-private partnerships to achieve SFM.

On a proposed target regarding the GFFFN, Iran, Niger, Brazil, China and Nigeria, for the African Group, underscored the importance of a numerical target. Japan emphasized the GFFFN as a tool, not a target and, with the EU and Switzerland, said numerical financial targets should not be included, as they cannot be known up until 2030. Ukraine suggested success be measured by how many countries have achieved their GFFFN-related targets rather than concrete funding figures.

Goal Five/Cross-Cutting Strategy One: The EU with Chile said the statement that the goal will “enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda” should move to the chapeau since it applies to all goals.

Brazil said the positive aspects of incentives and subsidies should be included.

Several participants, including Mauritius, Brazil and FAO, said the target to eradicate illegal logging should be qualitative, since baseline data does not exist. Serbia proposed including “and other illegal activities.”

Brazil, supported by India, China and Chile, said reporting on implementation of the UN Forest Instrument should not be a target. Germany stressed that a mechanism for measuring implementation is an important aspect of this goal.

On land ownership by men and women, Mauritius preferred replacing the term “control over forest land and resources” with “access to forest land and resources.” FAO said baseline data available on forest ownership is not differentiated on gender.

China, supported by Nigeria, for the African Group, suggested including a target addressing fragmentation and weak forest governance globally.

Goal Six/Cross-Cutting Strategy Two: Germany highlighted scope for more targets under this goal, suggesting consideration of private sector and all other forest-related sectors. The US supported qualitative targets. Brazil supported adding a guiding principle of reducing the reporting burden. Farmers and Small Forest Landowners urged reference to Major Group and other stakeholder engagement within this goal's targets.

China, on behalf of the Asian Group, reiterated their preference to have six rather than four goals and two cross-cutting strategies. If the latter is possible, he suggested, supported by Brazil, but opposed by Iran, moving scientific, technical and technological cooperation under goal six.

On the proposed establishment of a UN Forest Programme as the authoritative global body on forests, several participants, including China, IUFRO, Iran and Nigeria, for the African Group, questioned the ambition of such a development and asked for clarification on the implications of such a target.

ADOPTION OF THE CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY AND THE REPORT OF THE AHEG

On Friday morning, Co-Chair Hoogeveen presented delegates with the draft AHEG2 Co-Chairs' Summary and the draft AHEG2 meeting report. Participants went through the draft Co-Chairs' summary paragraph-by-paragraph, and approved the document with minor amendments.

Participants then turned to the AHEG2 report. Switzerland called for including information regarding procedures post-AHEG2, in preparation for the UNFF Working Group and Special Session in January 2017. The EU requested clarification on preparation procedures. China queried if the Working Group Co-Chairs can be elected in advance. Brazil asked whether the AHEG mandates are time-bound, inquiring if the AHEG2 Co-Chairs can continue work until the Working Group Co-Chairs are elected. Switzerland asked if timeframes can be included for documents to be circulated by the beginning of December.

UNFF Secretary Sangeeta Sharma drew attention to paragraphs 46-49 of ECOSOC resolution 2015/33, noting that the mandate of the AHEG Co-Chairs ends at the end of AHEG2. She underscored that if Forum members so desired, they may recommend that the AHEG Co-Chairs carry on as Working Group Co-Chairs, whereby they would be considered Co-Chairs designate and *ex officio* members of the Working Group Bureau.

Colombia, South Africa for the African Group, Chile, the EU, Switzerland, Ukraine, the US, and others recommended that the AHEG2 Co-Chairs continue as Working Group Co-Chairs. The EU requested this be incorporated into the AHEG2 report. Colombia proposed adding that the Co-Chairs will continue preparation of draft documents for circulation in advance of the Working Group and Special Session.

UNFF Director Sobral and Co-Chair Hoogeveen thanked the Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland and the US for their generous financial contributions that made AHEG2 possible. He concluded that the week was a significant step to progress UNFF. Co-Chair Hoogeveen thanked the UNFF Secretariat for their hard work and concluded the meeting by emphasizing how crucial SFM is for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, saying that we can move from "dreaming the impossible dream" to "living the impossible dream." He closed AHEG2 at 1:15 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF AHEG2

Country-nominated experts arrived in Bangkok for the second of two Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Groups (AHEGs) mandated to develop detailed proposals for the Strategic Plan 2017-2030 and the Quadrennial Programme of Work 2017-2020 with many noting that this would not be like AHEG1, held in April 2016, which was a straightforward stock-taking of options.

This week was a much more in-depth consideration of the Co-Chairs' proposals for both texts. AHEG2 came three months before the UNFF Working Group and Special Session—where the Strategic Plan and the 4POW are expected to be adopted—and six months prior to UNFF12, which will be the first opportunity to deal with implementation of the plans. The week got underway with a little less enthusiasm than was seen at AHEG1, as delegates began working through the Co-Chairs' proposals in a somewhat quiet manner, prompting some participants to question how many had "done their homework" on the preparatory documents. Optimism and enthusiasm, however, slowly resurfaced as the agenda turned to goals and targets, and participants started to engage more vocally, which was perhaps understandable given that the majority were foresters as opposed to policy experts.

Key questions still remain though. Has AHEG2 helped create a solid platform for negotiation on the Strategic Plan and 4POW in January? Have experts' views been holistic enough to produce a truly reinvigorated UN-wide strategy on forests, beyond the traditional components of the IAF? Will it help reinforce forests' importance within the UN system and beyond the forest sector?

AVOIDING THE GHOSTS OF THE PAST

Over the course of the five days, participants covered both draft documents, with a notable focus on the mission, vision, goals and targets of the Co-Chairs' proposals for the Strategic Plan. This focus was well-founded and much needed, as such sections will provide the core of a robust UN-wide framework that places forests as a key partner for sustainable development. Steady progress—especially on potential targets and associated indicators—was made easier by the hard work of the Secretariat and Co-Chairs, who had a number of late nights to make sure revised documents and non-papers were ready for delegates the next morning.

At the heart of many of the week's interventions was the widely accepted notion that business-as-usual is not acceptable. As one expert said, "We have the opportunity and privilege to be the architects of UNFF's future, and we need the courage to think outside the box."

Taking that sentiment to heart, and recognizing that returning to the era of MYPOWs will not work, many suggested including strong, bold statements to show definitive intent. Participants also strived to find ways of making the forest agenda more prominent and more understandable to outside audiences.

Many noted the current wave of citizen awareness around sustainable development is a sign that the time is now right to unpack complex concepts such as sustainable forest management. Building on this, suggestions to repackage forest goals and targets using "SDG lenses" and those from other fora was seen as one such pathway towards a reinvigorated message.

Many noted these as clear signals of intent. Indeed, as Co-Chair Hoogeveen mentioned in the closing session, "agreeing on the Strategic Plan and the 4POW is the best signal we can give to underscore the importance of our work on forests, worldwide."

FRAMING THE FUTURE

Clear signals of intent were present from the outset. Although slow to start, participants were mindful of the fact that their input was needed to contribute to a comprehensive proposal for the Strategic Plan and 4POW. This intent was also bolstered by a confidence to move forward on a UN-wide strategy, which was still present at AHEG2, and largely driven by recent key developments shaping the international sustainable development landscape, namely the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.

Many participants underscored the necessity of innovation in formulating the Strategic Plan and the 4POW. This was due to recognition that with contributions to the UNFF being voluntary, and the current climate of fiscal austerity, sufficient resources for implementation are not guaranteed. This meant that in order to advance the forests agenda participants needed to “think outside the box” and seek opportunities through other avenues and take advantage of synergies with other processes. Experts suggested looking to the Ramsar Convention for inspiration on how to deal with issues of clearly and concisely conceptualizing and communicating the relationship between goals, targets, actions and priorities, particularly where resources are limited and not guaranteed. Much like the UNFF, the Ramsar Convention has no formal funding mechanism and it too seeks to raise the profile of its “issue,” wetlands, within the larger sustainable development agenda.

The Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 2015-2024, at the time of its adoption, was heralded as a success due to its ability to establish bi-directional links when defining targets and indicators, and increase and exchange information on wetlands. These were seen as vital to allowing the Ramsar Convention to tap into different funding sources. This methodology, many believed, could be both beneficial to UNFF, and replicable. It was also foremost in the mind of many during the discussions, as the linkages to other processes as well as opportunities for financing were repeatedly emphasized, particularly in the discussions on goals and targets.

In recent years, there has been a lamentable lack of stakeholder participation in the work of the UNFF, but this week saw a notably improved level of vocal contributions from four of the nine Major Groups. Member States also actively engaged with, and encouraged, Major Groups on how they can be more effectively involved in the UNFF. One participant was heard suggesting that the noticeable increase in the Major Groups’ interventions could be due to many see the emerging UN Strategic Plan on Forests as a new opportunity to constructively engage in UNFF and positively engage in the larger IAF. It remains to be seen whether they will feel supported and listened to enough to continue attending future sessions.

BENDING, NOT BREAKING

The Co-Chairs repeatedly emphasized that this session was not a negotiation, but it did, however, provide a platform to test the water on country positions. Having delegates decide to use language agreed to in other fora helped experts make substantive and constructive suggestions, allowing for significant progress. Indeed, much emphasis was put on outside goals and targets, including the SDGs, forest-related Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Paris Agreement. Such discussions shed light on a central question resonating from AHEG1: will the UN Strategic Plan on Forests prioritize outside goals and targets as ends in themselves,

or will such external processes remain the means to achieve the UN Forest Instrument’s four Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs)?

There was an acceptance among participants that both the Strategic Plan and the 4POW will be UN-wide and encompass areas beyond that of the GOFs. For example, they will include cross-cutting issues such as poverty reduction, climate change, stakeholder participation and governance frameworks. It is expected that such goals (with process-related targets) would address UN-wide governance frameworks and cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies.

Central to the “minutiae” is the inclusion of targets and goals, and delegates from the outset showed their flexibility and willingness to accommodate new targets on emerging issues, disagreement over which could potentially block progress in the upcoming negotiations, ultimately hindering the adoption of a strategic plan. They also recognized, however, that resource constraints and voluntary reporting may make monitoring implementation burdensome, and thus all agreed to make full use of existing data reporting mechanisms, particularly FAO’s Global Forest Resources Assessment. Still, though, many noted the opportunities that the GFFFN may present as a catalyst for forest finance to provide resources for implementation, monitoring and reporting activities.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE FUTURE

AHEG2 delegates concluded the meeting with optimism and a strong sense of “job well done.” Participants provided strong guidance on the way forward for the Strategic Plan and the 4POW and were infused with enthusiasm at the thought that a “UN Strategic Plan on Forests” could at last bring what so many UNFF veterans have been calling for. Namely, a chance for UNFF to: effectively engage in broader UN processes; look outside forests and address sectors driving deforestation and degradation; and highlight the contribution of forests to so many of the SDGs, including food security, poverty reduction, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

And with little concern among experts that the Strategic Plan will fail, new questions arose. Were the discussions wide-ranging, yet focused enough, to provide a good “zero draft” for January’s Special Session and Working Group? Does the work thus far allow for a long-term vision that is ambitious, flexible but not burdensome for reporting and resources? UNFF’s 2017 sessions will be the measure of these questions, yet AHEG2 did provide the space for all opinions to be heard and to take the first, early steps to consensus building for an ambitious next 15 years. It may be too early to tell, but delegates, cognizant of these constraints from the outset, seemed willing to work within these boundaries.

What is certain, however, is the enduring imperative in all of this to ensure that forests’ role in—and importance for—sustainable development is recognized.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

6th International Symposium for Research in Protected Areas: This symposium will gather researchers and protected area managers, as well as individuals from government, business, and non-governmental organizations, to discuss protected areas in mountains and other landscapes. **dates:** 2-4 November 2016 **location:** Salzburg, Austria **contact:** University of Salzburg **phone:** +43-6562-40849 **email:** symposium2017@salzburg.gv.at **www:** www.nationalparksaustria.at/symposium2017

52nd Session of the International Tropical Timber Council and Associated Sessions of the Committees: The 52nd session of the International Tropical Timber Council

(ITTC) and Associated Sessions of the Committees (Finance and Administration; Economic Information and Market Intelligence; Forest Industry; and Reforestation and Forest Management) will address project and governance issues. The ITTC is the governing body of the ITTO, which provides a framework for tropical timber producer and consumer countries to discuss and develop policies on issues relating to international trade in, and utilization of, tropical timber and the sustainable management of its resource base. **dates:** 7-12 November 2016 **location:** Yokohama, Japan **contact:** Steven Johnson, ITTO Officer-in-Charge **phone:** +81-45-223-1110 **fax:** +81-45-223-1111 **email:** itto@itto.int **www:** http://www.itto.int/council_documents

2016 Global Landscapes Forum: The 2016 Global Landscapes Forum, to be held on the margins of UNFCCC COP 22, will bring together experts and leaders to address issues including gender in climate policy, innovative financing for smallholder farmers, and landscape restoration in African drylands. **date:** 16 November 2016 **location:** Marrakesh, Morocco **contact:** Erika Piquero, Global Landscapes Forum Coordinator **email:** e.piquero@cgiar.org **www:** <http://www.landscapes.org/glf-marrakesh/>

6th Meeting of Congo Basin Forest Partnership:

The Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) coordinates efforts to sustain forest resources, enhance natural resource management and improve the standard of living in the Congo Basin. The partnership brings together 70 partners, including African countries, donor agencies, governments, international organizations, NGOs, scientific institutions and the private sector, and convenes biannually to coordinate priority activities, propose actions on emerging issues and share information with others that are active in the Congo Basin. **dates:** 21-26 November 2016 **location:** Kigali, Rwanda **contact:** Dany Dogmo Pokem **email:** dany.pokem@pfbc-cbfp.org **www:** http://pfbc-cbfp.org/news_en/items/MOP-KigaliRwanda.html

OLI to Develop Global Forest Indicators to Support Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the IAF Strategic Plan: This organization-led initiative (OLI), hosted by the FAO, will provide a platform to propose a set of common, concise global indicators for input into negotiations on the UNFF Strategic Plan 2017-2030, to help monitor progress in achieving the forest-related SDGs and relevant goals and targets of other forest-related global processes. It will also provide input on a cycle and format for reporting, and provide guidance on the FRA 2020. **dates:** 28-30 November 2016 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** CPF Secretariat **phone:** +1-212-963-3401 **fax:** +1-917-367-3186 **email:** cpf@un.org **www:** <http://www.cpfweb.org/92408/en/>

CBD COP13, Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety COP/MOP8, and Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing COP/MOP2: The 13th COP to the CBD, the 8th COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the 2nd COP serving as the MOP to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing will take place concurrently. The meetings will be preceded by a High Level Segment on 2-3 December. **dates:** 4-17 December 2016 **location:** Cancun, Mexico **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/cop2016/>

UNFF Working Group and Special Session: The back-to-back meetings of UNFF's Working Group and Special Session are expected to negotiate and endorse the Strategic Plan for 2017-2030 and the 4POW for 2017-2020, based on recommendations submitted by the AHEG. **dates:** 16-20 January 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/>

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/>

UNFF12: The twelfth session of the UN Forum on Forests is expected to be held in May 2017. **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://nr.iisd.org/>

GLOSSARY

2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
4POW	Quadrennial Programme of Work
AHEG	<i>Ad Hoc</i> Expert Group
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FRA	Global Forest Resources Assessment
GFFFN	Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOFs	Global Objectives on Forests
HLFP	UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IAF	International Arrangement on Forests
IPF/IFF	Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/ Intergovernmental Forum on Forests
IUFRO	International Union of Forest Research Organizations
MYPOW	Multi-Year Programme of Work
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OLI	Organization-led initiative
PES	Payment for ecosystem services
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
Strategic Plan	Strategic Plan 2017-2030
UNFF	UN Forum on Forests
VPCs	Voluntary Planned Contributions