

## UNFF12 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 3 MAY 2017

UNFF12 resumed on Wednesday, 3 May 2017, at UN Headquarters in New York. In the morning, delegates took part in a third panel discussion, which addressed the contribution of forests to the achievement of SDG2 (Zero hunger). This was part of the technical discussion and exchange of experiences regarding the implementation of the UNSPF.

In the afternoon, delegates addressed the agenda item on monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR), including hearing a report on: the outcomes of the Brasilia Expert Meeting on reporting to the UNFF; and the CPF Organization-led Initiative (OLI) on global forest indicators. Delegates also discussed the proposed format and cycle of voluntary national reporting to the UNFF.

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

**TECHNICAL DISCUSSION AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES: Panel discussion on the contribution of forests to the achievement of SDG2:** Tomas Krejzar, UNFF12 Vice-Chair, introduced the panel discussion on the contribution of forests to the achievement of SDG2. Paola Deda, ECE, moderated the panel.

Keynote speaker Bhaskar Vira, University of Cambridge, outlined the work of the IUFRO Global Forest Expert Panel on Forest and Food Security. He stated that there is growing evidence that conventional agricultural strategies can result in, *inter alia*, unbalanced diets that lack nutritional diversity and increased exposure to volatile food prices for the most vulnerable groups. He outlined the linkages between deforestation and a higher risk of micronutrient deficiencies, referring to the latter as “hidden hunger.” Vira argued that forest systems can improve: dietary diversity, quality and quantity, especially during lean seasons; and household resilience by providing diverse sources of income. He concluded by highlighting the need to move beyond the “conservation versus agriculture” trade-off towards a more subtle understanding of the food-forest nexus.

Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General, FAO, emphasized that food and agriculture are at the heart of the SDGs. She underscored that food security depends on maintaining biodiversity in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. Integrated land-use planning, she stressed, is key to balancing multiple land uses that promote both sustainable forests and agriculture. Semedo also called for more effort in addressing land tenure rights and security, in order to ensure indigenous users’ rights

to natural resources. Recognizing customary laws and traditional rights, she added, is key to keeping the 2030 Agenda’s promise “to leave no-one behind.”

John Parrotta, IUFRO, noted the traditional links between agriculture and forests, and pointed to three ongoing forest management practices that enhance the nutritional and economic value of food: shifting cultivation; agroforestry; and tree crops. He added that most of these forest systems are underpinned by traditional knowledge, and that more data is needed to inform policy.

Bronwen Powell, Penn State University, US, urged moving away from viewing forest conservation as a trade-off with agriculture, and towards an understanding that forests are important to achieving food security and nutrition. Despite this, she cautioned against the notion that increases in income from forest products will guarantee an improved diet. She called for more data that reflects diet quality and diversity rather than caloric intake, saying this would also provide insight into the food security benefits of forests.

In the ensuing discussion, FARMERS AND SMALL FOREST OWNERS underscored the link between food security and gender, noting that addressing the myriad of barriers women face can lead to increased productivity in agriculture and forestry. The EU requested that the UNFF reference the work of the CBD, IPBES, and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in their input to the upcoming HLPF.

CHILE outlined her country’s development of a sustainable agriculture protocol, which considers, *inter alia*, best practices, water resource use, labor conditions, human rights, and the participation of local communities. RUSSIAN FEDERATION emphasized the role of boreal and temperate forests in global food security. COLOMBIA requested the FAO further analyze and promote the concept of food sovereignty. SOUTH AFRICA noted the alignment of their national development plan to the SDGs, including setting targets on poverty, food and nutrition security, and inequality.

The US highlighted the contribution of sustainable and healthy wood industries in providing jobs and livelihoods for communities and urged forest experts to better articulate, in economic terms, the extent to which forests contribute to food security. GABON emphasized the need to ensure sustainable forest utilization, reporting that the timber and wood production sector is the second largest employer in her country.

GERMANY noted that FAO’s global assessment report, “Forests, Trees and Landscapes for Food Security and Nutrition,” is a good basis to guide the UNFF’s work in this area. NIGERIA said resource conflicts impede food security in many African

countries, and are further exacerbated by drought. Bhaskar Vira said peace-building initiatives can be combined with landscape-based interventions to prevent and resolve such conflicts.

THAILAND highlighted community forest activities in his country and referred to forests as “year-round kitchens for communities.” NEW ZEALAND urged for increasing communication on the value of forests for food security to the wider community. NEPAL emphasized the need for multiple land-use policies for forest landscapes, saying that land tenure reforms globally will enhance the contribution of forests to food security.

### **MONITORING, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING**

Tomas Krejzar, UNFF12 Vice-Chair, introduced the agenda item (E/CN.18/2017/3).

UNFF Director Manoel Sobral Filho noted that guidance for MAR is provided by ECOSOC resolution 2016/33, and that in order to reduce the reporting burden, the reporting cycles of the FAO’s Forestry Resources Assessment and SDGs should be taken into account.

Tomasz Juszczak, UNFF Secretariat, highlighted features of the UNSPF reporting format, including a set of seven questions for each Global Forest Goal and the use of qualitative responses.

BRAZIL reported on the Expert Group meeting on Reporting to UNFF held in Brasilia in February 2017, echoing the need to reduce the reporting burden and follow the FAO’s Forest Resources Assessment and SDG reporting cycles.

Eva Müller, FAO, reported on the global core set of forest-related indicators, which were proposed by an OLI organized by the CPF in November 2017. She noted their effectiveness will depend on the will to use them, but they provide a promising way to decrease the reporting burden.

**CYCLE AND FORMAT FOR VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REPORTING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNSPF:** AUSTRIA called for maximizing the use of existing reporting mechanisms and efficient sharing of such data. CANADA supported careful consideration of the unique value UNFF reporting will add to the global discussion on forests before deciding on the specifics of MAR under the UNSPF.

The US noted that effective streamlining of MAR would involve “pulling” data from other CPF reporting mechanisms, such as the FAO’s Forest Resources Assessment, and, with UKRAINE, supported a five-year reporting cycle. JAPAN stated that reporting should be flexible, including on whether to use an initial baseline of 2015.

SWITZERLAND applauded the global core set of indicators and supported the inclusion of more socio-economic data, rather than data focused solely on forest cover. UKRAINE supported flexibility in national reporting, suggesting that each Member State report on their voluntary national contributions in the format they choose to provide. INDONESIA proposed that the format of voluntary national contributions follow that of Nationally Determined Contributions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, given the similarity of the exercise.

COLOMBIA said there is a need to ensure data collection involves forest agencies that are already formally collecting national data. The EU urged for building upon existing criteria and indicators, citing advances made by Forest Europe in MAR tools.

MALAYSIA highlighted that Member States are already reporting on forests to the World Bank, ITTO and FAO, suggesting that reporting to the UNFF be embedded in the FAO’s Forest Resources Assessment reporting.

CANADA, the EU, AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND said there is need for clarity on the purpose of and expected outputs from reporting. MEXICO said reporting has to lead to outputs that can have impacts on forest management at national and local levels.

AUSTRALIA emphasized that the UNSPF provides an opportunity to tell the lesser-known forest story within and beyond the UN, noting that data should add value to this story.

CHINA stated that INBAR’S Global Assessment of Bamboo and Rattan should be taken into account. NORWAY noted that the reports of voluntary national contributions should be adapted to improve consistency, and supported the suggestion by Switzerland to pilot the feasibility and appropriateness of proposed MAR procedures.

BRAZIL reiterated the need to use indicators from pre-existing sources. GERMANY stated that indicators could help reach a common understanding of SFM. FARMERS AND SMALL FOREST LANDOWNERS suggested that engaging with rural communities would help motivate them to meet targets.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH emphasized the need for strategic reporting and to communicate outcomes to the general public, including through mainstream media. She proposed the UNFF consider a shorter time frame for reporting. FOREST EUROPE reaffirmed its commitment to quality and harmonization of data collection.

In closing, UNFF Director Sobral highlighted that the UNFF Secretariat has received a wealth of reporting data that has not yet been used to its full potential. He also urged delegates to keep in mind that the SDG review cycle is every four years, suggesting the merits of streamlining MAR efforts with this process. Müller encouraged delegates to participate in the upcoming online consultation on the global core set of indicators, and opined that “the core set will only be useful if they are used,” both by this Forum and other relevant fora.

### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

The third day of UNFF12 began with the continuation of the technical discussions on the implementation of the UNSPF, which followed the previous days’ format, with Member States and Major Groups sharing their experiences.

On the sidelines and in the corridors, however, groups of delegates could be found huddled in discussion, debating elements of the draft omnibus resolution that is expected to be adopted during the final plenary session. As many pointed out, a technical session such as UNFF12 should not, as a matter of course, adopt a resolution, but given the current transitional phase the UNFF finds itself in, there are unresolved policy issues from, *inter alia*, UNFF11 that need to be addressed, including MAR, Country-led Initiatives and the HLPF.

Some seasoned delegates were also heard debating if there would be any contentious issues, pointing to the afternoon’s session on MAR as a possible candidate. And indeed, as the afternoon wore on, it seemed that there polarized views were beginning to emerge. The delegates in turn hoped that—with the UNFF12 Bureau sharing the draft elements of an omnibus resolution and scheduling informal sessions on the matter—some consensus on the topic could be reached, preventing a detailed discussion on the resolution on the final day of UNFF12. Several delegates expressed optimism, saying that consensus would indeed prevail.