



COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION

Rome, 16 - 20 July 2018

SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FORESTS

I. Background

1. At its 23rd session COFO considered the need for FAO to support the International Arrangement of Forests (IAF), through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) as Chair and as a member, as well as through its direct contributions to the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). The Committee recommended FAO to support the implementation of the UNFF decisions; contribute to the development and implementation of the strategic plan of the IAF; strengthen capacities both at the global and regional levels; and include these activities in the Medium-Term Plan and the Programme of Work and Budget¹. A full account of actions for implementing this guidance is presented in Miscellaneous document *Progress report 2016-2017*.

2. As one of the major tasks identified by COFO, FAO actively supported the development of the IAF strategic plan and contributed to formal and informal discussions on the subject. During the process the plan went through a considerable evolution became a high level policy document that was adopted by the UN General Assembly in April 2017 as the first ever United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030² (UNSPF).

3. The UNSPF provides a global framework for actions to sustainably manage the world's forests and trees. It facilitates their contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations Forest Instrument (UNFI), and other international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments and goals³. The UNSPF further serves as a reference for the forest-related work of the UN system.

¹ COFO/2016/REP paragraph 54

² <https://undocs.org/A/RES/71/285> and http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2017/4

³ E/RES/2017/4 paragraph I.A.1

4. The UNSPF is a comprehensive document which includes a vision, mission, trends, challenges and opportunities, six Global Forest Goals (GFGs) with 26 associated targets, as well as implementation and review frameworks and provisions for communication and outreach.

5. The mission of the UNSPF is to “promote sustainable forest management (SFM) and the contribution of forests and trees outside forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including by strengthening cooperation, coordination, coherence, synergies, political commitment and actions at all levels”. This mission declares very clearly that the focus in the forthcoming period is on implementation and action on the ground. Accordingly, elements of the UNSPF intend to facilitate action.

6. The Global Forest Goals are focusing on reversing the loss of forest cover; increasing the area under sustainable forest management and the share and contribution of products from such forests to sustainable development and livelihoods; the mobilization of resources; the promotion of governance frameworks and the enhancement of coordination, coherence and synergies. Among the many quantifiable and measurable targets the most notable one is a commitment by member states to increase forest area by 3 percent worldwide by 2030, measured against the Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2015 baseline.

7. A new element of the UNSPF is the opportunity for member States to determine, on a voluntary basis, their contributions towards achieving the Global Forest Goals and targets. Through the voluntary national contributions (VNCs) member states can identify and communicate their intended actions. The voluntary nature allows countries to determine the best and most efficient ways and means of contributing, allowing stronger ownership of and buy-in to the process.

8. To further strengthen its action-oriented nature, the UNSPF has an instrument for operational planning, the Quadrennial Programme of Work (4POW). According to the resolution, the 4POWs are to reflect the Forum’s contribution to the global forest goals and targets for each quadrennium.

9. The UNSPF also contains an open-ended, indicative list of thematic areas for action. The GFGs and associated targets encompass a wide variety of thematic areas where voluntary actions, contributions and cooperation are needed to advance their achievement. These thematic areas reflect and encompass the 44 policies, measures and actions set out in the UNFI.

II. Contributions of FAO

10. The GFGs are all directly relevant to FAO’s mandate. They are fully in line with the organization’s global goals and strategic objectives. An analysis of the thematic areas for action also showed that these are in line with FAO’s programme of work, and in spite of their extensive nature (altogether 93 thematic areas have been identified tentatively), they are all covered, with at least one organizational unit having substantive work carried out on each. Accordingly, FAO can provide substantive support to member states in implementing the UNSPF at various levels.

11. One of FAO’s major contributions is the support to UNFF by providing baselines and periodically updated information for the review of progress in implementation. The Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2020 has been designed to be able to provide timely input and a global core set of forest-related indicators was developed to enhance consistency of international data sets and to decrease reporting burden on countries. Further details on this work have been presented in document COFO/2018/5.1. FAO can provide further input to the UNSPF review process through its major analytical products, most notably the State of the World’s Forests. Other analytical products of FAO may be considered in line with the topics identified in the 4POW.

12. One particular contribution to the work of UNFF and the implementation of the UNSPF could be the involvement of the regional forestry commissions (RFCs) in strengthening the regional dimension of UNFF. Based on the invitation of the last session of COFO, the RFCs considered the

contribution to UNFF with the Forum's secretariat attending all sessions and making an intervention to invite such a collaboration. The RFCs confirmed interest in the collaboration and are awaiting further information and guidance from UNFF on the suggested ways of contribution and collaboration.

13. During the expert meeting on regional and sub-regional input to UNFF, held in Nairobi in November 2017, participants identified an additional benefit of the involvement of the RFCs: "many forest-related bodies and processes which are active at the regional and sub-regional level do not have the opportunity to attend UNFF meetings mainly due to lack of dedicated funds. They do, however, attend FAO's regional forestry commissions and would gain from interacting more substantively with the Forum, emphasizing the importance of bringing forward a universal perspective to regional discussions and vice-versa⁴."

14. The 13th session of UNFF considered this issue further and decided to invite FAO to "provide the Forum at its 14th session an update of the consideration by the 24th session of the Committee on Forestry of the potential offered by the Regional Forestry Commissions, as appropriate, for enhancing regional/subregional involvement"⁵. The Committee may wish to recall that according to the recommendations by the RFCs there are multiple ways of strengthening collaboration including through using the Commissions for regional dialogues related to UNFF.

III. Contributions of CPF

15. The UNSPF devotes a special section to CPF. The Plan invites CPF and its members to support member states "in advancing the global forest goals and targets, including through cooperation and partnership among its members, implementing a joint CPF workplan which is aligned with the Forum's quadrennial programmes of work and identifying collective actions by all or subsets of the Partnership's members, as well as associated resource needs."

16. CPF is expected to support and streamline reporting on progress, contribute to the functioning of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, support monitoring and assessment through analytical products and contribute to the review of the 2030 Agenda. Special attention is given in the UNSPF to the FRA process, as a major information provider and vehicle for collecting and analysing forest-related information.

17. In addition to the recurrent task of supporting the Forum's sessions and meetings of governing bodies of other members as appropriate, the CPF workplan contains nine joint initiatives in support of the UNSPF and the 2030 Agenda. These initiatives cover a broad range of actions including forest and landscape restoration, forest finance, forest information, streamlining reporting, scientific studies on selected subjects, policy learning and communication and outreach. New initiatives are being recommended on sustainable wood products value chains in the context of the 2030 Agenda and green finance.

18. FAO is playing a crucial role in these joint initiatives, by leading or co-leading four of them and contributing to the other five initiatives. FAO also provides a major contribution to the Partnership by steering its work and, together with the CPF secretariat⁶, manage its daily business.

19. The joint initiatives are the main vehicles of CPF to deliver on its mandate and provide direct support to the implementation of the UNSPF. The resource needs of these initiatives are met through in-kind contributions of members, own financial resources and support from the donor community. Experiences show that CPF's activities are largely constrained by the availability of resources, with

⁴ Expert Meeting on Regional and Sub-regional input to the United Nations Forum on Forests, page 8 paragraph 3 (http://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Nairobi_2017_Regional_EGM_summary.pdf)

⁵ UNFF13 Omnibus Resolution, paragraph 22bis of the advance unedited version

⁶ The UNFF Secretariat is performing the functions of the CPF secretariat

only a few members having budgetary allocations for this work, and with fund raising remaining the responsibility of members.

20. A major step forward in this area has been the informal meeting on the sidelines of the CPF conference⁷ in February 2018, where donor representatives expressed their readiness to consider supporting CPF activities and recommended that the Partnership develop joint initiative proposals with clear budgets and indication of resource needs, so that potential donors could use these in their resource allocation planning. In response to this call FAO, together with partners, has developed a new initiative on “Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World”, which will be presented to the 2nd informal donors’ meeting on the occasion of UNFF13.

21. On internal management matters and in response to ECOSOC resolution 2015//33, CPF has developed a new policy document⁸ to be more responsive and support member states more strongly in implementing the UNSPF and other major forest-relevant agreements. CPF also reviewed its membership and decided to accept the secretariat of the Convention on Illegal Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) as the 15th member of the Partnership, aiming to strengthen its capacities in addressing certain elements of illegality in forestry and wildlife.

IV. Points for consideration

22. The Committee may wish to:

- Stress the importance of the work of the CPF in supporting the implementation of the UNSPF and other global forest-relevant instruments;
- Recognize FAO’s contributions to the work of UNFF and invite the Forum to continue to engage FAO closely in its work on the Organization’s areas of expertise;
- Invite the Forum to continue to use major analytical products of FAO in its review functions and consider a deeper collaboration with the regional forestry commissions in strengthening its regional dimension.

23. The Committee may wish to request FAO to:

- Continue to support the implementation of the UNSPF and the 4POW and align these activities with the strategic framework;
- Continue and strengthen its leadership role in the CPF;
- Recognize the contribution to the UNSPF as a core function of the organization and include it in the Medium-Term Plan and the Programme of Work and Budget, and allocate adequate resources to these activities.

⁷ International conference on Working Across sectors to Halt deforestation and forest degradation – from Aspiration to Action, 20-22 February 2018, Rome, <http://www.cpfweb.org/93859/en/>

⁸ <http://www.cpfweb.org/47318-05366ac58ffc533300f705a3ef2533810.pdf>