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REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENT ON FORESTS

I. Background

1. The International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) was established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2000 with the main objective of promoting the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long term political commitment to this end.¹ ECOSOC further decided that in order to achieve the objective of the IAF, an intergovernmental body, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) should be established; and invited the executive heads of relevant organizations of the United Nations system as well as heads of other relevant international organizations, institutions and instruments, to form a collaborative partnership to support the work of the Forum and to enhance coordination and collaboration.

2. In response to the invitation by ECOSOC, eight members² of the Inter-agency Task Force on Forests (ITFF) established the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in 2001 under the chairmanship of FAO. UNFF resolved to initiate work with the CPF in Resolution I/3 in the same year. Membership of CPF grew to 14³ in the following years and the Partnership launched its Policy Document in 2003, outlining its main objectives, functions and working modalities.

3. In 2006, ECOSOC resolved that the effectiveness of the IAF be reviewed in 2015, on the basis of which a full range of options for the future would be considered⁴. At its 7th session, UNFF requested the Secretary-General “to prepare, in collaboration and coordination with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in its capacity as Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, analytical consolidated reports”⁵ to support the assessment of progress and the review. UNFF

¹ Resolution E 2000/35.

² Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR); FAO; International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); UNFF Secretariat; World Bank.

³ International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO); Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF); Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF); International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

⁴ Resolution E 2006/49 paragraph 31.

⁵ Resolution E 2007/42 page 16, paragraph 19.

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further decided at its 10th session that the review should include: the performance of the Forum; the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (Forest Instrument); the Forum secretariat; both the CPF and its contribution to the work of the Forum and the related activities of individual CPF members in support of the Forum; means of implementation; and the Forum within the context of the UN sustainable development framework.⁶ UNFF further decided that the review should be based on input from: countries, CPF and its member organizations, global and regional organizations, instruments and processes, major groups and other stakeholders; an independent assessment; and the results of an open-ended intergovernmental ad-hoc expert group.⁷

II. CPF and its activities

4. CPF has been functioning as a voluntary partnership based on its members' commitment to collaboration and joint activities. CPF has its own governance structure which comprises the permanent position of the chair (FAO), the rotating vice-chair (ICRAF in 2014), and the permanent secretariat (UNFF Secretariat). CPF does not have its own human and financial resources, its activities being financed through its members' (mostly in-kind) contributions as well as through limited financial contributions in specific cases. The extent to which CPF can respond to the invitations of UNFF is largely determined by the availability of resources.

5. Over the years, UNFF has extended an increasing number of invitations to CPF to contribute to, and support countries in, implementing the Forum's decisions and resolutions. In response, CPF has launched several joint initiatives in various fields, which at present cover forest and climate change, forest degradation, forest finance, Global Forest Expert Panels (currently working on forests and food security), a Global Forest Information Service, the harmonization of forest-related definitions, support to the International Day of Forests, contributions to the Rio+20 Summit and its follow-up, a sourcebook on funding for sustainable forest management, streamlining of forest-related reporting, the Wangari Maathai Award, and the Working Group on sustainable forest management. CPF also supports forest communication through its informal Communicators Group.

6. The activities of CPF have been regularly presented to member states through the CPF Framework 20XX,⁸ which is an official session document at each UNFF session. CPF maintains its own website,⁹ which gives a full account of the activities of the Partnership and its members as they relate to the mandate of CPF.

7. FAO has provided considerable contributions to the functioning and outputs of the CPF, not only through its leadership and facilitative role but also through participation in the Partnership's various initiatives and activities. FAO has been part of all joint initiatives, playing a lead role in many of them. Streamlining forest-related reporting¹⁰ has been one of the CPF's first major endeavours, with FAO as the focal agency. Closely related to this initiative, a great deal of work has been accomplished in harmonizing forest-related definitions,¹¹ thus facilitating the collection of comparable forest-related data by major international processes and instruments including FAO's Forest Resources Assessments (FRA). FAO has been supporting the dissemination of forest-related information through the Global Forest Information Service¹² (GFIS) led by IUFRO, serving in the core team.

8. Forest finance has been a major focus of work, with FAO and its partners developing and maintaining the CPF Sourcebook¹³ on funding for sustainable forest management. FAO also has been participating in the work of the CPF Advisory Group on Forest Finance,¹⁴ has supported the related ad

⁶ UNFF Resolution 10/2 paragraph 5.

⁷ Ibid. paragraph 6.

⁸ <http://www.cpfweb.org/73055/en/>

⁹ <http://www.cpfweb.org/73031/en/>

¹⁰ <http://www.cpfweb.org/73035/en/>

¹¹ <http://www.cpfweb.org/73036/en/>

¹² <http://www.gfis.net/gfis/en/en/>

¹³ http://www.cpfweb.org/74750/en/#13293021701493&id=plugin_167325&height=365

¹⁴ <http://www.cpfweb.org/73033/en/>

hoc expert group meetings and, with the help of partners and the generous support from member countries, organized an Organization-Led Initiative on Forest Financing.¹⁵

9. Other highlights of the joint work that featured strong FAO input or leadership include the development of the Strategic Framework for Forests and Climate Change¹⁶; the study on assessing and monitoring forest degradation¹⁷ and the SFM Fact sheets.¹⁸ In support of communication and outreach activities, major input was provided for the celebrations of the International Day of Forests; the CPF Communicators' Group, which FAO co-coordinates with the UNFF Secretariat, was particularly instrumental in facilitating events during the International Year of Forests.

10. In addition to working with Partnership members, FAO has also been providing direct support to the IAF. FAO conducted three projects with generous support from Germany, totalling \$3.5 million for developing a methodology for systematic implementation of the Forest Instrument and its assessment and monitoring; joint capacity building with the UNFF Secretariat for implementation and reporting for over 60 countries; and direct support to the implementation of the Instrument for 12 countries.

11. FAO also supported the UNFF negotiations in various ways, including through participating in various country-led initiatives; providing support in the preparation of session documentation; offering FRA 2012 and *State of the World's Forests (SOFO) 2010* as sources of important background information, and most recently *SOFO 2014* as a means to facilitate the review of progress, in particular towards Global Objective 2. The secondment of staff to the UNFF Secretariat has also been a priority with a total of about 10 years of service from FAO staff in the Secretariat.

12. While recognizing and appreciating FAO's leadership role in CPF, the Strategic Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work in Forestry noted that there are further opportunities that FAO should tap into, taking a more proactive approach to its role and place in the global forestry regime, and it highlighted the role of CPF in this regard. The findings of the Evaluation suggest that the CPF is not taking a strong enough leadership role on key issues and that FAO could strengthen its intellectual leadership in CPF.¹⁹

13. In the Management Response, FAO noted that both the Organization and CPF are operating in an increasingly complex global architecture, where roles and mandates are ultimately defined by member countries, and suggested initiating a strategic thinking process within CPF to further strengthen coordination; as well as establishing an Advisory Group to provide strategic guidance for FAO as chair of CPF. FAO further suggested working with relevant intergovernmental, international non-governmental and civil society organizations to strengthen coordination on forest issues and propose that the CPF engage more strongly with major groups and stakeholders.²⁰

III. Interim results of the review process

14. As stipulated in UNFF resolution 10/2, member countries, CPF members and other stakeholders were invited to provide their views according to the reporting template developed for this particular purpose. The responses have been made available on the UNFF website.²¹ At the time of writing, views from 45 member states and two major groups were available.

15. The Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests (AHEG) met on 24–28 February in Nairobi, Kenya. FAO participated in the meeting and made a presentation on strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement for CPF from FAO's

¹⁵ <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/cpf-oli.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.fao.org/forestry/30137-08bfac75588a0dbd48f2af0ea63bcb4de.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2479e/i2479e00.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.cpfweb.org/76228/en/>

¹⁹ Strategic Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work in Forestry (FAO, June 2012), paragraph 85 and 90.

²⁰ PC 112/3 Supp 1 page 7.

²¹ http://www.un.org/esa/forests/IAF_submissions.html

perspective.²² The meeting resulted in a wealth of observations, as contained in the advance unedited Report.²³ Of particular relevance for the Committee are the observations relating to FAO and CPF.

16. In considering the experiences of regional–global interactions, experts at the AHEG noted the less than optimal engagement at the regional level and recognized that there is a perception that UNFF does not provide the necessary flexibility for input from FAO's Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs). It was noted that allowing an opportunity for RFCs, which meet in between UNFF sessions, to provide direct input to UNFF would enhance regional engagement.

17. Experts noted CPF's achievements in providing consolidated expert views on key issues, its work on forest financing, its joint programmes, the generation of reliable forest information and harmonization of reporting, and the support to country-led initiatives. The complementarity in mandates, the ability to support country implementation and the informal, voluntary and flexible nature of the Partnership were recognized as major strengths.

18. Experts noted, however, that CPF's weaknesses include: a lack of effective working modalities and common programming; members' different agendas, mandates, priorities and governing bodies, which are not all equally engaged in CPF's work; a lack of dedicated funds; a lack of equitable burden- and credit-sharing among members; and no mechanism to assess the extent to which CPF responds to UNFF calls and invitations. Some experts also noted that there was not enough information about CPF's work and accomplishments.

19. Recommendations for improvement included strengthening the relationship between UNFF and CPF members' governing bodies; clarifying the role and mandate of CPF, as well as responsibilities, expertise, gaps and division of labour; grouping members around thematic clusters based on areas of expertise; incorporating the Forest Instrument more explicitly into the members' programme of work; considering the advantages and disadvantages for expanding CPF membership; and establishing a CPF trust fund.

IV. POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

20. The Committee may wish to recognize that CPF is a unique arrangement in the United Nations system, which holds considerable potential to further forest issues within and outside the UN, and be recognized as a unique source of reliable forest information and expertise by various processes, including those related to the Sustainable Development Goals. The Committee may wish to consider present and future opportunities for the CPF and give guidance in particular on the need for a longer term strategy for CPF, the review of its membership, the role of an advisory group to the chair, and collaboration with stakeholders.

21. The Committee may wish to invite member countries to:

- make full use of the findings of the review of the IAF as they relate to the CPF and consider further strengthening the CPF as a uniquely broad inter-agency coordination mechanism, in any future international arrangement on forests;
- coordinate actively across government agencies to guarantee that consistent messages are sent to governing bodies of CPF member organizations;
- make sure that experts attending the 2nd meeting of the AHEG are fully informed of the outcome of the Committee's considerations.

22. The Committee may wish to invite governing bodies of CPF member organizations to:

- support the participation of their respective organizations in the work of the CPF through appropriate guidance;
- facilitate inter-agency collaboration by allocating adequate resources.

²² <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/aheg/IAF/EvaMueller-FAO.pdf>

²³ http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/aheg/IAF/AHEG1_Nairobi_report_Unedited.pdf

23. The Committee may wish to invite UNFF to consider *State of the World's Forests 2014* as major inputs to the review;

24. The Committee may wish to take note of FAO's accomplishments in contributing to the international arrangement on forests and request FAO to:

- continue facilitating the review of the IAF;
- support the Secretary-General in preparing the analytical consolidated reports stipulated in UNFF resolution 7/1;
- continue and step up its leadership role in the CPF, including through developing, in collaboration with members, a vision for the future of the Partnership;
- increase efforts to disseminate the results and achievements of CPF to all stakeholders;
- continue incorporating fully the work under CPF in the Strategic Framework of the Organization, including the provision of adequate resources;
- provide a progress report to the Committee for its 23rd session.