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7.2 Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and collaboration with the UN Forum on Forests

I. Background

1. Consideration of developments in the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and support to the implementation of the UN Forest Instrument¹, and since its inception, to the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF)² including the achievement of the Global Forest Goals and their associated targets has become a regular agenda item for both the Regional Forestry Commissions and the Committee on Forestry (COFO). Supporting work in this regard is also a main task for FAO, which Member Nations repeatedly requested during recent sessions.

2. The 24th Session of COFO, taking into consideration also the recommendations of the Regional Forestry Commissions, requested FAO to continue to support the implementation of the UNSPF and its Quadrennial Programme of Work (4PoW) and align its programme of work in Forestry accordingly. COFO further requested that these activities be recognized as core functions for forestry and reflected in the Medium Term Programme of Work and the Programme of Work and Budget³ of FAO.

3. COFO also considered broader opportunities for cooperation with and support to UNFF and invited the Forum to collaborate with FAO closely on its areas of expertise⁴. The Committee noted in this context the potential contribution of major analytical products, including the State of the World's

¹ https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/UN_Forest_Instrument.pdf

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

³ COFO/2018/REP paragraph 36.

⁴ COFO/2018/REP paragraph 9. c) .(i), 10., 35. b)

Forests (SOFO) and the Global Forest Resources Assessments to UNFF's review function and invited their use⁵.

4. Special attention has been given by COFO to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), a voluntary alliance of 15 UN and non-UN organization, processes and instruments. FAO has a dual role in the CPF, both as its member and chair. Countries repeatedly recognized the role of FAO in the CPF and stressed the importance of the work of the CPF in supporting the implementation of the UNSPF and other global forest-relevant instruments. They further requested FAO to continue and strengthen its leadership role in the CPF and initiate new activities. Among these countries identified, *inter alia*, forest education and support to small-holders as very important and potentially very promising directions.

II. FAO's contributions to the implementation of the UNSPF

5. FAO provides important contributions to the UNSPF in two capacities: as a UN system organization and as a CPF member. In an analysis conducted for the CPF on capacities to address the *Indicative thematic areas for action associated with the global forest goals and targets of the UNSPF*, as contained in its Appendix⁶, FAO concluded that it has capacities on all of the over 100 areas. FAO's activities in Forestry are directly relevant for the 6 Global Forest Goals and their associated targets.

6. Accordingly, FAO's activities provide direct contributions to all of the Goals and their associated targets. In order to make these linkages more obvious and visible, as well as for planning future contributions, it appears beneficial if recommendations for FAO's work in forestry would be mapped against the GFGs, similarly to how it is done currently for the Strategic Objectives. A concrete recommendation is presented for the Commission's consideration in this regard in the current document.

7. FAO's contribution to the implementation of the UNSPF within the framework of the CPF is represented mostly by the Joint Initiatives. Of the ten Initiatives currently running or completed in this reporting period, FAO is leading or co-leading five of them and is a partner in the other five initiatives. Reporting only on the initiatives under FAO's leadership, the following results deserve attention:

- CPF Communicators Network: Following the recommendation of the Network to UNFF14 the topic of forests and biodiversity will be celebrated during the International Day of Forests 2020.
- Wangari Maathai Award: preparations for the new edition of the award is in progress with the ceremony taking place on 30 September, 2019 at the IUFRO World Congress in Curitiba, Brazil.
- Streamlining forest-related reporting: major work has been accomplished and results, in particular the Global Core Set of Forest-related Indicators, were presented to UNFF and COFO. COFO "acknowledged the progress made on the Global Core Set of Forest Related Indicators and invited UNFF and the governing bodies of CPF member organizations to consider the use of Tier 1 and Tier 2 indicators in their reporting processes"⁷. It further requested FAO to continue working with CPF members on further development of the "Tier 2", "Tier 3" and "candidate" indicators of the Global Core Set; and requested FAO to continue to report on progress⁸.

8. FAO worked very closely with all members of the CPF in organizing the *International Conference on Working across Sectors to Halt Deforestation and Increase Forests Cover - From Aspiration to Action*, with the main objective of making recommendations to UNFF, and through it to

⁵ COFO/2016/REP paragraph 53. a)

⁶ E/RES/2017/4 Pages 15-20

⁷ COFO/2018/REP paragraph 10

⁸ Ibid paragraph 12. c)

the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on how to accelerate progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15, in particular target 15.2, to promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally by 2020. (The outcome of the Conference was also presented to COFO.)

9. In order to provide further input to the HLPF, the State of the World's Forests 2018, which focused on the linkages between forests and the SDGs, was also launched on the occasion of the HLPF in New York, during the special forestry event organized by the UNFF Secretariat. These inputs, together with the written submission of the Chairperson of COFO on the Committee's work in relation to SDG 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16, constituted important contributions to the work of the HLPF, where ministers committed to, among others, "the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halting deforestation, restoring degraded forests and substantially increasing afforestation and reforestation globally by 2020"⁹.

10. FAO and partners, notably CIFOR and ITTO, also achieved major progress through the Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World initiative which was launched at UNFF13 in 2018. This initiative aims to strengthen sustainable wood value chains to enhance their social, economic and environmental benefits from production to consumption, and move towards improved policy, incentives and institutional frameworks to increase sustainable production and consumption of wood and leveraging its contribution to the bioeconomy and circular economy. Major accomplishments include raising awareness of the role of wood products in sustainable development, and helping to promote an integrated approach to forest finance, reconciling conservation, climate and production within forest finance strategies, thereby making a direct contribution to the Global Forest Finance Facilitation Network.

III. Collaboration with UNFF

11. In addition to requesting FAO to support the work of UNFF, Member Nations repeatedly invited UNFF to consider collaboration with FAO bodies, in particular the Regional Forestry Commissions, in the context of strengthening global-regional interaction and activities on the regional level.

12. The related UNFF Expert Meeting¹⁰, held in Nairobi in 2017 noted that while many regional forest-related processes do not have the opportunity to attend UNFF sessions, they are regularly participating at the Regional Forestry Commission meetings, which they considered a good opportunity to enhance regional-global interaction and recommended the involvement of the Commissions.

13. The 13th session of UNFF considered this recommendation inconclusively and invited COFO to provide an update at the Forum's 14th session on the potential offered by the Regional Forestry Commissions, as appropriate, for enhancing regional/subregional involvement¹¹.

14. COFO discussed the subject on the basis of document COFO/2018/7.2 and concluded by recommending "deeper collaboration between regional forestry commissions and the Forum through its regional dimension and suggested that this collaboration be flexible and fit to different regional circumstances"¹². COFO's recommendation, endorsed also by the FAO Council, has been brought to the attention of UNFF in the Note by the Secretariat on Enhanced cooperation, coordination and

⁹ E/HLS/2018/1 paragraph 27

¹⁰ Expert Meeting on Regional and Sub-regional input to the United Nations Forum on Forests

¹¹ E/2018/42 paragraph 25 of Resolution 13/1

¹² COFO/2018/REP paragraph 35. d)

engagement on forest-related issues¹³ and through the related panel during the session¹⁴. The policy session of UNFF in 2020 may wish to consider the proposal.

15. An excellent example of one possible method of collaboration is presented by the Asia Pacific Forest Week, where the UNFF secretariat was a co-leader of Stream 5 “Innovating Governance and Institutions” and organized four sessions under this stream. The involvement of the UNFF secretariat was based on FAO’s invitation and appeared very beneficial for both parties. Similarly, Regional Forestry Commissions could be invited to consider UNFF-related topics and provide feedback to the Forum.

IV. Points for consideration

16. The Commission may wish to consider:

- proactive measures to strengthen the linkages between its work and the UNSPF;
- appropriate ways to strengthen collaboration with UNFF as recommended by COFO.

17. The commission may wish to request FAO to:

- continue supporting the implementation of the UNSPF
- establish clear links between its activities and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and report on implementation accordingly;
- continue its leadership role in the CPF.

¹³ E/CN.18/2019/6 paragraph 71

¹⁴ UNFF14 Cahir’s Summary, paragraph 35