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COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

Twenty-sixth Session

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Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and strengthening FAO's contribution to the International Arrangements on Forests, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and its review in 2024

Executive Summary

This document highlights activities carried out since the last session of the Committee and presents progress made by FAO, including through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), in implementing the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF). It further describes relevant outcomes of the 17th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF17) in relation to FAO's work, and describes FAO's, including through chairing the CPF, contribution to the preparations for the midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests in 2024.

Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- welcome the progress and accomplishments of FAO's work in support of the Global Forest Goals, the UNSPF and the CPF.

The Committee may wish to recommend FAO to:

- continue supporting the implementation of the UNSPF;
- continue and strengthen its leadership role in the CPF, and facilitate active participation of CPF members in the CPF midterm review;
- contribute with expertise, data and knowledge products to the policy discussions of the United Nations Forum on Forests; and
- support the implementation of the UNSPF communication and outreach strategy aimed at raising awareness on the multiple benefits of forests, and through this enhance advocacy on forests through relevant global processes, initiatives and events.

Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:

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I. Introduction

1. Consideration of developments in the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and support to the implementation of the UN Forest Instrument, the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) 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 Members recurrently requested during recent sessions, including promoting knowledge on the role of sustainable forest management in sustainable development, establishing clear links between its activities and the UNSPF and reporting on implementation accordingly¹.

2. The UNSPF was adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council on 20 April 2017 and was subsequently adopted by the UN General Assembly on 27 April 2017. The UNSPF features a set of six voluntary and universal Global Forest Goals and 26 associated targets to be reached by 2030. At its 17th Session organized on 9-13 May 2022 (UNFF17), the UNFF held policy discussions on the implementation of the UNSPF means of implementation, monitoring, assessment and reporting, and the preparations for the midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF). The midterm review of the IAF will be carried out at the 19th Session of the UNFF in 2024.

3. This document provides an overview of activities carried out since the last session of the Committee and presents progress made by FAO, including through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), in implementing the UNSPF. It further describes relevant outcomes of UNFF17 in relation to FAO's work, and describes FAO's, including through chairing the CPF, contribution to the preparations for the midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests in 2024.

II. FAO's collaboration with the United Nations Forum on Forests

4. FAO provides important contributions to the UNSPF as a UN system organization, as a CPF member and chair. FAO's activities contribute directly to all the Global Forest Goals and the associated targets of the UNSPF, through major initiatives of the Forestry Division, COFO and the six Regional Forestry Commissions.

5. The Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA)² is the most comprehensive and authoritative assessment of global forest resources, their management and uses. FRA data contributes to the monitoring of the progress towards the Global Forest Goals of the UNSPF. FAO provided substantive contributions by providing the latest quantitative data from FRA 2020 and peer reviewing of the UNFF flagship report "The Global Forest Goals Report 2021".

6. The State of the World's Forests 2022 (SOFO 2022) *Forest pathways for green recovery and building inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies* was launched at the XV World Forestry Congress in May 2022.³ SOFO2022 is a major contribution to the UNSPF as well as to the in-depth review of SDG15 during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2022⁴.

7. Following the COFO25 recommendations,⁵ FAO cooperated with the UNFF Secretariat in preparing an initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable forest management, which was presented at UNFF16.

8. FAO contributes also to the implementation of Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), the communication and outreach strategy of the UNSPF and the Expert Group Meetings

¹ COFO/2020/REP

² More information on FRA is contained in document COFO/2022/6.3

³ More information on SOFO 2022 is contained in document COFO/2022/2

⁴ <https://hlpf.un.org/home>

⁵ COFO/2020/REP, paragraph 33.c.

organized by the UNFF Secretariat (e.g. *Assessment of the Impacts of COVID-19 on Forests and Forest Sector* 19.01.2021 and 2.02.2022, *Preparations for the Midterm Review of the International Arrangement on Forests* 17.11.2021).

III. FAO's contribution to the CPF

9. Following the COFO25 recommendations,⁶ FAO continued and strengthened its leadership role in the CPF, as a member and as chair, and facilitated the work of the CPF in developing the CPF Work Plan 2021-2024⁷, which was presented at UNFF16 in a long version and in a summary version available in English, French and Spanish, and in an updated version subsequently to UNFF17.
10. FAO contributes to the implementation of the CPF Work Plan by providing leadership and facilitating and chairing the CPF meetings, supporting global advocacy, providing its expertise and advice on relevant technical issues and supporting the implementation of the work plan through recurrent activities and joint initiatives.
11. Several actions were implemented:
 - Since COFO25, the CPF held two virtual working group meetings to develop its new work plan and four virtual members' meetings to discuss its activities in support of the implementation of the UNSPF in a collaborative, coherent and synergetic manner;
 - The CPF published two joint statements: *Towards sustainability: Forests solutions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic* (2020)⁸ on promoting the integration of the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of all types of forests and trees outside forests into recovery measures in response to the causes and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to achieve sustainability; and *Challenges and opportunities in turning the tide on deforestation* (2021)⁹ presenting scientific findings on the status of deforestation and on the multidimensional services provided by forests, with a view to supporting countries and other key stakeholders to address the issue;
 - The CPF further published the expanded policy brief *Forests, trees and poverty alleviation in Africa* (2021)¹⁰ showcasing poverty alleviation strategies in Africa and in catalyzing action on all levels, the brochure *Turning the tide on deforestation – flagship initiatives of the CPF* (2021)¹¹ containing information on flagship programmes and initiatives of CPF members on the topic, and a publication *Status of, and trends in, the Global Core Set of Forest-related Indicators* (2022) providing an overview of the GCS and presenting the latest data on the status and trends of the 21 indicators;¹²
 - It further organized advocacy events at HLPF 2021 on *The role of forests in time of crisis: sustainable production and consumption patterns to turn the tide on deforestation*¹³, at UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP26) on *Upscaling actions to turn the tide on deforestation*, at UNFF16 on *Turning the tide on deforestation* and at UNFF17 an event the *Friends of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Meeting*¹⁴, the XV World Forestry Congress *CPF dialogue: climate change, conflicts, and food insecurity – forest*

⁶ COFO/2020/REP, paragraph 33.f.

⁷ <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CPF-Work-Plan-2021-2024-update-April-2022.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb5686en/cb5686en.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb5879en/cb5879en.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.iufro.org/science/gfep/regional-activities/forests-trees-and-poverty-alleviation-in-africa/>

¹¹ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb7451/en>

¹² <https://www.fao.org/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/publications/en>

¹³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=20000&nr=7392&menu=2993>

¹⁴ <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/events/friends-of-cpf-meeting/index.html>

*solutions to tackle effects of crises and Special event on the role of forests in a post COVID-19 recovery: re-imagining the future of forests*¹⁵ and Wangari Maathai Award Ceremony¹⁶ and *The Champions view: a special panel of Wangari Maathai award winners*¹⁷, Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) live *How should we use forests to build the future?*¹⁸, and Stockholm+50 *Protect, restore and sustainably use forests: building blocks for environmental and economic recovery*;¹⁹

- FAO also updated the multilingual website of the Partnership, and it is now more secure, user-friendly, modern, and compatible with mobile devices.

12. Of the nine joint initiatives currently active or completed in this reporting period, FAO is leading or co-leading five and is a partner in other three initiatives. There are further two joint initiatives in the pipeline, one of which is led by FAO. Reporting only on the Initiatives under FAO's leadership, the following results deserve attention:

- **Streamlining global forest-related reporting:** the joint initiative focuses on harmonizing reporting on forest resources and their management, and using reports for various processes and conventions. The initiative is aimed at improving the coverage, quality and transparency of forest-related data and information and reducing the forest-related reporting burden of countries. The focus of work lies in improving the methodology for reporting on primary forests, revising the terms and definitions, improving reporting for FRA 2025 and advancing the global core set of forest-related indicators. FAO, with inputs from the CPF members, has prepared a concise but comprehensive publication describing all the Global Core Set for Forest-related Indicators as well as their status and trends. The publication *Status of, and trends in, the Global Core Set of Forest-related indicators* serves as supporting document for the State of the World's Forests 2022 report and is available at the CPF website²⁰. This is a major milestone in streamlining global forest-related reporting, reducing the reporting burden of countries, and improving coverage, quality and transparency of forest-related data;
- **Sustainable wood for a sustainable world:** under this initiative, national and international policy dialogues on sustainable wood value chains, as well as institutional arrangements and the promotion of innovation, with a focus on sustainable investments; sustainable trade; measures to increase value added and material efficiency; the inclusion of small and medium-size enterprises, smallholders and forest communities; and the inclusion of wood in the bioeconomy are supported. The initiative supports several African countries to improve sustainable wood value chains, institutional arrangements and promotion of innovation. In Cameroon, supported activities include restructuring a centre for the promotion of wood and the development of roadmaps to strengthen wood value chains directed at African internal markets. Kenya was supported to attract investment in wood value chains focused on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). In Uganda, a decision-making tool for optimizing environmental and socioeconomic benefits from restoration investments was developed;
- **Forest Education:** the work of the initiative is aimed at supporting effective, holistic and inclusive forest-related education and knowledge-sharing systems for the benefit of all forest stakeholders. The members of the CPF recognize that improvements in forest education are essential to maximize the contributions of forests and trees to the

¹⁵ <https://programme.wfc2021korea.org/en/session/9d553162-9e8f-ec11-a507-a04a5e7d20d9>

¹⁶ <https://programme.wfc2021korea.org/en/session/9f553162-9e8f-ec11-a507-a04a5e7d20d9>

¹⁷ <https://programme.wfc2021korea.org/en/session/a0553162-9e8f-ec11-a507-a04a5e7d20d9>

¹⁸ <https://news.globallandscapesforum.org/56583/how-should-we-use-forests-to-build-the-future/>

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6Xz3KJYezg>

²⁰ <https://www.fao.org/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/publications/en>

achievement of the SDGs and other forest-related goals at global and national levels. The *International Conference on Forest Education*²¹ was held on 22-24 June 2021, building on six regional assessment and expert consultation reports on forest education, initiating the implementation of a free on-line course in *Legal and Sustainable Supply Chains*, the development of a prototype for the forester on-line platform for information sharing and networking on forest education and publications on *Enabling Ecosystems Restoration: Farmer Field Schools in Agroforestry* and *Enabling greater response-ability: Farmer Field Schools in smallholder Forestry*;

- **In the pipeline: Turning the tide on deforestation:** a joint initiative is being developed with the aim of scaling up ongoing efforts within the UN system and beyond to turn the tide on deforestation, following up on the UN Secretary-General's (SG) initiative with the same name and in support of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. In support of this initiative and following the COFO25 recommendation²², the CPF released a joint statement with key messages in all UN languages on *Challenges and Opportunities in Turning the Tide on Deforestation*²³ and a brochure²⁴ outlining flagship programmes and initiatives on the topic. The statement presents scientific findings on the status of deforestation and the multidimensional services provided by forests, with a view to supporting countries and other key stakeholders to address the issue based on evidence. It is envisaged to develop a Global Action Plan on Turning the Tide on Deforestation under this initiative to accelerate international agreed goals in regard to deforestation and to follow up on the UN SG Executive Committee decision of 9 October 2019;
- **CPF Communicators' Network:** the Network enhances advocacy and coordinated outreach on the multiple benefits of forests and trees. Following the Network's recommendation, UNFF15 and 16 agreed to the topics for the International Day of Forests 2021 "*Forest restoration-a path to recovery and well-being*", 2022 "*Forests and sustainable production and consumption*" and 2023 "*Forests and health*". The network amplifies forestry messages on this day across the globe making focused and targeted communication possible. It further supports outreach for the Wangari Maathai Award and the implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the UNSPF;
- **Wangari Maathai Award:** the CPF periodically selects and seeks to recognize an individual who has made extraordinary efforts to improve the world's forests and the lives of the people who depend on them, through the *Wangari Maathai Forest Champion Award*. Over the past years, six extraordinary personalities for forests have been awarded for their inspirational activism in their communities and beyond. The celebration of the 2022 Wangari Maathai Forest Champions Award took place on 5 May 2022 during the XV World Forestry Congress. It was mentioned in over 170 news articles and broadcasted worldwide. The CPF awarded the Cameroonian activist Cécile Ndjebet in recognition of her outstanding contributions to conserving and improving forests and championing gender equality. Through this award, the CPF recognized the valuable work of grassroots' movements and community work in support of strong, vocal and active spokespersons to inspire others, spark innovation and action.

IV. Review of the International Arrangement on Forests

13. The midterm review of the effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests in achieving its objectives is guided by the relevant provisions of Economic and Social Council

²¹ <https://www.fao.org/forestry/forest-education/conference/en/>

²² COFO/2020/REP paragraph 22.j.

²³ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb5879en/cb5879en.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb7451en>

(ECOSOC) resolution 2015/33²⁵, in particular sections I, on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, and XII, on the review of the international arrangement on forests; section IV of the UNSPF (ECOSOC resolution 2017/4, annex I)²⁶, requesting to assess the progress towards its implementation and UNFF's contribution to the 2030 Agenda; and ECOSOC resolution 2021/6, requesting the review to also include the review of the effectiveness of the communication and outreach strategy of the UNSPF. The IAF is composed of the UNFF and its Members, the secretariat of the Forum, the CPF, the GFFFN and the Trust Fund.

14. Outcomes of UNFF17 are contained in document E/CN.18/2022/L.4²⁷, and proposed actions in preparation for the midterm review in 2024, of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, are presented in Annex 1 to E/CN.18/2022/L.4. FAO as the chair and member of the CPF has a role in providing inputs to the midterm review process of the IAF, and in particular on the CPF. The outcomes of the mid-term review process will shape the future work and modalities of the IAF, including the CPF, guiding it until 2030.

²⁵ <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=E%2FRES%2F2015%2F33&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>

²⁶ <https://daccess-ods.un.org/tmp/7697350.38280487.html>

²⁷ <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/E-CN.18-2022-L-4-UNFF17-Draft-omnibus-resolution-Adv-Unedited.pdf>