



**EUROPEAN UNION**  
DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
**Head of Delegation**

New York, 26 October 2015

Dear Mr. Sobral Filho,

Please find enclosed the submission on behalf of the European Union and its 28 Member States in response to the invitation by the UNFF Secretariat (ref. DESA - 15/00819) to submit views and proposals on the strategic plan for the period 2017-2030.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our concern about the current timing of the first AHEG, as it will not allow the participants to take into full account latest developments in relation to important issues such as the outcome of the climate change negotiations or the work of the UN Statistical Commission on Indicators for monitoring of the SDGs.

We look forward to participating constructively in all upcoming activities leading up to the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Forum on Forests.

Yours sincerely,

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Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

Annex:

Submission by the European Union and its Member States on initial views and proposals on the strategic plan for the period 2017-2030

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**SUBMISSION BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES  
ON  
INITIAL VIEWS AND PROPOSALS ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE PERIOD  
2017-2030**

## **1 Introduction**

This submission by the European Union (EU) and its Member States is a response to the invitation by the UNFF to submit views and proposals on the development of an International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) Strategic Plan (SP) for the period 2017-2030.

The EU and its Member States believe that the many important decisions taken during UNFF11 represent an important step forward towards a more effective International Arrangement on Forests.

In particular, the EU and its Member States believe that the development of a SP will greatly benefit the IAF by providing a sufficiently long-term horizon to frame its future work and by enhancing its effectiveness, efficiency and accountability through better planning and implementation of its activities. The SP needs to be a concise common strategic framework for all the components of the IAF and the actors involved in it. Roles and responsibilities should be well defined. It should provide clear priorities and guidance for its future work. It should outline where Members aim to get in the future and how they intend to get there. For that reason, the SP should define an adequately robust implementation and monitoring framework including a set of relevant targets and a clear division of labor, in order to ensure appropriate accountability. Regular review of the SP should take place to efficiently monitor progress and to make possible any adjustment required to adapt to new developments during the course of its duration. Finally, the EU and its Member States further believes that the SP should also be effectively used to increase the visibility and communication of forest-related matters at a global level.

As agreed at UNFF11, the development of the SP should take into full account recent developments at the international level, including in particular the adoption of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Addis Ababa Action Agenda as well as its related follow-up and review mechanism to which UNFF should contribute and from which it could benefit. Important forest-related developments in forest-related conventions and processes, particularly the Rio Conventions should also be taken into account. There is a need for the future SP to foster coherence and promote synergies across relevant international forest-related legally and non-legally binding commitments, particularly the 4 Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs), the SDGs, the Aichi Targets and forest-related commitments that may be taken later this year at the climate change COP21.

## **2 Elements of a strategic plan for the IAF**

The EU and its Member States propose the following indicative outline for the SP, as well as, matters that could be included in its various sections.

### **2.1 Introduction/context**

The EU and its Member States support having an introductory section that should:

- Highlight the purpose of the SP, as defined in paragraph 38 of the UNFF11 resolution, which states that the SP should enhance “coherence of and guide and focus the work of the IAF and its components”;
- Clearly indicate in a concise manner key messages regarding the importance of forests, like its multi-functionality and benefits they provide; the main trends, challenges and opportunities faced by the world forests, including continued alarmingly high deforestation and forest degradation rates, loss of forest biodiversity, climate change and associated risks, potential contribution of forests to food security and to a green economy, etc.;
- Outline the added value of the IAF and its aspiration to serve as a global platform to address forest matters from a holistic perspective and enhance coherence, coordination and synergies.

### **2.2 Mission and vision of the IAF**

Following the introduction, the EU and its Member States supports having a section focusing on the mission and vision of the IAF (building on its update mandate as set-out in the UNFF11 resolution) which should:

- Reflect the following components for the mission and vision of the IAF:
  - o Halt deforestation and forest degradation;
  - o Achieve sustainable management of all forests in order to ensure the contribution of forests to the well-being of present and future generations.
  - o Encourage inter-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration

The mission and the vision should be presented in a concise and appealing/attractive way so that the message gets easily grasped by everybody and effectively used for communication purposes.

### **2.3 GOFs, SDGs and associated Targets**

The EU and its Member States consider that a clear identification of a coherent set of forests targets and indicators, taking into full account existing global forest-related commitments, objectives/goals, targets and indicators, is one of the most important elements of added value that can be delivered by the SP. In preparation for the AHEG deliberations, we invite the Secretariat to make available an analysis of how these existing commitments are inter-linked with a view to identify possible gaps and/or overlaps.

Different approaches are possible, but for instance, similar to approaches used in other relevant UN bodies or structures, the SP could include both "substantive" strategic targets and indicators, as well as operational targets.

Substantive targets could be identified on the basis of a clear framework which links the Global Forest Objectives with relevant SDGs, particularly SDG Goal 15 (but without overlooking other forest-related SDGs). The SP could furthermore identify global targets for the GOFs in a format that takes into account other relevant commitments such as the Aichi targets.

Operational targets could also be identified to guide the activities of the IAF and the actions of all stakeholders and partners with a view to supporting the attainment of the above-mentioned mission, vision and substantive objectives/goals. Operational targets could cover issues identified in the UNFF11 resolution, such as, inter alia:

- Enhancing cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels, including by strengthening the CPF
- Promoting the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, in particular the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;
- Enhancing the contribution of all types of forests and trees outside forests to the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development;
- Supporting efforts to strengthen forest governance frameworks and means of implementation for SFM;
- Improving cooperation between global and regional level, as well as the participation of major groups and other stakeholders

## **2.4 Description of the implementation framework of the strategic plan**

A dedicated section would describe the implementation framework of the SP, including institutional aspects, planning processes and monitoring and review mechanisms. It should describe the role of the various actors and their contribution to the implementation of the SP and prioritize their actions.

### **2.4.1 Institutional matters**

The SP should provide a clear description of the institutional set-up of the IAF and clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of UNFF, CPF, Member countries for implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The **Forum**, assisted by the UNFF secretariat, adopts the SP and will remain the entity with the overall responsibility to monitor its implementation and review as appropriate. The SP should describe how the annual sessions of the Forum with their alternate focus on "science and review" and "policy development" will be used to deliver on the SP. The SP should also describe how the UNFF secretariat will prioritise its activities in order to deliver its work within existing resources.

**Member Countries** retain the primary responsibility to implement SFM in their territory. They will continue to report on a voluntary basis on implementation of the Forest Instrument and of the SP.

**CPF** continues to provide technical and scientific advice and prepares, submits and supports coherent approaches to forest-related issues. Through its 14 members the support function of CPF within the IAF is rooted in a broad and balanced array of forest-related institutions, organizations and secretariats. With a strengthened role and modus operandi of the CPF within the IAF, it will develop multi-year joint workplans in line with the Strategic Plan and the guidance provided by the Forum. Linked specifically to the technical and scientific UNFF sessions, the regular CPF report will enable the Forum to deliberate on the findings and proposals submitted and take them into account when shaping future recommendations and decisions. The SP may also describe the way in which individual CPF Members, as decided by the relevant governing body, may want to take the lead on implementation of specific areas of the SP.

**Major Groups and other stakeholders** should continue their relevant and important stakeholder involvement within the work of the IAF has supported by ECOSOC resolution E/2015/42-E/CN.18/2015/14 in order to strengthen IAF's visibility, credibility and impact on the ground. Reliable procedures and clear incentives are developed how to further engage Major Groups and other stakeholders both in advisory work and in implementation, and in the end in funded activities.

The **Global Forest Financing Framework Network (GFFFN)** has a paramount role to play to facilitate the mobilization of resources for sustainable forest management. In order to ensure concrete outcomes of the GFFFN and to avoid duplication of efforts with existing financial frameworks and instruments, the EU and its Member States believe that the SP should define for the GFFFN clear priorities on the basis of the functions of the Facilitative Process (see E/2009/118-E/CN.18/55/2009/2, para. 3 and E/2011/42-E/CN.18/2011/20, para. 2) by focusing on capacity-building for strategic forest finance planning and for effective resource mobilization at the national level in countries with special needs and circumstances. This should include close collaboration with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and enhance coordination among the various means of implementation aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, the Rio Conventions and other relevant processes to offer synergy, coherence and mutual support among all these processes.

The Strategic Plan should also set these priorities of the GFFFN within the quadrennial periods.

#### **2.4.2 Regional dimension**

The SP should identify clearly the role of existing regional organizations and processes in the implementation of the strategic plan, as well as the manner in which the regional organizations and processes will feed into the global discussion.

Furthermore, the SP should *inter alia* also encourage to:

- involve the other relevant forest policy setting CPF members when it concerns forests , as CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD, ITTA, to have a joint approach and implementation for forests in the region;
- make use as much as possible of existing regional organizations and processes with the involvement of the relevant stakeholders/major groups of that region.

#### **2.4.3 Cross-sectoral dimension**

As forests directly contribute to the implementation of the SDGs, but also indirectly to many others and related targets, cross sectoral approaches are needed. The SP should identify tangible target-related cross sectoral approaches and its related stakeholders/major groups at all levels. It should provide for participation of other sectors in the Forum and CPF, by identifying priority sectors such as natural resources, food security, water (quantity–risk reduction and quality) and energy.

#### **2.4.4 Quadrennial programme of work**

The EU and its Member States underline the importance of the quadrennial programmes of work for operationalization of the SP. This should contain a clear list of priority actions, related resource needs and a clear identification of actors responsible for the accomplishment of those actions.

#### **2.4.5 Monitoring, assessment and reporting**

The EU and its MS consider the following as basic preconditions concerning MAR in relation to the Strategic Plan of the IAF:

- Make better use of existing MAR systems on forests
- To limit member states' reporting burden, existing reporting processes and formats (e.g. UNFF, FAO FRA, CBD, ITTO, UNFCCC-REDD+, Forest Europe, Montreal process, UNECE, etc.) should be used as far as possible;
- Streamlining and harmonization of reporting vis-a-vis other reporting processes;
- The reporting cycle could be synchronized with other relevant forest related reporting processes.

The EU and its MS would like to see the following elements regarding MAR in the Strategic plan:

- Concerning monitoring of the implementation of the IAF strategic plan and its different components the question of division of labor/responsibilities (e.g. UNFFS, another CPF member?) should be addressed;
- Describing how the process for future mid-term review of the strategic plan shall be conducted;
- Building on the previous efforts by the Forum, existing processes and initiatives and consistent with the follow-up and review mechanism for the overall Agenda 2030, decide on the indicators to be used for MAR or clarify the process to develop the necessary indicators for MAR.

#### **2.4.6 Communication**

The EU and its Member States support the idea of stressing communication in the SP. Strategic communication should be an effective means for enhancing recognition of the concept of SFM and for improving efficiency in the work of the IAF. It is therefore important to build as much as possible upon available resources and capacities, such as the existing forest communicators' networks. The EU and its Member States recommend:

- After finalization of the SP consider the added value of a Communication strategy.
- The UNFF Secretariat should, working with countries, the CPF and other actors, consider building upon and working with the existing networks to enhance communication of the IAF.