



Paris Agreement and the IAF beyond 2015; Opportunities for greater coherence

1. Introduction

On 12 December 2015, the Twenty First Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP) adopted the Paris Agreement through decision 1/CP.21. The text of the Paris Agreement is contained in the annex to decision 1/CP.21. The backbone of the Paris Agreement is the Intended-Nationally Determined-Contributions (INDCs). In the framework of the Paris Agreement, each Party to the Agreement has to communicate its own INDC, i.e. its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2025-2030, through implementing its INDC. The INDCs may include mitigation and/or adaptation measures, addressing sources of the GHGs or enhancing GHGs sinks and reservoirs.

2. The role of forests in addressing climate change

It's well recognised that the world's forests play a critical role in addressing climate change. Reductions in deforestation and forest degradation can result in lower greenhouse gas emissions and more sequestered carbon. Since the COP/UNFCCC in Bali, there has been increased recognition of the role of forests in reducing GHG emissions. This led to the gradual development and expansion of the scope of forest-based climate change mitigation actions in the context of the REDD+. Forests are also well recognized for their role in adaptation. Conserving and enhancing forests strengthens resilience for the climate and for communities.

3. Article 5 of the Paris Agreement

Article 5 of the Paris Agreement specifically integrates forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the operational scheme of the Agreement. Article 5.1 states that Parties should take action to 'conserve' and 'enhance' sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases including forests. This provides a legal basis to require Parties to 'conserve' and 'enhance' ecosystems when taking INDCs to address climate change. Article 5.2 encourages 'implementation' and 'support', among others, of REDD+, and alternative policy approaches such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for integral and sustainable management of forests. It also reaffirms the importance of non-carbon benefits of forests.

By considering the importance of forests and sustainable forest management in both climate change mitigation and adaptation, one of the key policy messages of the UNFF11 Ministerial Declarationⁱ was incorporated by the COP21/UNFCCC in Article 5 of the Paris Agreement. In addition, consideration of all benefits of forests, whether carbon or non-carbon, and policies and approaches that ensure integral and sustainable management of forests, were also incorporated in Article 5. These elements have been a long and consistent call by the UNFF and are core components of the overall UNFF mandate. It is now critical to find the best framework to implement these provisions of Article 5.

According to paragraph 10 of the ECOSOC Resolution 2015/33 on the IAF beyond 2015, the UN Forest Instrument provides an integrated framework for national action and

international cooperation for implementation of the sustainable forest management. In this regard, the UN Forest Instrument can provide the right framework for implementation of the Article 5. This Article provides a sound basis for substantive future collaboration between the UNFCCC and the UNFF, in furthering integrated sustainable management of forests, through advancing implementation of the UN Forest Instrument. To this end, Parties to the Paris Agreement can be encouraged to include implementation of the provisions of the UN Forest Instrument in their INDCs. Similarly, Member States of the UNFF can report on forest-related action of their INDCs, as part of their national reports to the UNFF. Such measures will substantively, and concretely, promote coherence among international instruments and processes.

4. Forest financing

Under the Paris Agreement and on the issue of forest financing, there are multiple opportunities for collaboration and cooperation between the UNFCCC and the IAF. Given the mandate of the GFFFN under the IAF, and the mandate of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the GEF under the Paris Agreement and more specifically in regard to its Article 5ⁱⁱ, options can be explored to more systematically link the GFFFN activities to the GCF and the GEF. This is an important consideration for the “Implementation Review Framework” of the IAF Strategic Plan, as well as the priorities of the GFFFN. Moreover, involvement of the UNFF Secretariat and other CPF member organizations in the work of the UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance can be further enhanced to promote coherence and synergy between the work of the UNFF and the UNFCCC on issues related to forest financing.

5. Tracking progress, building capacity

Another important area for promoting coherence between the work of the IAF and the UNFCCC is in the context of the “Global Stocktake” under the Paris Agreement. Under Article 14 of the Paris Agreement, Parties

agree to periodically take stock of the implementation of the Paris Agreement, to assess collective progress towards achieving the purpose of the Agreement and its long-term goals. The first global stocktake will be in 2023 and every five years thereafter. The outcome of the global stocktake will inform Parties in updating and enhancing their INDCs, as well as in enhancing international cooperation for climate action. Given that the mid-term review of the IAF will take place in 2024, the outcome of the first global stocktake under the Paris Agreement would be an important input to the IAF review process and its work until 2030. Under Decision 1/CP.21 and the Paris Agreement, it was also agreed to develop a Capacity Building work plan for the period 2016-2020ⁱⁱⁱ. This work plan, when it is ready, can help Members of the UNFF to seek a better coherence on capacity building issues with the UNFCCC, in the IAF strategic plan and quadrennial programme of work.

6. Conclusions

As stated above, both ECOSOC resolution 2015/33 and the Decision 1/CP.21 and its annex (Paris Agreement) contain several provisions that can potentially lay the foundation for increased coherence between the IAF beyond 2015 and the Paris Agreement, and consequently, enhanced collaboration between the UNFF and the UNFCCC. These provisions are important elements for consideration in the development of the IAF strategic plan, and the operationalization of the Paris Agreement.

ⁱ Please see paragraph 15 c of the Ministerial Declaration of High Level Segment of UNFF11.

ⁱⁱ Please see paragraphs 52-64 of the Decision 1/CP.21 on Finance.

ⁱⁱⁱ Please see paragraphs 71-83 of Decision 1/CP.21 and Article 11 of the Paris Agreement.

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