

EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON REPORTING TO THE UN FORUM OF FORESTS

7-10 February 2017 – Brasilia, Brazil

SUMMARY REPORT

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Annexes

1. List of Participants
2. Draft format for voluntary national reporting to UNFF¹
3. Preliminary list of potential indicators that could supplement information provided in national reports

¹ This is a working document to be continuously updated. The latest version will be annexed to the UNFF Twelfth Session “Report of the Secretary-General on monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards implementing the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030, including the United Nations forest instrument and voluntary national contributions” (E/CN.18/2017/3).

I. INTRODUCTION

1. **Participants.** The Expert Meeting on Reporting to the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was organized by the UNFF Secretariat and hosted by the Government of Brazil in Brasilia, 7-10 February 2017. The meeting brought together 49 participants from 14 countries and 12 international organizations and processes². (Annex 1: List of Participants.)

2. **Objectives.** The main objective of the meeting was to contribute to the development of a format for voluntary national reporting on implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) and the United Nations Forest Instrument (UNFI). Other objectives were to consider and, as appropriate, make proposals on: (a) the development of a global set of forest indicators; (b) data sharing arrangements and the cycle for reporting to the UNFF; and (c) potential uses of information collected through reporting.

3. **Meeting opening.** The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Clarissa Souza Della Nina, Head of the Environment Division, Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ms. Carlota de Azevedo Bezerra Vitor Ramos, Environment Division, Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Opening remarks were made by Minister Reinaldo Salgado, Director of the Department of Sustainability, Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Dr. Antonio Prado, Assistant to the Director-General, Brazilian Forest Service, Ministry of Environment; Dr. Manoel Sobral Filho, Director of the UNFF Secretariat (UNFFS); and Senator Jorge Viana, former Vice President, Brazilian Federal Congress.

4. **Setting the scene.** To set the scene for the meeting, presentations were made on the following topics:
 - a. Guidance on reporting from Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC resolution 2015/33, the UNSPF and the 4POW 2017-2020 (Ms. Stephanie Caswell, Consultant to the UNFFS));
 - b. Outcome of the organization-led initiative (OLI) on the “Development of global forest indicators to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the IAF strategic plan” (Mr. Peter Csoka, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)); and
 - c. The current UNFF reporting cycle, format and lessons learned (Mr. Tomasz Juszczak, UNFFS)

5. **Availability of data and sources.** Background information on the availability and sources of forest-related data for future reporting to the UNFF was provided through the following presentations:
 - a. Forest Resources Assessment 2015 (FRA 2015): Key reporting challenges and the way forward (Mr. Anssi Pekkarinen, FAO);
 - b. Work of ITTO in tropical forest reporting (Mr. Takeshi Goto, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)); and

² Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management

- c. Forest monitoring, assessment and reporting in the European region (Mr. Martin Moravcik, Forest Europe Liaison Unit, Bratislava, and Mr. Roman Michalak, UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)).

II. BACKGROUND

6. ECOSOC resolution 2015/33. Paragraph 6(f) of ECOSOC resolution 2015/33 stipulates that odd-year sessions of the Forum will focus on “implementation and technical advice” and identifies a set of specific tasks. One task is to assess progress on implementation of the UNFI and the UNSPF. The frequency of such assessments is not indicated.

7. Paragraph 16(c) of the resolution requests the UNFF secretariat, in consultation with Member States, the CPF and its members, and C&I processes, to propose a cycle and format for voluntary national reporting for the Forum’s consideration at UNFF12 (1-5 May 2017, New York), taking into account and utilizing existing data collection systems. Paragraph 16(b) takes note of ongoing efforts by the CPF and its members and other relevant entities and processes to work jointly to further streamline and harmonize reporting, reduce reporting burdens and synchronize data collection.

8. UNSPF. At its Special Session on 20 January 2017, the UNFF adopted the UNSPF and the Forum’s 4POW 2017-2020 based on guidance contained in ECOSOC resolution 2015/33. At the heart of the UNSPF are 6 Global Forest Goals (GFGs) and 26 associated targets to be achieved by 2030. The GFGs fully encompass and expand on the four Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs) contained in the UNFI.

9. As set out in paragraphs 28-30 of the plan, Member States may, on a voluntary basis, determine their “voluntary national contributions” (VNCs) to achieving the GFGs and targets and communicate their progress on VNCs to the UNFF at regular intervals determined by the Forum.

10. According to paragraph 65, the assessment of progress on the UNSPF should be based on “internationally agreed indicators” which are relevant to the GFGs and targets and include relevant SDG indicators. Paragraph 67 states that in order to reduce reporting burdens, the Forum should establish a cycle and format for voluntary national reporting that takes into account the cycle of the FRAs and the cycle for reviewing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level by the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

11. UNFF 4POW 2017-2020. Tables 1-4 of the 4POW 2017-2020 set the agenda for UNFF12 through UNFF15 and represent the Forum’s contribution to implementing the UNSPF during the quadrennium. Item 2 of the tables addresses “monitoring, assessment and reporting” (MAR). UNFF 12 will consider the (a) cycle and format for voluntary national reporting on the implementation of the UNSPF, including the UNFI and VNCs, (b) progress on the development of global forest indicators, and (c) measures to better synchronize data collection and reduce reporting burdens.

III. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

A. UNFF format for voluntary national reporting on progress on the implementation of the UNSPF, including the UNFI and VNCs announced by Member States (Facilitator: Mr. Peter Csoka, FAO)

12. Mr. Tomasz Juszczak of the UNFFS introduced an initial approach to the format for future voluntary national reporting to the UNFF. The initial format was used as the basis for discussions in plenary and two informal break-out groups over the course of the meeting.

13. Purpose of reporting. There was a general view that national reporting to the Forum serves several purposes, including demonstrating national progress toward sustainable forest management, facilitating the exchange of experiences and lessons learned and enhanced cooperation, and identifying capacity building and financing needs and data gaps. Information derived from national reports is synthesized to provide a global overview of progress and trends in advancing the GFGs and targets and implementing the UNFI.

14. Guiding Principles. Participants were mindful of the importance of reducing reporting burdens and agreed that the format and cycle for reporting should complement other reporting processes and rely on data available through the FRA and other global sources wherever possible. Participants also recognized that the GFGs and targets are global in nature and that the relevance of the targets may vary from country to country based on national circumstances. The reporting format should provide flexibility to countries in reporting to the UNFF.

15. In line with the guiding principles, the meeting produced the revised draft reporting format contained in Annex 2, which has the following features:

- The format provides an opportunity for Member States to report progress on the GFGs and targets, the UNFI and VNCs.
- The format is largely narrative, reflecting the qualitative nature of the majority of targets.
- Member States would be encouraged to supplement their narrative responses with relevant quantitative data where available.
- To the extent possible, the UNFFS would supplement information submitted by countries with quantitative data derived from a variety of global and regional sources and databases, including the FRA, CPF member organizations, C&I processes and the 2030 Agenda process.
- The initial baseline year is 2015 but Member States have the flexibility to report on earlier significant actions as appropriate.
- Terms used in the format are consistent with the terms and definitions used for the most recent FRA.

B. Development of a global set of forest indicators (Facilitator: Dr. Steve Johnson, ITTO)

16. Mr. Anssi Pekkarinen (FAO) reviewed the ongoing work on developing a global core set of “multi-purpose” forest indicators that could be used for reporting to UNFF and to support other forest-related MAR processes. Future work will focus on refining indicators categorized in the CPF-OLI report as “yellow” (more work is needed on concepts, definitions or methodology) and will include an open online consultation. THE CPF-OLI will also be discussed in the FRA expert consultation in June 2017. Mr. Pekkarinen also provided an update on preparations for FRA 2020 and indicated that in the future, countries could submit national data to the FRA process on an ongoing basis through FRA platform.

17. Participants had an initial exchange of views on a preliminary list of potential indicators for the GFG targets contained in [Annex 3](#). The preliminary list suggests data that could be used to supplement information provided by countries in their national reporting to the UNFF. A number of specific comments were made on individual indicators in the list, which were taken note of by the Secretariat. It was also noted that:

- The indicators should be based on available data;
- The indicators should be clearly related to the GFG targets; and
- The list of indicators should be streamlined to the extent possible

18. Participants considered that further work on the list was needed, taking into account the CPF-OLI follow up process of a global core set of indicators and further development by the UN Statistical Division on indicators for SDG 15.1, 15.2 and other forest-related indicators.

C. Data sharing arrangements and reporting cycle (Facilitator: Dr. Steve Johnson, ITTO)

19. The meeting discussed the content and format of possible data sharing arrangements to reduce reporting burdens, as well as opportunities for synchronizing data collection. In this regard, participants noted the success of the annual Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JFSQ), the launch of the CPF joint initiative to streamline national forest-related reporting to international bodies, and the intention of FRA to move to an improved platform and flexibility in the submission of national data.

20. Participants made the following points:

- A common data base that can be used multiple times by different users, as well as data-sharing mechanisms, can significantly reduce reporting burdens.
- CPF members should work together to coordinate data sharing, better harmonize reporting cycles and reduce fragmentation and reporting burdens.
- In practice, there may be challenges to harmonizing reporting cycles since organizations, conventions and instruments have their own reporting mandates and cycles.

- The UNFF should decide its own reporting cycle, making full use of all available data and sources.
- The UNFF reporting cycle:
 - Should build on, add-value to and be mutually supporting with other forest-related reporting cycles.
 - Should take into account the role of forests in achieving the SDG targets and serve to enhance linkages between the UNFF and the HLPF.
 - Depends in part on the complexity of the reporting format.
- Annual reporting would be burdensome for many countries.
- National circumstances generally do not change significantly on annual and biennial basis.

21. The following options were proposed for the UNFF reporting cycle:

- Report every 2 years to odd-year sessions of the Forum on selected GFGs and targets, beginning in 2019.
- Report every 2-3 years in the year following the most recent FRA and again in the interval between FRAs.
- Report every 4 years linked to the HLPF review of SDG 15 to strengthen synergies with the HLPF and raise the profile of the UNFF.
- Report every 5 years following the FRA.
- A fixed schedule need not be set. The Forum can decide reporting years.

D. Potential use of information collected through national reports (Facilitator: Dr. Steve Johnson, ITTO)

22. Mr. Ryosuke Ujihashi (UNFFS) made a presentation on the uses to date of biennial national reporting to the UNFF. He explained that data derived from national reports are synthesized into Secretary-General reports for presentation to sessions of the Forum. Since such reports are limited in length and must meet other requirements, following the UNFF11 reporting cycle, the Secretariat prepared a more informative and user-friendly background paper synthesizing national information. The paper is available on the UNFF web site.

23. Representatives of FAO (including the FRA), ITTO, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) described the types and uses of national reporting in their respective organizations. These included a wide variety of national, regional and synthesis reports, reporting cycles and related communication and awareness-raising products and publications.

24. Participants made the following points:

- National reports prepared for UNFF are useful to show progress towards SFM and share best practices and lessons learned, including during Forum sessions.
- Synthesis reports and publications based on national reporting are useful in communicating global progress and trends to a variety of audiences.
- A periodic “global forest outlook” report based on national reporting to UNFF could be an effective way to highlight and raise the profile of the UNSPF and UNFF, assuming resources are available.
- The announcement of and reporting on VNCs could also highlight and raise the profile of the UNSPF.
- The UNFF should consider how to provide input to the annual HLPF process.
- Quadrennial SDG reports (beginning in 2019) could include information on individual sectors, including the forest sector.

IV. PROPOSALS

25. The meeting made the following proposals:

1. The revised draft format for voluntary national reporting to the UNFF contained in Annex 2 should be the basis for further work and should be circulated to UNFF Member States and CPF member organizations for review and comment shortly after the Expert Meeting.
2. The first round of voluntary national reporting to the UNFF using the new reporting format as approved by the Forum should be in 2018 or 2019.
3. The initial format and cycle for reporting should be reviewed and, as needed, revised based on lessons learned and relevant developments.
4. The CPF is encouraged to inform UNFF12 on progress in developing a global core set of forest indicators, including its potential contribution to harmonizing forest-related reporting and reducing reporting burdens.
5. The UNFF Secretariat should continue to be involved in the CPF-OLI follow up work on a global core set of forest indicators and in further work on the preliminary list of indicators contained in Annex 3.
6. UNFF Member States should also be engaged in further refinement of the global core set of forest indicators and should coordinate in capitals to ensure consistent national messages to the FRA and potential CPF user organizations, including the UNFF.

7. The UNFF should invite the CPF, with the support of the UNFFS, to prepare at a suitable time a global forest outlook publication suitable for a variety of audiences based on national reporting to the UNFF.

V. CLOSING

26. Ms. Clarissa Souza Della Nina of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs thanked participants for their active participation in the meeting and their many useful contributions to the discussions and the successful outcome of the Expert Meeting on Reporting to the UNFF. Her sentiments were echoed by Dr. Antonio Prado of the Brazilian Forest Service.

27. Participants expressed their deep appreciation to the Government of Brazil, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for hosting the Expert Meeting on Reporting to the UNFF, and to the Government of Japan for their generous financial support to the meeting. Participants also expressed their appreciation to the presenters, discussion facilitators, the UNFF Secretariat and the independent consultant for their support and contributions to the meeting.