

**CONCEPT NOTE**

*Regional and Sub-Regional Input to the United Nations Forum on Forests*

**–EXPERT MEETING–**

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| <b>Objectives</b>   | To facilitate: a) a discussion on the format of the future written contribution from regional and sub-regional partners to the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF); b) the provision of inputs for next year’s session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF 2018); c) a discussion on the eventual elaboration of inputs regarding the invitation contained in the report of the 23 <sup>rd</sup> Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) |
| <b>Venue</b>        | United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON)   |
| <b>Participants</b> | Representatives of the various UNFF regional and sub-regional partners.   |
| <b>Dates</b>        | 20-21 November 2017 (2 days)  |

**1. BACKGROUND**

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The multi-year programme of work of the Forum for the period 2007-2015, which was prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/49 and adopted by the Forum in its resolution 7/1, set a new focus on regional collaboration and partnerships. In paragraph 2 (c) of its resolution 2006/49, the Council agreed to strengthen interaction between the Forum on relevant regional and sub-regional forest related mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organizations and processes, with the participation of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, and relevant stakeholders to facilitate enhanced cooperation and the effective implementation of sustainable forest management, as well as to contribute to the work of the Forum. In the Forum’s programme of work, relevant regional and sub-regional entities were invited to address issues and agenda items planned for each Forum session, and to submit a concise summary of their deliberations to the Forum secretariat prior to the session. Such entities were also invited to contribute to discussions at Forum sessions as per their respective mandates, while the Secretary-General is requested to prepare a report summarizing the entities’ submissions. To facilitate the submission of inputs, until the Forum’s eleventh session the UNFF secretariat prepared an information note and a questionnaire; the inputs received from regional and sub-regional entities would then be available in full from the Forum website and summarized on Secretary-General Reports.

Through paragraph 25 to 28 of the ECOSOC resolution 2015/33 on the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) beyond 2015, the regional and sub-regional involvement was strengthened, as an integral component of the IAF beyond 2015. On 27 April 2017 the United Nations General Assembly approved the Resolution A/RES/71/285, entitled “United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests” (UNSPF), which states that “regional bodies (...) provide a crucial bridge between international policies and national actions and are important partners in efforts to implement the strategic plan and achieve its global forest goals and targets”; moreover, “the Forum works with regional and sub-regional bodies and processes to identify ways to contribute to the global forest goals and targets, including by

encouraging them to exchange information, enhance cooperation, raise awareness, strengthen stakeholder engagement and build capacity to scale up best practices within and across regions”. Finally, “regional and sub-regional bodies and processes (...) are encouraged to build and strengthen synergies between the strategic plan and their policies and programmes, including in the context of their contributions to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals”<sup>1</sup>.

The Quadrennial programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2017-2020 (4PoW)<sup>2</sup> represents the Forum’s contribution to implement the UNSPF; in the regard, UNFF’s odd-year sessions “focus on discussions on implementation and technical advice, including exchange of experiences among members of the Forum, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and sub-regional organizations, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, and the science-policy interface”.

Last May the 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the Forum agreed on a Resolution which invites Member States, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), UN system partners, regional and sub-regional organizations processes, Major Groups and other stakeholders to provide inputs to the Forum Secretariat on the contribution of forests to the issues under consideration by the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2018 by 30 November 2017; in this regard, the Forum Secretariat is requested to synthesize the inputs received and submit the synthesis as background information to the thirteenth session of the Forum.

Finally, the report of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of FAO’s COFO<sup>3</sup> contains an invitation to UNFF (paragraph 53 b), which reads:

**“53. The Committee invited the UNFF to:**

**(...)**

**b) consider the potential offered by the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions for enhancing regional/sub-regional involvement, including through using the Commissions for regional dialogues related to the UNFF, noting that the respective roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined in collaboration with other relevant regional forest-related bodies and processes.”**

## **2. RATIONALE**

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The UNSPF and the 4PoW provide a new framework for the Forum’s work. Due to the enhanced role that regional and sub-regional entities will play in the IAF, those partners’ contributions to the IAF merit a dedicated and comprehensive discussion, including as it relates to the written format of their future contribution; moreover, UNFF12 invited members and partners to provide inputs to the issues to be considered by HLPF 2018. Finally, FAO’s COFO invitation to UNFF is to be considered “(...) in collaboration with other relevant regional forest-related bodies and processes”. An expert meeting will provide an opportunity for regional and sub-regional entities to elaborate and provide their views on all those matters.

## **3. OBJECTIVES**

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<sup>1</sup> E/2017/10

<sup>2</sup> E/2017/10

<sup>3</sup> COFO 2016/REP



The main objective of the expert group meeting is to enhance contributions of the regional and sub-regional partners to the implementation of the UNSPF and the 4PoW. In this context, the expert meeting is expected to provide regional and sub-regional partners with an opportunity to:

- Discuss the format and content of their written input to UNFF sessions, including a possible dedicated questionnaire;
- Contribute to the substantive input of the Forum to the HLPF 2018;
- Provide their views on COFO's invitation to UNFF.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

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##### **Participants**

The expert meeting will bring together around 15 participants representing various regional and sub-regional entities from around the world.

##### **Presenters**

The UNFF Secretariat will make presentations, together with participants.

##### **Format**

The expert meeting will last 2 days. It will consist of an opening and closing sessions, as well as of working sessions. The expert group will be highly interactive, consisting of short, informal presentations which will trigger discussions and engage participants. Participants will be invited to present their entity's point of view on the future regional and sub-regional written contribution to the Forum, as well as on inputs to HLPF 2018 and on COFO's invitation to UNFF.

##### **Language**

English will be the working language.

##### **Output**

There will be no official outcome for the meeting. Instead, a summary of the key proposed actions and ideas which will be recorded in the pertinent UNFF13 official document for consideration of Members of the Forum.