

United Nations Forum on Forests
Minutes of the First Meeting of the Bureau of the Fourteenth Session
30 October 2018 (ET 9:30 – 13:00)
(Via Teleconference)

Participation

Bureau Members: Mr. Boris Greguška (Slovak Republic), Mr. Javad Momeni (Iran), Mr. Rob Busink (The Netherlands)

UNFF Secretariat: Mr. Hossein Moeini Meybodi, Ms. Afsa Kemitale-Rothschild, Ms. Mita Sen, Mr. Benjamin Singer, Mr. Ryo Nakamura, Ms. Yan Lang

Summary of Key Actions/Decisions

- 1. The Bureau agreed that the Chair communicate the Bureau's input on enhancing synergy between the work of the Functional Commissions and the ECOSOC to the President of the ECOSOC, and in this connection, underline the important role of the UNFF, as the body to monitor implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests.**
- 2. The Bureau members agreed to consult with their respective constituencies and encourage donors to contribute to the UNFF trust fund to support travel of representatives from eligible countries at UNFF14, so as to ensure wide participation of Members States at UNFF14.**
- 3. The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting on 8 January 2019 at UNHQ, New York, in advance of the Expert Group Meeting on the Clearing House of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network which is being held from 9 to 11 January 2019.**

Provisional Agenda
First Meeting of the Bureau of the Fourteenth Session
30 October 2018 (ET 9:30 – 13:00)
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- 1- Introduction of the UNFF14 Bureau Members**
- 2- Adoption of the provisional agenda**
- 3- Preparations for UNFF14:**
 - a. Date and venue of UNFF14**
 - b. Key issues for consideration of UNFF14 and inclusion in its organization of work**
 - c. UNFF14 official documentation**
 - d. Activities carried out by the UNFFS in preparation for UNFF14**
 - i. Secretariat Note Verbale (July 2018)**
 - ii. Preparations for organization of four expert group meetings**
 - iii. GFFFN related activities**
 - iv. Update on the CPF and ongoing events related to forests**
 - e. Nomination of the Bureau Members from the African Group and the Latin American and Caribbean Group to the UNFF14 Bureau**
 - f. Status of trust fund resources for participation of representatives from eligible countries at UNFF14**
- 4- DESA reform**
- 5- Next meeting of the Bureau**
- 6- Other matters**

1. Introduction of the UNFF14 Bureau Members

Mr Boris Greguška, Chair of the UNFF14 Bureau, introduced himself and invited the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat to introduce themselves. The Secretariat conveyed apologies from the Secretary of the Forum and Mr. Juwang Zhu, Officer-in-Charge of the Secretariat for not being able to attend the meeting due to other commitments.

2. Adoption of the provisional agenda

After introduction of the provisional agenda, Mr. Busink (Netherlands) proposed to add one sub-item on lessons learned from HLPF 2018 under agenda item 3 b, and one sub-item on the communication strategy under agenda item 6 on other matters. The provisional agenda, with these additions, was adopted.

3. Preparation for UNFF14

a. Date and venue of UNFF14

The Secretariat referred to the relevant ECOSOC decision, based on which, the fourteenth session of the Forum would be held from 6 to 10 May 2019 in New York.

b. Key issues for consideration of UNFF14 and inclusion in its organization of work

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on key substantive and operational elements in preparations for UNFF14, highlighting the scope of items contained in the UNFF14 provisional agenda. These key items included, among others: i) technical discussion and exchange of experiences on the thematic and operational priorities, priority actions and resource needs for the period 2019–2020; ii) Progress on the implementation of the strategic plan, including the United Nations forest instrument and voluntary national contributions; iii) progress on the development of global forest indicators; iv) progress on the activities and the operation of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and availability of resources; v) enhancing global forest policy coherence and a common international understanding of sustainable forest management; vi) enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement on forest-related issues, including activities of Collaborative Partnership on Forests, Regional and subregional partners, Major groups and other relevant stakeholders. The Secretariat also informed the Bureau of an additional agenda item for UNFF14 on “Implications of DESA reform, pertinent to the UNFF”. This agenda item was proposed by Switzerland during UNFF13 and was included in the provisional agenda of UNFF14.

It was added that the technical discussions at UNFF14, under agenda item 3 (a), will focus on: i) Forests and climate change, ii) Forests, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and employment, and iii) Forests, peaceful and inclusive societies, reduced inequality, education, and inclusive institutions at all levels. The Chair’s summary on discussion of this agenda item will serve as an input of the UNFF14 to the HLPF 2019.

The Secretariat reminded the Bureau of the technical nature of the upcoming session of the Forum, and the fact that there would not be a negotiated outcome or resolution at UNFF14. It was further added that the outcome of the UNFF14 would be a report containing the Chair summary on technical discussions of the session. This summary may contain policy proposals emanating from the discussions of the Forum on different agenda items, including agenda item 3 (a) and would be transmitted for consideration of the UNFF15 in 2020, which is a policy session.

The Bureau discussed lessons learned from the HLPF 2018 and emphasized the importance of conveying a substantive and strong input from UNFF14 to the HLPF 2019, given the fact that HLPF would be convened twice; once under the auspices of ECOSOC in July 2019 and once under the auspices of the GA in September 2019. In light of the past experience and relative success of UNFF to impact the discussions at HLPF2018, the Bureau emphasized that participation and presence of UNFF delegates during the HLPF meeting would be critical to ensure consistent and stronger recognition of the role of forests for the achievement of the SDGs.

c. UNFF14 official documentation

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on preparation of the seven official documents for UNFF14 including the provisional agenda and annotation and six Notes by the Secretariat addressing various UNFF14 agenda items. The Secretariat reminded the Bureau that due to the fact that there would be a discussion on DESA reform under the GA and its ongoing nature, there would be no document on the agenda item on DESA reform and its implication on the UNFF, rather, there might be an oral update to UNFF14 on this matter.

The Secretariat added that the advanced unedited versions (in English only) of all UNFF14 official documents were expected to be available on the UNFF website at the end of February 2019. The final version of the official documents (following editing and translation in all UN languages) would subsequently be issued in March 2019.

d. Activities carried out by the UNFFS in preparation for UNFF14

i. Secretariat Note Verbale (July 2018)

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the information transmitted to Members of the Forum in July 2018 regarding the UNFF14 preparations and intersessional activities via a Note Verbale, including on: i) organizational matters; ii) voluntary announcements of VNCs; iii) Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network; iv) UN system-wide contribution to the implementation of the UNSPF and iv) contribution to the 2019 HLPF.

ii. Preparations for organization of four expert group meetings

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on its ongoing and planned activities to organize expert meetings on: i) Monitoring, assessment and reporting on the Global Forest Goals and targets of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 (14-16 November 2018, FAO HQ, Rome); ii) Regional and Sub-Regional Input to the UNFF14 (7 – 8 January 2019, UNESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand); iii) Review of the progress in implementation of the major groups workplans and their input to the UNFF14 (9–11 January 2019, UNESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand); and iv) Clearing House of the UNFF Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (9-11 January 2019, CR6-UNHQ, New York). It was added that outcomes of these expert group meetings would be incorporated into the relevant UNFF14 official documents.

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the concept notes of the expert group meetings would be made available on the UNFF website, and the information on the relevant meetings would be circulated to the UNFF national focal points via email. The Bureau emphasized the need to circulate this information in due course.

iii. GFFFN related activities

The Secretariat updated the Bureau on the GFFFN-related activities, including progress on its support to

member states, in regard to the development of project proposal for submission to multilateral funding, and the design of National Forest Financing strategies. The Bureau was also briefed on the activities of the Secretariat in responding to the UNFF13 resolution in initiating the development of the GFFFN Clearing House, and more specifically, organization of the expert group meeting on this matter in January 2019.

iv. Update on the CPF and ongoing events related to forests

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the first CPF meeting conducted after UNFF 13 in July 2018 in Rome and the main issues to be discussed at the upcoming CPF retreat on 10-11 December 2018 in Rome, Italy.

The Secretariat also informed the Bureau that it organizes two events on forests and climate change at the DESA Pavilion at COP 24 of the UNFCCC in Katowice, Poland. These events would be held on 4 and 13 December 2018. The Secretariat also invited the Bureau Members to participate and speak at these UNFFS-organized events at the DESA pavilion. Further details on the UNFFS events at COP24 would be shared with the Bureau and the UNFF National Focal Points in due course.

The Secretariat also updated the Bureau on its call for sharing the good practice, success stories and lessons learned on Forests. This request was circulated by the Secretariat to the UNFF National Focal Points in September this year, and it was noted that the deadline for such inputs was 31 January 2019. So far, there has been one response from China on this matter.

The Chair also briefed other members of the Bureau on his participation at the recent meeting of the Chairs of the Functional Commissions (FCs) with the ECOSOC President. The Chair informed that he would consult with the Bureau members on his responses to the questions asked by the ECOSOC President. He would share these questions with the Bureau members and compile the responses and send them to the ECOSOC President before the deadline of 26 November 2018. The Chair informed that these questions were mainly seek inputs on enhancing synergy between the work of the FCs and that of the ECOSOC and HLPF.

The Chair also updated the Bureau on the ongoing consultation of the COP24 President of the UNFCCC on the Ministerial Declaration on Forests for Climate. The Bureau noted with appreciation that the current draft declaration includes references to the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) which would promote the visibility of the UNSPF at the UNFCCC COP.

e. Nomination of the Bureau Members from the African Group and the Latin American and Caribbean Group to the UNFF14 Bureau

The Bureau was briefed that nomination of Bureau members from African Group and the Latin American and Caribbean Group were still pending. The Bureau noted the importance of having representation from all regional groups, and noted in this regard that the Secretary of the Forum would be following up with the respective regional groups to expedite the nomination of their representatives to the UNFF14 Bureau.

f. Status of trust fund resources for participation of representatives from eligible countries at UNFF14

The Secretariat informed the Bureau on the current lack of designated funding to support the travel of representatives from eligible Member States to UNFF14. The Bureau noted the importance of raising

funds to enable the widest possible participation of Member States in UNFF14 and agreed to consult with their respective constituencies and encourage donors to contribute to the UNFF trust fund for this purpose.

4. DESA reform

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that a Secretary General report was expected to be issued on DESA reform for consideration of the fifth Committee of the General Assembly. As of this date, this report was not ready yet.

Mr. Busink (Netherlands) emphasized on the important role of UNFF, as the intergovernmental body to monitor implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and the need to maintain the momentum to increase the visibility of the UNSPF worldwide and, hence, the status of the Forum. In this regard, he expressed his concern on potential implications of the DESA reform on the work of the UNFF and the Sub-programme on Sustainable Forest Management. Mr. Momeni (Iran) also emphasized on the important role of the Forum and implementation of its mandates. They underscored that DESA reform should not undermine the role of the UNFF, as the Forum is the only universal intergovernmental body within the UN system on forests and the crucial need for promoting the visibility of the UNSPF. In this connection, Mr. Busink suggested if these points could be included in the input from the Chair to the ECOSOC President. After some discussions, the Bureau agreed to highlight these points in the communication of the Bureau Chair to the ECOSOC President, when he would be submitting input on the relation of the FCs and ECOSOC.

Mr. Busink also inquired whether or not the post of the UNFFS Director has been advertised. The Bureau was informed that immediately after the retirement of Mr. Sobral at the end of May 2018, the Under-Secretary -General of DESA, Mr. Liu, appointed Mr. Juwang Zhu as the Officer-in-Charge of the UNFF Secretariat. The Bureau was also informed that the post of the Director of the Secretariat has not yet been advertised. The Bureau agreed to further discuss this item at its next meeting.

5. Next meeting of the Bureau

The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting on 8 January 2019 at UNHQ, New York, in advance of the Expert Group Meeting on the Clearing House of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. The Bureau members would be also attending the expert group meeting on the GFFFN-CH from 9 to 11 January 2019 in New York.

6. Other matters

The Bureau emphasised the importance of raising the visibility and profile of the UNSPF within and beyond the UN system, especially including through the communication strategy of the UNSPF. The Secretariat updated the Bureau on the ongoing activities of the Secretariat regarding promoting the UNSPF and recognition of the UNSPF by CPF members and other initiatives. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that it would report to the UNFF14 on these activities. It was added that a concise publication on the Global Forest Goals and targets of the UNSPF would be made available before the UNFF14.

The meeting was adjourned at 13:00 pm.