

CONCEPT NOTE

Expert Group Meeting on Regional and Sub-Regional Input to the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

7 – 8 January 2019, UNESCAP, Bangkok,

Background and Rationale

According to 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. Furthermore, “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”¹.

The implementation of all six GFGs will be considered at the Fourteenth Session of the Forum (UNFF14). The theme of the 2019 HLPF is “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, and the SDGs under its in-depth review are: SDG 4²; SDG 8³; SDG 10⁴; SDG 13⁵; SDG 16⁶; and SDG 17⁷. The theme of the 2019 International Day of Forests is “Forests and education” which will contribute to SDG4.

Considering the above, technical discussions during UNFF14 will focus on three thematic priorities: (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. In addition, UNFF14 agenda item 6 will address

¹ E/2017/10

² Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

³ Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

⁴ Reduce inequality within and among countries

⁵ Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

⁶ Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

⁷ Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

“Enhancing global forest policy coherence and a common understanding of sustainable forest management”. As usual, the views from all UNFF stakeholders will be sought and UNFF’s regional/sub-regional partners, due to their diversity in membership and mandates, are expected to provide the Forum with valuable input.

During the expert group meeting (EGM) on regional and sub-regional input to UNFF which took place in Nairobi in 2017, regional and sub-regional partners expressed the view that any future written contribution to the Forum, including through a dedicated questionnaire, should follow the format and periodicity of the voluntary national reports as agreed by UNFF. The 13th session of the Forum approved the format and periodicity for voluntary national reports and invited Member States to submit their voluntary national reports by mid-November 2019. In this regard, the EGM will provide an opportunity for the regional and sub-regional partners to further discuss their written contributions to the UNFF on progress made in the implementation of the Global Forest Goals and targets of the UNSPF.

In light of the above, the UNFF Secretariat is organizing an Expert Group Meeting from 7 to 8 January 2019 at UNESCAP, Bangkok Thailand, to discuss and consolidate inputs on Regional and Sub-regional contributions to the UNFF, and to prepare for UNFF14.

Objective

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 Quadrennial Programme of Work, and to prepare for UNFF14. In this context, the expert meeting is expected to provide regional and sub-regional partners with an opportunity to:

- Discuss regional and sub-regional partners’ contributions to the thematic priorities for UNFF 14, including a panel discussion
- Discuss the regional and sub-regional contributions to the UNFF14 agenda item 6 on enhancing global forest policy coherence and a common understanding of sustainable forest management
- Promote an exchange of ideas on the SDGs to be addressed by HLPF 2019 as they relate to the GFGs
- Discuss and agree on the periodicity, format and content of their written inputs to UNFF on progress made towards the achievement of the Global Forests Goals and targets of the UNSPF 2030

Format and expected outcome

The expert meeting will last 2 days. It will consist of an opening and closing sessions, as well as working sessions. The expert group will be highly interactive, consisting of short, informal presentations which will trigger discussions and engage participants.

The outcome of the expert group meeting will be a concise summary of the key proposed actions and ideas. A brief overview of the discussions and suggestions of the EGM will be incorporated in the pertinent UNFF14 official documentation for consideration by Members of the Forum.

Participants

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

Language

The expert group meeting will be conducted in English.