

United Nations Forum on Forests – 15th Session, May 2020

U.S. input for Ministerial Declaration

November 4, 2019

I. Structure and Tone

- The Ministerial Declaration should be concise, ideally no more than two pages.
- The Ministerial Declaration should focus on high-level issues without getting into details, particularly on points under negotiation at UNFF15, though it should offer support for the decisions of UNFF15.
- Preambular language should be kept to a minimum and avoid citations to previous agreements, decisions, as well as to processes and decisions from non-UNFF bodies, etc.
- The text should be meaningful and accessible to readers with no specialized knowledge of, or familiarity with, United Nations processes, institutions and decisions.
- The language should be political in nature rather than legal (e.g., it should not use terms such as shall, will, agree, etc.)

II. Proposed Ministerial Declaration Elements

The Declaration should recognize that:

- Forests are crucial for sustainable development. Forests – as well as other natural ecosystems – constitute essential “natural infrastructure” for sustainable economic development, poverty alleviation, and improved human well being.
- Healthy forests are part of the equation in addressing so many of the priority issues identified in the proposed Sustainable Development Goals, such as food security and agriculture, energy, clean water and watershed protection, disaster risk reduction, and environmental sustainability.
- There is still progress to be made to meet the commitments of SDG15 and the target to “By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.”

The Declaration should support:

- The importance of national actions to conserve, restore, and sustainably manage forests;
- Increased recognition of the full value and multiple benefits of forests through increased cross-sector planning and integration of the valuation of forest ecosystem services into economic development planning and policies, especially their benefits in eradicating poverty, improving food security, combating climate change, conserving biodiversity, combating desertification, sustaining the world’s water resources, and contributing to human health and well-being;

- Strengthening forest governance at all levels including by improving the clarity and security of land tenure; building more effective and accountable public and civil society institutions; strengthening national and subnational cooperation; enabling community-based forest management; cooperating to promote trade in legal forest products; and developing policies that enable public and private sector investment in sustainable forest management (SFM);
- Increasing, diversifying and simplifying financing for SFM drawing on public, private, domestic and international sources;
- Expanding recreation opportunities and business by improving access for all;
- The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) as a key body for policy dialogue on forests within the United Nations system playing a vital role in addressing forest-related issues in a holistic and integrated manner and promoting international policy cooperation and coordination to achieve SFM;
- The UN strategic plan for forests as a strong basis for national and international actions to maintain the whole suite of contributions from forests and trees, supporting global, national, and local development commitments.;
- The importance of sustained international commitment and cooperation, and the critical role of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in advancing implementation of SFM.
- Raising awareness on the importance of forests across other international processes;
- Commitment to advance decisions taken at UNFF-15.

The Declaration should avoid citing opinions and calls to action from the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019, which represents the views of a select group of authors.