

United Nations Forum on Forests
Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the UNFF15 Bureau
10:00 am- 2:00 pm, 11 November 2019
4:00 pm-6:00pm, 13 November 2019
Conference Room VIII, Palais des Nations
Geneva-Switzerland

Participation

Bureau Members: Mr. Boris Greguška (Slovak Republic), Ambassador Kitty Sweeb (Suriname), Mr. Javad Momeni (Iran), Mr. Rob Busink (The Netherlands), Mr. Khalid Cherki (Morocco) (via teleconference)

UNFF Secretariat: Mr. Alexander Trepelkov, Mr. Hossein Moeini-Meybodi, Ms. Yan Lang

Summary of Key Actions/Decisions

1. The Bureau agreed to set the deadline of the end of November 2019 for submission of the remaining regional nomination for the advisory group on the flagship publication.
2. The Bureau decided that Mr. Rob Busink and Mr. Javad Momeni to co-chair the consultation on the UNFF15 omnibus resolution, including the 4POW 2021-2024 and its expert group meeting in Geneva.
3. The Bureau agreed to share the UNFF15 zero-draft declaration with Members of the Forum in early February 2020, and to hold a two-day informal consultation on it in March 2020 in New York. The Bureau also agreed that Ambassador Sweeb and Mr. Cherki will co-chair the informal consultation.
4. The Bureau decided to organize two parallel roundtables during UNFF15 High-Level Segment (HLS) on the morning of 7 May, open to all Members of the Forum. A dialogue with the Heads of the CPF member organizations, senior representative of the civil society and the private sectors will be held in the afternoon, followed by the adoption of the HLS Declaration.
5. The Bureau agreed to hold its next, in -person meeting, on 1 May 2020 in New York, prior to the UNFF15 and to meet in between through virtual means as needed.

Provisional Agenda
2nd Meeting of the UNFF15 Bureau

- 1- Adoption of the agenda
- 2- Preparation for UNFF15:
 - a. UNFF expert group meetings
 - b. Progress on the preparation of the flagship publication
 - c. UNFF15 official documents
 - d. Expected outcomes of UNFF15
 - e. Update on the submitted inputs on the building blocks for the zero draft UNFF15 HLS Declaration, and the next step
 - f. Initial discussions on the UNFF15 provisional organization of work, including the High-Level Segment and the CPF Dialogue
 - g. Update on the GA consultation on the new programme of work of the HLPF
- 3- Update on recent and upcoming events:
 - a. UNFFS activities/events at COP14 of UNCCD, COP25 of UNFCCC, the UN Climate Action Summit, etc.
 - b. CPF Meeting in New Delhi, India and its upcoming meetings
- 4- Next Bureau Meeting
- 5- Other matters
 - a. DESA reform and the recruitment of the UNFFS Director
 - b. Status of UNFF Trust Fund to support participation of Members of the Forum in UNFF15

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda

Mr. Greguška, Chair of the UNFF14 Bureau, welcomed members of the Bureau, and the UNFF Secretariat to the second meeting of the UNFF 15 Bureau held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. He invited Mr. Alexander Trepelkov, the Officer-in-Charge of the UNFFS to make his opening remarks.

In his statement, Mr. Trepelkov highlighted some of the outcomes of the high-level summits held in New York in September 2019, and the upcoming meetings related to forests. Several commitments made during the Climate Action Summit have implications for forests and some were specifically focused on forests, such as Norway's pledge to provide \$150 million to Gabon to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat deforestation. The SDG Summit featured announcement of over one hundred acceleration actions, around 30 of which are linked to SDG15. 2020 is a critical year for the forest policy debate, starting with UNFF15 in May 2020, then FAO's 25th session of the COFO in Rome in June, followed by COP15 of Biodiversity in China in October. At this meeting, it is important to have Bureau's views on the organization of UNFF15, its High-Level Segment (HLS), the intersessional activities in preparation for UNFF15. Concerning the new programme of work of the HLPF, currently, there is not much clarity on the specific modalities of the GA consultations on this matter. It is expected, however, that such consultations will likely to begin in early 2020.

The Chair then invited the Bureau to adopt the provisional agenda. Upon the request of Mr. Busink requested, items on the DESA reform and recruitment of the UNFFS Director, the status of the UNFF Trust Fund to support participation of eligible countries in UNFF15, and preparation of the flagship publication were added to the agenda. The provisional agenda was adopted with the proposed modifications.

2. Preparation for UNFF15

a. UNFF expert group meetings

The Secretariat informed that four expert group meetings and workshops have been organizing to advance the intersessional work. The workshop on the Global Core-Set of Forest Related Indicators, held on 22-24 October 2019 in Rome, advanced the work on Tier 3 indicators for which there was neither data nor agreed methodology. The meeting agreed on a road map for each of these indicators, including the next steps, timelines and resources needed. This work is expected to be completed within a year. The second workshop, held on 28-30 October 2019 in Bangkok, aimed at addressing potential problems that countries could face in preparation of their voluntary national report to the UNFF15.

The expert group meeting on the Clearing House (CH) of the GFFFN, to be held on 12-13 November in Geneva would discuss the scope, content and design of phase I of the CH, and also would look at the consultant's paper on lessons-learned and best practices on projects that successfully mobilized funding. The expert group meeting on the Quadrennial Programme of Work 2021-2024, to be held on 14-15 November 2019 in Geneva, would review the responses to the Secretariat's survey, and propose possible elements for 4POW 2021-2024. Key outcomes of these meetings would be incorporated in the relevant UNFF15 official documents. The

Secretariat also invited the Bureau to nominate two Co-Chairs for the expert group on the 4POW from its members.

The Bureau thanked the Secretariat for organizing these meetings. On the GCS, Mr. Momeni proposed that the Secretariat to organize a side-event during UNFF15. Following the requests from Mr. Greguska, Mr. Busink, and Mr. Momeni, the Bureau decided to extend the deadline of submission of voluntary national reports from 15 November to 30 November 2019 and requested the Secretariat to inform Members of the Forum accordingly. The Bureau also decided that Mr. Rob Busink and Mr. Javad Momeni to co-chair the expert group meeting on the 4POW 2021-2024 in Geneva, as well as the consultation on the omnibus resolution during UNFF15.

b. Progress on the preparation of the flagship publication

The Secretariat informed the Bureau of its activities in establishing an advisory group to assist the Secretariat on the preparation of the flagship publication. The Secretariat shared the concept note on the composition and terms of reference of the advisory group with the Bureau members early August 2019 and invited them to nominate the regional representatives for this group. Only two regions nominated their representatives so far, and the Secretariat has been following up to receive the remaining nominees.

Mr. Greguska and Mr. Busink emphasized on the work of the advisory group to begin as soon as possible. Ambassador Sweeb, Mr. Cherki and Mr. Momeni also reported back on their communications with the respective members of their regions. Due to its significance, the Bureau agreed to set the deadline of the end of November for submission of the remaining nominees for the advisory group.

c. UNFF15 official documents

The Secretariat informed that there would be seven official documents for UNFF15, namely; i) Provisional Agenda and Annotations, ii) Secretariat Note on the Implementation of the UNSPF; iii) Information Note on the CPF activities; iv) Secretariat Note on monitoring, assessment and reporting on the progress towards implementing the UNSPF, including the UNFI and VNCs; v) Secretariat Note on the means of implementation - progress on the activities and the operation of the GFFN and availability of resources; vi) Secretariat Note on the contribution of regional, sub-regional partners and major groups to the implementation of the UNSPF; and vii) Secretariat Note on the Forum Trust Fund. Advance unedited version of most of these documents were expected to be ready in English by the end of Feb. 2020 on the UNFF website. In response to Mr. Cherki's inquiry, the Secretariat confirmed that a simple format for announcing the VNCs will be submitted for consideration of UNFF15.

d. Expected outcomes of UNFF15

Referring to the past practice, the Secretariat informed that there would be two substantive outcomes for UNFF15; an omnibus resolution, and a HLS declaration. The resolution would include the outcome and decisions of the Forum on the substantive issues in its agenda such as the 4POW 2021-2024, and the declaration would mainly include issues of political significance for forests, as well as any guidance or commitment by the ministers. The Secretariat reminded

that since UNFF11, the Forum did not follow the traditional way of negotiations, and this proved to be very successful, as it saved significant amount of time and energy. The Bureau noted the explanation provided by the Secretariat and also agreed to follow the practice of recent Forum's sessions in finalizing the resolution and the declaration.

e. Update on the submitted inputs on the building blocks for the zero draft UNFF15 HLS Declaration, and the next step

The Secretariat informed that six inputs have received for the building blocks for the zero-draft declaration by the end of deadline of 31 October 2019. Due to time constraints during UNFF15, the Bureau emphasized on the need to have a concise declaration and to finalize it, to the extent possible, in advance of UNFF15. In this respect, the Bureau decided to convene a two-day informal consultation in March 2020 in NY. The Secretariat will check the availability of conference services and will inform the Bureau accordingly. To allow enough preparation by countries, the Bureau also agreed to share the zero-draft declaration with Members of the Forum in early February via a letter from the Chair of UNFF15. The Bureau also agreed that Ambassador Sweeb and Mr. Cherki to co-chair the informal consultation.

f. Initial discussions on the UNFF15 provisional organization of work, including the High-Level Segment and the CPF Dialogue

The Secretariat indicated that unlike UNFF11, in which the Forum had two weeks to finalize and agree on the omnibus resolution and the ministerial declaration, UNFF15 has only three days to complete its deliberation on these outcomes. The Bureau was also informed about a UN conference on transport in China during the same week of UNFF15, as this might impact the attendance of senior high officials of the UN at UNFF15.

The Bureau shared the concern about the time constraints during UNFF15. In addition to holding two-day informal consultation on the zero draft declaration in March 2020, the Bureau further agreed: i) to share the draft provisional organization of work of UNFF15 with Members of the Forum, as soon as possible, to allow them sufficient time to prepare themselves for UNFF15, ii) not to organize any panel during UNFF15, except the HLS, iii) not to have general statement at the opening session of UNFF15, iv) to convene parallel consultation during UNFF15 on the draft resolution and draft declaration, if needed, v) to introduce officially all substantive agenda items on day one, to allow initiation of informal consultation as and when needed, vi) to conclude all consultation on the draft declaration and draft resolution before Thursday 7 May, and vii) to leave no substantive item in the agenda for Friday 8 May.

Concerning the organization of the HLS, the Bureau decided to organize two parallel roundtables on the morning of 7 May, open to all Members of the Forum. The Bureau will later decide if there should be one joint theme or different themes for these roundtables. The discussions during the roundtables should be interactive and focused on responding to a few key questions. If two different themes to be selected for the roundtable, at the beginning of the afternoon session, participants in the HLS will be informed orally of the key points of discussions during the morning roundtables. The HLS will then continue with a dialogue with the Head and Principals of the CPF member organizations and senior civil society and private sector representatives for about two hours. The remaining half an hour will be devoted to the adoption of the HLS Declaration.

Regarding the concurrence of transport conference in China with UNFF15, some Bureau members considered this very unfortunate. However, the Bureau of UNFF15 requested examination of other alternatives such as participation of the UN Deputy Secretary-General during the HLS, or a SG message to the HLS. Moreover, the Bureau asked the Secretariat to check on the availability of other senior representatives of countries at the HLS such as the ECOSOC President or Vice-President.

The Secretariat informed that it would prepare the initial provisional organization of work of UNFF15 and the zero draft HLS declaration for the review of the Bureau before the end of 2019. The Bureau also agreed to review the drafts and finalize them via e-mail, or virtual meeting before the end of January 2020.

g. Update on the GA consultation on the new programme of work of the HLPF

The Secretariat informed that the GA consultation on new programme of work of the HLPF has not yet started. This is expected to begin early next year. However, there has been consultation on the joint theme of ECOSOC 2019-2020 cycle and the HLPF 2020 during the first week of November in New York. The suggested joint theme is: “Transformative pathways to realize the decade of action and delivery for sustainable”. In terms of the impact on the UNFF15 work, it could be possible that the Forum can still contribute to the theme of the HLPF 2020, through an input by the Bureau, and its deliberation on the HLS declaration. In UNFF11, the Forum submitted the Ministerial Declaration as the input to the HLPF. This can be repeated, as the declaration addresses the broader systemic and global issues of concerns.

The Secretariat also informed that it has not yet received any letter from the ECOSOC President to invite contribution to the theme of the HLPF 2020.

3. Update on recent and upcoming events:

a. UNFFS activities/events at COP14 of UNCCD, COP25 of UNFCCC, etc.

The Secretariat informed about its activities during the COP14 of the UNCCD, including participation in the ministerial roundtable, organization of a side event and involvement in the discussions in the plenary. The Secretariat made several statements, highlighting the role of the UNSPF and its GFGs in combatting land degradation and desertification, as well as the importance of collaboration between the UNFF and UNCCD. The Secretariat also organized a side event with participation of government representatives, CPF member organizations and regional organizations were participated. During this side event, the UNCCD Secretariat shared a brochure on the role of forests in advancing the global efforts to combat land degradation. As part of DESA Pavilion, the Secretariat also informed that it would organize an event during COP25 of the UNFCCC to highlight the role of forests in global efforts to address climate change. Working with the CPF Chair, this might turn to a CPF Forest Day event.

b. CPF Meeting in New Delhi, India and its upcoming meetings

The Secretariat informed that during COP14 of UNCCD, the CPF working group met to discuss the elements and components of the CPF Strategic Vision. This group will hold its second meeting on November 15th in Geneva to advance the work of the CPF on this matter.

The Bureau noted the activities of the Secretariat and emphasized that the Secretariat should continue its active involvement in various meetings to raise awareness on the significance of forests, the UNSPF and GFGs.

4. Next Bureau meeting

The Bureau agreed to hold its next in-person meeting on 1 May 2020 in New York, prior to the UNFF15, and to meet in between through virtual means as needed.

5- Other matters

a. DESA reform and the recruitment of the UNFFS Director

Mr. Trepelkov reminded the Bureau that the proposed UN Programme and Budget for 2020 contains a proposal to maintain the subprogramme on sustainable forest management and to reclassify the post of the UNFFS Director (D2) to a D1 post and to merge the UNFFS in the DSDGs. At the Committee on Programme and Coordination and the ECOSOC Management Segment in June and July 2019, there was no decision on this matter. The ACABQ was not convinced of this proposal and did not agree with it. This issue is now under consideration of the 5th committee. It is expected the final decision to be made by the end of this year. If the proposal regarding the UNFFS is rejected, the UNFFS D2 post should be advertised subsequently.

The Bureau thanked Mr. Trepelkov for this update and reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the Forum and the Secretariat. The Bureau also discussed various means to ensure that the result of consideration of the 5th Committee of this matter will lead to a stronger subprogramme and Secretariat. In this respect, the Bureau members agreed to monitor closely the discussion of the 5th Committee in New York. The Bureau further agreed that Ambassador Sweeb consult with relevant representatives in the 5th Committee on this matter.

The Bureau also discussed the means and options to increase the visibility of the Forum and forests at the global level, including the possibility of a good will ambassador on forests. In this respect, the Bureau recognized that further information is needed to discuss various options, including their implications and effectiveness.

b. Status of UNFF Trust Fund to support participation of Members of the Forum in UNFF15

The Secretariat informed that in the absence of dedicated resources to support participation of eligible countries in UNFF15, it would not be possible to provide full travel support to eligible countries. This has been a trend in recent years which led the Secretariat to provide only economy ticket in the past few sessions, and if this situation continues, this might be the case for UNFF15 as well. The Bureau noted the explanation provided by the Secretariat and emphasized on the importance of UNFF15 and wide participation of Members of the Forum at this session. The Bureau members agreed to consult with their respective constituencies to encourage contribution to the UNFF Trust Fund to support travel of eligible countries.

The Chair closed the meeting at 6:00 pm.