

**United Nations Forum on Forests**  
**Minutes of the First Virtual Meeting of the UNFF16 Bureau**  
**23 July 2020 (7:00 – 9:00 am, NY Time)**

**Participation**

**Bureau Members:** Ambassador Kitty Sweeb (Suriname), Mr. Javad Momeni (Iran), Mr. Jesse Mahoney (Australia);

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

**Summary of Key Actions/Decisions**

- 1. The Bureau decided that the thematic priorities for UNFF16 and UNFF17 would be GFG1 (expansion of forest cover) and GFG2 (improving livelihoods), along with three cross cutting GFGs (GFG4, GFG5 and GFG6).**
- 2. The Bureau considered and welcomed progress of the intersessional activities including preparation of the flagship publication and assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 on forest and forest sector.**

## **Provisional Agenda**

### **Frist Virtual Meeting of the UNFF16 Bureau- 23 July 2020**

- 1. Adoption of the provisional agenda**
- 2. Preparations for UNFF16:**
  - a. Date and venue of UNFF16**
  - b. Discussions on the thematic priorities for UNFF16 and UNFF17**
  - c. Update on the preparation of the flagship publication and related intersessional activities**
  - d. Update on the preparation of the assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 on forest and forest sector**
- 3. Other matters**
  - a. Recruitment of the Director of the UNFFS**

## **1. Adoption of the provisional agenda**

Ambassador Kitty Sweeb, Chair of the UNFF16 Bureau, welcomed members of the Bureau and the UNFF Secretariat to the first virtual meeting of the UNFF16 Bureau. The Chair introduced the provisional agenda for the meeting. Mr. Mahoney (Australia) proposed to add a sub-item under item 3 on the recruitment of the Director of the UNFF Secretariat. The provisional agenda was adopted, as amended.

## **2. Preparations for UNFF16**

### **a. Date and venue of UNFF16**

The Bureau noted that the sixteenth session of the Forum (UNFF16) would be held from 26 to 30 April 2021 at UN Headquarters in New York, following the ECOSOC decision.

### **b. Discussions on the thematic priorities for UNFF16 and UNFF17**

In its discussion of the thematic priorities for UNFF16 and UNFF17, the Bureau considered the Secretariat proposal on this matter. The Secretariat highlighted that the two important conference of the parties of the CBD and UNFCCC would be taking place during the biennium of UNFF16 and UNFF17. In addition, the current global pandemic of COVID-19 has had adverse impacts on the livelihoods of people across the globe. In this context, the Secretariat's proposal was to have GFG1 (expansion of forest cover) and GFG2 (improving livelihoods), along with three cross cutting GFGs (GFG4, GFG5 and GFG6), as the thematic priorities for UNFF16 and UNFF17.

After a thorough discussion on the key factors impacting the selection of the thematic priorities, including dates and location of CBD and UNFCCC meetings, the current status of the consultations on the programme of work of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and other international forest related developments, the Bureau agreed with the Secretariat's proposal and adopted the thematic priorities as contained in the attached note. The Bureau further agreed that the Secretariat would officially communicate the decision of the Bureau on the thematic priorities to Members of the Forum.

Regarding the organization of work for UNFF16, Mr. Mahoney (Australia) suggested early preparations be made in order to engage participation of representatives from different sectors, including the private sector and philanthropic organizations at the session. The Secretariat shared that increasing engagement with the private sector has been a priority area. The Secretariat also updated the Bureau of a positive development in that regard, and informed the Bureau of recent renewed engagement of the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD) in the work of the Forum. The Secretariat further invited Members of the Bureau to suggest names of interested philanthropic organizations for participation in UNFF16.

### **c. Update on the preparation of the flagship publication and related intersessional activities**

The Secretariat updated the Bureau on the preparation of the flagship publication, based on a briefing note previously shared with the Bureau. The Bureau noted that the Secretariat was advancing the analysis of the substantive data from 52 national reports submitted to UNFF15, the Voluntary National Contributions (VNCs) and the bio-physical data recently received from FAO from FRA 2020. The Secretariat added that a meeting of the Informal Advisory Group (IAG) on the flagship publication was being planned towards the end of August 2020.

The Bureau shared their views on various aspects of the flagship publication. Mr. Mahoney (Australia) noted the importance of a concise publication, from a communication perspective and in accordance with the mandate provided by Member States, and encouraged the Secretariat to more actively engage the IAG in the preparation process. Mr. Momeni (Iran) noted that the flagship publication was an important opportunity to showcase the role of forests and progress towards the GFGs and that there were high expectations in this regard from Members of the Forum. He emphasized the importance of the highlighting the substantive information from the national reports and VNCs and stated that the length of publication should not as such be considered a constraint. The Secretariat shared that now that substantive preparations of the publication were underway there would be more frequent engagement with the IAG. On the issue of COVID-19, the Secretariat noted that reference would be made to this emerging issue in the flagship publication. However, as per the provision of UNFF15 resolution, the initial assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 on sustainable forest management would be contained in a separate document for UNFF16, and not in the flagship publication.

**d. Update on the preparation of the assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 on forest and forest sector**

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on preparations for the initial assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 on sustainable forest management. The Secretariat informed that it would undertake several regional assessments, in close consultation with Member States and stakeholders. This work would be carried out, based on the substantive areas identified in the UNFF15 resolution. All regional assessments would be elaborated and discussed in an expert group meeting, virtual or physical (if the situation permits), before the end of the year. Members of the Forum, CPF member organizations, and other stakeholders would take part in this expert group meeting. The outcome of the expert group meeting would provide a basis for relevant official document, to be prepared by the Secretariat, to the UNFF16.

The Bureau welcomed the inclusive and participatory plan, prepared by the Secretariat. In terms of the timeline, the Bureau took note that the relevant regional assessments and the expert group meeting have to be concluded by the end of 2020, given the deadlines for preparation of official documentation for UNFF16.

**3. Other matters**

**a. Recruitment of the Director of the UNFF Secretariat**

The Secretariat informed that the Chair of UNFF15 had recently sent a letter to the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Liu Zhenmin on this subject. In his response, Mr. Liu referred to the ongoing budgetary situation of the United Nations and the suspension of recruitment of regular budget posts. Necessary actions would be taken for the appointment of the Director, as soon as the restrictions were lifted. The Bureau noted that the Director's post would be advertised publicly and would be open to internal and external candidates.

*The meeting finished at 8:35 am*