

**Concept Note**  
**UNFF Expert Group Meeting on the Assessment of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Forest Management**  
**19-21 January 2021**

**I. Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an enormous disruption to human lives, livelihoods and economic systems worldwide. It is the worst global crisis humanity has faced since the Second World war with its impacts being felt in all aspects of social and economic spheres. The on-going pandemic has caused a massive public health crisis and economic contraction, shuttered countless businesses whether big or small, thrown tens of millions out of work, disrupted global supply chains, severely strained fiscal capacity and safety nets, and continues to test global solidarity and multilateralism at a time when they are needed to address its impacts. The pandemic-induced turmoil in the global economy has led to the sudden loss of livelihoods and increase of extreme poverty, income inequality and food insecurity of some of the most vulnerable segments of society. In view of the broad range of vital services that forests provide for economic functioning and human well-being, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the forest sector and forest-dependent people, especially rural communities, indigenous peoples, and small-farm holders.

In order to have a broad overview of the impacts of COVID-19 on forests, forest sector, and forest-dependent people, and to assess the potential of forests to diminish the adverse impacts of the pandemic, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), at its fifteenth session, requested the UNFF Secretariat, in consultation with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and with input from members of the Forum, to compile an initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on: (i) sustainable forest management (SFM), (ii) the forest sector, forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, (iii) forest financing and international cooperation, and to present this assessment to the Forum at its sixteenth session in April 2021.

To initiate this assessment and collect information, the UNFF Secretariat has conducted five assessments in different regions, which cover the impact and implications of the pandemic on:

- a) The status of forest management and conservation activities, production, forest protection, afforestation etc;
- b) Livelihoods of forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities, smallholder forest owners, workers, women and youth;
- c) Forest sector, including institutional capacity at the regional, sub-regional, national and subnational levels;
- d) Forest industries labour market and employment, as well as the domestic and international demands for forest products and services;
- e) Trade, industrial and manufacturing activities;
- f) Investment and financing (public and private, including foreign direct investment);
- g) Certification and traceability; and
- h) International and regional cooperation on forests and forestry issues.

In light of the above, the UNFF Secretariat will organize an expert group meeting to allow the consultants, who carried out the assessments, to share the findings of their assessments with the

participants. The meeting will provide an opportunity for experts to share their experiences and lessons learned.

## **II. Objectives**

The main objective of the expert group meeting is to discuss and share views on: (i) the impact of the global pandemic on forests and forest sector, including risks, threats and challenges; (ii) potential responses and measures for forests and forest sector recovery; (iii) the role of forests in the post COVID-19 recovery; and (iv) potential opportunities, if any, that COVID-19 has brought to the fore to enhance contribution of forests to inclusive and long-term sustainable development.

## **III. Modality**

The UNFF expert group meeting will be held virtually from 19 to 21 January 2021. The discussions will be led by two co-chairs, to be selected from among the participants. Interpretation will be available in English, French and Spanish. The programme of work of the meeting will be shared in due course.

## **IV. Participants**

The meeting will bring together experts from UNFF Members, CPF member organizations, regional entities and processes, the private sector, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

## **V. Background documents**

The assessments by consultants and UNFFS policy briefs on the impacts of COVID-19 on forests and forest sector are the main background documents for this meeting. These documents are available at: [www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/index.html](http://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/index.html)

## **VI. Expected outcome**

The outcome of the meeting will be a concise summary of key points raised in the discussion on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable forest management, as outlined in the UNFF15 resolution, the role of forests in recovery efforts, as well as the suggestions and proposals on the way forward. An overview of the discussions and outcome of the meeting will be also incorporated by the Secretariat in the relevant official documents for consideration of UNFF16.

## **VII. Contact Person**

For all coordination issues related to the UNFF expert group meeting, including registration, please contact Ms. Njeri Kariuki at [kariuki@un.org](mailto:kariuki@un.org).