

United Nations Forum on Forests
Minutes of the Second Meeting of the UNFF17 Bureau (Virtual)
14 January 2022 (8:00–11:00 am, NY Time)

Participation

Bureau Members: Ambassador Miriam Mac Intosh (Suriname), Mr. Javad Momeni (Iran), Mr. Jesse Mahoney (Australia), Mr. Tomasz Markiewicz (Poland)
Absent: Mr. Abu-Juam (Ghana)

UNFF Secretary: Mr. Ziad Mahmassani; Ms. Jori Joergensen

UNFF Secretariat: Mr. Hossein Moeini Meybodi, Ms. Afsa Kemitale, Ms. Mita Sen, Ms. Njeri Kariuki, Mr. Ryo Nakamura, Ms. Yan Lang

Summary of Key Actions/Decisions

1. The Bureau adopted the provisional organization of work of UNFF17 and decided to organize a High-Level Roundtable on “UNFF response to, role in, and expectations from forest-related multilateral developments” during the opening meeting of UNFF17 on 9 May 2022.
2. The Bureau agreed to make a final proposal on the modality of UNFF17 in February 2022, based on guidance from the ECOSOC, the UNHQ, and host country.

Provisional Agenda

Second Meeting of the UNFF17 Bureau- 14 January 2022

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda
2. Preparations for UNFF17:
 - a. Discussions on the modalities of UNFF17
 - b. Discussions on the outcome and organization of work of UNFF17, including implications of the developments during COP26 of UNFCCC
 - c. Update on the outcome of the expert group meeting on the IAF midterm review
 - d. Update on the preparation of the 2nd assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 & related expert group meeting
 - e. Update on the outcome of the expert group meeting on proposing refinements to the format for voluntary national reporting to UNFF
 - f. Update on outcomes of the expert group meeting on strengthening the engagement of the UNFF with regional partners, Major Groups, and other stakeholders
 - g. Update on the IDF 2022
 - h. UNFF17 official documents
3. ECOSOC related matters
 - a. ECOSOC's request for Bureau's input to the 2022 session of the HLPF
 - b. Update on the ECOSOC's review of the work of its subsidiary bodies
 - c. Participation of UNFF17 Chair in the ECOSOC Briefing on the outcomes of COP26
 - d. ECOSOC Coordination Segment
4. Other matters
 - a. Update on the recruitment of the Director of the UNFF Secretariat

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda

Ambassador Miriam Mac Intosh (Suriname), Chair-designate of UNFF17, welcomed members of the Bureau, the UNFF Secretary and the UNFF Secretariat to the second virtual meeting of the UNFF17 Bureau. The Chair introduced the provisional agenda for the meeting and asked Bureau members and the Secretariat if there were any additional items that needed to be added. Mr. Jesse Mahoney (Australia) suggested adding subitem under Agenda item 4 to receive an update on the recruitment of the Director of the UNFF Secretariat. The Secretariat also suggested adding a subitem 2f on an update on the outcomes of the EGM on strengthening the engagement of the UNFF with regional partners, Major Groups, and other stakeholders. The provisional agenda was adopted with these additions.

2. Preparations for UNFF17

a. Discussion on the modalities of UNFF17

The Secretary of the Forum briefed the Bureau on the prevailing situation in UNHQ regarding organization of meetings. In this respect, he outlined three modalities, namely virtual, hybrid and in-person and informed of a possible combination with the opening and closing meetings to be held in-person to adopt procedural and other decisions, the continuation of the first meeting to be held in a hybrid format and the remaining meetings to be held fully virtually. However, selection of any of these options would be subject to the situation at that time, and any updated guidance received from ECOSOC, the UN medical office and the host country. He further added that updated ECOSOC guidance on this matter, including the procedures for the possible adoption of decisions by the functional commissions through silence procedure, if necessary, was expected to be made available soon.

In the context of discussions of the Bureau on the modality of UNFF17, Mr Javad Momeni (Iran) informed that one country of his region had expressed concerns over the schedule of various global forest-related events, including UNFF17. He further conveyed the inquiry of this country on the possibility of rescheduling UNFF17.

Mr. Jesse Mahoney (Australia) referred to his consultation with member countries of his region on the issue of modality of the session. He shared that given important global developments related to forests in COP26, CBD and the need for UNFF17 to decide on the preparations for the IAF midterm review, it was the strong preference of his region to avoid a fully virtual UNFF17. He reflected on the opportunities that a physical or hybrid session would provide to advance the work of the UNFF, emphasizing the need for a meaningful policy session outcome. Nevertheless, he also recognized that the final modality of UNFF17 was dependent on the evolving situation with the pandemic and respective ECOSOC, UNHQ and host country decisions.

In response to Mr. Momeni, the Secretariat, and the Secretary of the Forum both explained that there were many constraints in rescheduling the dates of UNFF17 in terms of UN rules, availability of conference services including interpretation, and the substantive programme of work of the Forum. They reminded that the date of UNFF17 had been adopted by the Forum and the ECOSOC last year, following a thorough consideration of all available options. As a subsidiary body of the ECOSOC, UNFF17 must conclude its work in time to submit its session report for action to the ECOSOC Management Segment in July 2022. Given the already crowded schedule of meetings, with several annual meetings of other ECOSOC subsidiary bodies being held in spring in New York, it was not considered practicable to move the dates of UNFF17 at this time. The Secretariat noted that it would raise this issue at the next CPF meeting and request other CPF member organizations to avoid organization of concurrent or back-to-back meeting to the extent possible.

Regarding the modalities of the UNFF17, the Bureau discussed the three options based on the briefing provided by the Secretary of the Forum, namely: 1) a fully virtual meeting, 2) a hybrid meeting allowing for simultaneous in-person and virtual participation with in-person only formal components to take decisions and 3) a combination with the opening and closing meetings to be held in-person to adopt procedural and other decisions, the continuation of the first meeting to be held in a hybrid format and the remaining meetings to be held fully virtually. The Bureau also noted that updated guidance from ECOSOC on this matter would be made available shortly.

After thorough discussions on this matter, the Bureau concluded that the proposal on the modality of UNFF17 shall be guided by the ECOSOC decision, UNHQ and host country guidelines. In this respect and given the evolving situation in the context of the pandemic and given that members require certainty for making administrative arrangements (e.g., visas), the Bureau decided to defer the decision on the modality of UNFF17 to February 2022.

b. Discussions on the outcome and organization of work of UNFF17, including implications of the developments during COP26 of UNFCCC

The Secretariat provided a detailed explanation of the provisional organization of work of UNFF17. As a policy session, UNFF17 is expected to adopt an omnibus resolution which would contain a list of actions in preparation for the IAF midterm review, as well as a policy decision by the Forum on other substantive issues in the agenda of UNFF17. In addition, a Chair's summary of discussions of the Forum on interlinkages of the Global Forest Goals (GFGs) and the SDGs under consideration of HLPF 2022 would be included in the report of the session and submitted, as input of UNFF17, to the HLPF. Should the Bureau agree to convene a High-Level Roundtable at the opening meeting of UNFF17, a Chair's summary of the discussions of this Roundtable would be also included in the official report of UNFF17.

The Bureau thanked the Secretariat for preparing the draft provisional organization of work of UNFF17. After thorough review and discussions on the draft, the Bureau adopted the provisional organization of work of UNFF17. It further decided to convene a High-Level Roundtable (HLRT) on "UNFF response to, role in, and expectations from forest-related multilateral developments" during the opening meeting of UNFF17 on 9 May 2022. The outcome of the HLRT would be a concise Chair's summary to be included in the official report of UNFF17. The Bureau also requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft concept note for the Roundtable, that focuses on major developments such as at the outcomes of COP26, including the Glasgow Declaration on Forests and Land Use, and share it with the Bureau for its review. After finalization, the concept note would be made available to Members of the Forum in advance of UNFF17.

c. Update on the outcome of the expert group meeting on the IAF midterm review

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Preparations for the Midterm Review of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) which was held virtually on 17 November 2022. The key outcome of this meeting was a list of proposed actions in preparation for the IAF midterm review. This outcome had been included in the respective Note by the Secretariat on this matter for consideration by UNFF17. The Bureau also took note that informal consultations on the IAF midterm review could be arranged in advance of the UNFF17, if necessary.

d. Update on the preparation of the 2nd assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 & related expert group meeting

Based on the substantive discussions during UNFF16 and the strong interest expressed by Members of the Forum, the Secretariat has conducted the 2nd assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on forests and the forest sector. The second assessment focuses on the challenges faced by countries, including strategies, recovery measures and best practices for reducing the impact of COVID-19 on forests and the forest sector. The Secretariat informed that several regional and subregional assessments have been prepared which would be discussed at a virtual expert group meeting from 2 to 4 February 2022. The key outcome of this meeting would be incorporated in the official documents for consideration of UNFF17. The announcement for this meeting would be sent to Members and stakeholders soon.

e. Update on the outcome of the expert group meeting on proposing refinements to the format for voluntary national reporting to UNFF

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that an expert group meeting was held on 13 and 14 December 2021 to discuss refinements for the format for voluntary national reporting to UNFF. Experts shared their country experiences and lessons learned in reporting to the forum. Several suggestions were also made to revise the reporting format. Participants noted the low number of reports submitted during the last reporting cycle to UNFF15. In this respect, the Secretariat was requested to send a short survey on the challenges and opportunities countries were facing in preparing and submitting the national report. This survey was sent to National Focal Points on 12 January, with a deadline to respond by 24 January 2022. The key

results of the meeting and the survey would be included in the relevant official document for consideration of UNFF17.

f. Update on outcomes of the expert group meeting on strengthening the engagement of the UNFF with regional partners, Major Groups, and other stakeholders

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that it organized the expert group meeting on strengthening the engagement of the UNFF with regional partners, major groups and other stakeholders on 16 and 17 December 2021. This meeting was held in preparation for the seventeenth session and aimed to mobilize and strengthen engagement with major groups, regional and subregional partners, and other stakeholders in support of the implementation of the UNSPF. The key outcome of this meeting would be incorporated in the official document for consideration of UNFF17.

g. Update on the International Day of Forests 2022

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the theme of the 2021 International Day of Forests (IDF) had been proposed by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests as "Forests and sustainable consumption and production". Preparations were underway to organize the customary special event for the celebration of the International Day for Forests on 21 March. The modality for the event would either be a hybrid or a fully virtual event. As in previous years, the event would feature a high-level opening featuring senior officials, an expert panel featuring CPF members and stakeholders, and a dialogue segment featuring statements from member states. The Secretariat expressed its hope that the UNFF17 Chair would be able to join this event, as per the past practice. The Secretariat also informed that it would prepare social media communication package for the IDF and arrange live streaming for the event to promote broader participation.

h. UNFF17 official documents

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the preparation of seven official documents for UNFF17, which included the provisional agenda and annotations and six Notes by the Secretariat addressing various UNFF17 agenda items. The Secretariat informed that the advance unedited version of the Provisional agenda and annotations (in English) would be made available on the UNFF website shortly. The advanced unedited versions of all other UNFF17 official documents (in English) were expected to be available on the UNFF website by the end of February 2022. Thereafter, the final version of all UNFF17 official documents (in all UN languages) would be posted on the UNFF website, once available.

3. ECOSOC related matters

a. ECOSOC's request for Bureau's input to the 2022 session of the HLPF

The Secretariat reminded the Bureau of the letter of the ECOSOC President, requesting input to the 2022 HLPF by mid-March 2022. The Secretariat reminded that a two-step approach had been taken by the UNFF Bureaus in the past few years. The first step was to submit a concise input from the Bureau to respond to the letter of the ECOSOC President by 1 March 2022, and the second step was to submit the Forum's input based on the discussion held during UNFF17. The Bureau acknowledged the utility of this approach and decided to follow it for submission of inputs of UNFF to the 2022 session of the HLPF.

b. Update on the ECOSOC's review of the work of its subsidiary bodies

The Secretariat reminded that the aim of the ECOSOC's review of the work of its subsidiary bodies was to ensure the support from the functional commissions to the ECOSOC regarding implementation of the 2030 Agenda and emerging issues such as COVID 19. The Secretariat recalled that the Bureau designated Mr Jesse Mahoney to be its focal point on this matter, and the initial feedback of the Bureau had been submitted to the ECOSOC Vice-President in December 2021. This was expected to be a continuing process and once available, a further update would be provided by Mr. Mahoney.

c. Participation of UNFF17 Chair in the ECOSOC briefing on the outcomes of COP26

The Chair updated the Bureau on her participation in the ECOSOC briefing on the outcomes of COP26 on 14 December.

The Chair informed Members of the key issues she raised at the event. She indicated that the briefing considered the outcome of COP26 as a step forward in general although, some believed that COP26 did not completely meet the expectation.

d. ECOSOC Coordination Segment

The Secretariat informed that the ECOSOC Coordination Segment pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/290A is replacing the ECOSOC Integration Segment. It aimed to promote engagement of the subsidiary bodies, in particular, regarding the annual theme of the ECOSOC and implementation of the 2030 agenda.

The Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the preparation for the ECOSOC Coordination Segment, which was scheduled to be held virtually on 3 and 4 February 2022. An infographic and a two-minute recording video by the Bureau Chair had been prepared by the Secretariat to be shared during this meeting. These aimed at providing an overview of the role, objectives and main issues in the agenda of the Forum.

4. Other matters

a. Update on the recruitment of the Director of the UNFF Secretariat

The Secretariat informed that there has been no formal announcement on the recruitment of the Director's post of the Secretariat. However, based on informal communications, it was expected that the selected candidate would join the Secretariat in New York soon.

The meeting finished at 10:40 am