

Questionnaire on the Mid-Term Review of the International Arrangement on Forests

In response to the questionnaire shared by the UNFF Secretariat on the mid-term review of the International Arrangement on Forests and with reference to the UNFF17 omnibus resolution, this joint response by FAO integrates inputs related to regional collaboration.

Through its Forestry Programme, FAO seeks to achieve transformational impacts that benefit forests and forest-dependent people and help achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and its Global Forest Goals. FAO's approach balances economic, social and environmental objectives to enable the present generation to benefit from the Earth's forest resources while conserving those resources to meet the needs of future generations.

FAO is guided in its technical forestry work by the [Committee on Forestry](#) (COFO) and six Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs).

The six Regional Forestry Commissions are: the [African Forestry and Wildlife Commission](#), the [Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission](#), the [European Forestry Commission](#), the [Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission](#), the [Near East Forestry and Range Commission](#), and the [North American Forest Commission](#).

At its 26th Session, COFO invited FAO to continue supporting the participation of RFCs in regional dialogues related to UNFF, as appropriate and within FAO's mandate.

COFO and FAO's Regional Forestry Commissions have been providing a platform for discussing UNFF-related topics in a regional setup. It has been repeatedly brought to the attention of the Forum together with the recommendation to consider RFCs as a means to strengthen the regional dimension of UNFF. In spite of the progress made, this opportunity has yet to be tapped into and more effective collaboration and deeper involvement of the Commissions could be envisaged for stronger regional involvement.

A. Questions related to the United Nations Forum on Forests and its members

According to the information gathered through the analytical work performed within the IAF and in particular through the related work of FAO (which includes but is not limited to, *inter alia*, the biennial State of the World's Forests reports, the Global Forest Resources Assessments, the information collected through the Global Core Set of forest-related indicators), it can be concluded that UNFF and its members have made progress on all five objectives¹ of the IAF. It should be noted however that progress appears to be inadequate to achieve the objectives set out in the SDGs and the Global Forest Goals (GFGs) by 2030, and the implementation must be increased considerably in the remaining period. It has also been observed that progress appears uneven across the globe. In the spirit of the "leave no one behind" principle the imbalances have to be eliminated, which creates an additional challenge for the international community, besides the urgent need for accelerating progress overall.

¹ It should be noted that unlike the other 4 objectives, in case of objective 1 UNFF's role is supporting implementation while implementation itself is the prerogative of Member States. Q A-1 a. seems to be overseeing this, although it appears properly in Q A-4 b.

Another important observation is that progress is also uneven across the objectives, and while none can be labelled as “not achieved”, stake-holder involvement, cross-sectoral cooperation and means of implementation are areas where further efforts would be always needed. On the latter, the progress in facilitating access to means of implementation should be noted with appreciation, but the mobilization function may be lagging behind the needed level. However, the timing of the mid-term review appears to be very supportive of identifying bottlenecks and priority areas, and for scaling up efforts in the remaining period.

It should be recalled that in delivering its functions UNFF is receiving strong support from the different components of the IAF. One important way of accelerating progress is increasing efficiency through a stronger coordination with other instruments and processes and their workplans, to ensure that no area remains uncovered and there are no repetitions or overlaps only incremental work and synergies. The Forum’s sessions should be devoted to discussing issues that are not, or cannot be, discussed elsewhere, and in particular the Forum’s technical sessions should be coordinated strongly with other similar global technical discussions. Collaboration and coordination at national-level should be encouraged. Further, stronger and broader stake-holder engagement may lead to stronger ownership and willingness to contribute to intersessional activities and to performing the monitoring functions. In this function in particular, filling the existing capacity and information gaps appear to be a prerequisite of increased voluntary national reporting.

B. Questions related to the Forum secretariat

The Forum secretariat should be commended for its accomplishments during the last several years under rather challenging conditions, including limited capacities v.a.v. mandate and the extensive length of some recruitment periods.

Given its broad mandate, it appears quite likely that the secretariat should continue to rely heavily on external support in carrying out well-defined tasks, obtained through hiring consultants. This can be also provided by CPF members, where the tasks/mandate are relevant, especially related to the implementation, provision of scientific and technical advice to the Forum, including on emerging issues. To make these arrangements more efficient and help the secretariat to use existing resources best, careful mapping of tasks over time would be needed and early consultation with CPF members on their ways and means to help bridge gaps. These could be complemented by using the existing resources to hire external capacities, where support within the IAF cannot be found.

C. Questions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

According to the feedback received from UNFF members including through the Forum’s sessions, CPF has appeared to be instrumental in supporting the Forum in discharging its functions. CPF’s contributions have ranged from providing technical input to the sessions to mobilizing resources, strengthening collaboration and cooperation at all levels, and to supporting intersessional activities.

Item	Key CPF activities as outlined in its 2017-2020 Workplan	In your view what has been the effectiveness of CPF in the following areas (please explain)	In your view what has been the Impact and value-added of the CPF in the following areas (please explain)
1	Contributions to UNFF documents & sessions	Effective	CPF has been providing valuable inputs to several of the thematic discussions, but there appears to be more room for providing support in

			areas of expertise of the individual members.
2	Streamlining forest reporting	Very effective	CPF members are providing essential information in support of the review, and CPF achieved solid progress in streamlining global reporting through the Global Core Set.
3	Global Forest Expert Panel	Very effective	GFEP initiatives have provided a solid and scientifically based background for key UNFF deliberations,
4	Global Forest Information Service	Moderate	A conceptually very strong initiative, delivered remarkable results in spite of very limited resources, but to exploit full capacities a considerable increase of resources would be needed.
5	CPF meetings, side events & OLI	Very effective	Side events and OLI have been contributing directly to UNFF's deliberations by providing venues for technical discussion or allowing deeper consideration of policy issues. CPF's own meetings were instrumental in planning and coordinating the Partnership's activities.
7	CPF Communicators network	Very effective	The Network has been instrumental in increasing the visibility of UNFF's work, the GFGs and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests. Important to note that the annual topic of the International Day of Forest is also decided on the basis of the Network's recommendation.
8	Forest Landscape Restoration	Very effective	The activities are key in addressing the Secretary-General's initiative to turn the tide and in the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem restoration, two signature programmes of the current period.
10	Forest Finance Facilitation	Limited	Although the programme proceeds well it enjoys limited support from CPF as it is steered mostly by the secretariat.

It must be born in mind that CPF is a voluntary partnership, and the extent to which it can contribute to the work of UNFF depends ultimately on the decisions and mandate given by the governing bodies of individual members. Consequently, greater support from CPF can primarily be expected from stronger policy coordination and coherent decisions whereby countries, who are the members of the different governing bodies, can give clear guidance and allocate the corresponding resources to support the implementation of the UNFF decisions or the UNSPF.

[D. Questions related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network](#)

[E. Questions related to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests](#)

F. Questions related to the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

FAO has been attaching the highest priority to supporting the implementation of the UNSPF, both as a global organization of the UN system and as member and chair of CPF. Furthermore, through the network of its regional offices, which are also serving the Regional Forestry Commissions as their secretariat, seeks to support the implementation of the UNSPF at all levels. To keep the strongest possible linkages, FAO's activities are marked for their contribution to the Global Forest Goals in the Organizations various planning documents.

FAO is strongly supporting any measure that seeks to decrease reporting burden on countries, and as a custodian of a wealth of forest-related information, actively promotes that broadest possible use of those information resources, including in the UNFF-related reporting.

Question F-1: What significant actions has your country or organisation undertaken since 2020 to implement the UNSPF?² What are the main challenges and constraints your country or organisation is facing in implementing the UNSPF?

FAO provides important contributions to the UNSPF as a UN system organization, as a CPF member and chair. As an example, two significant actions are:

- The Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) as the most comprehensive and authoritative assessment of global forest resources, their management and uses. FRA data contributes to the monitoring of the progress towards the Global Forest Goals of the UNSPF. FAO provided substantive contributions by providing the latest quantitative data from FRA 2020 and peer reviewing of the UNFF flagship report "The Global Forest Goals Report 2021".
- The State of the World's Forests 2022 (SOFO 2022) Forest pathways for green recovery and building inclusive, resilient and sustainable. SOFO2022 is a major contribution to the UNSPF as well as to the in-depth review of SDG15 at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

Further, FAO and its six Regional Forestry Commissions are contributing significantly to the implementation of the UNSPF and its Global Forest Goals and the associated targets. Regional recommendations for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry mapped out with regard to the GFGs are listed in COFO/2022/INF/12. An update of the Regional Forestry Commissions on global initiatives and processes, including the UNSPF, is a common agenda item for the Commissions and the latest session documents are listed below.

Main documents since 2020 in regard to the implementation of the UNSPF:

- [COFO/2022/7.4 Rev.1 Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and strengthening FAO's contribution to the International Arrangements on Forests, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its review in 2024](#)
- [COFO/2022/INF/12 Recommendations of FAO's Regional Forestry Commissions for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry](#)
- [FO:AFWC/2022/9 Update on global initiatives and processes of relevance for the regional Forestry Commissions](#)
- [FO:APFC/2022/7 Update on global initiatives and processes of relevance for the regional Forestry Commissions](#)

² There is no need to repeat information which has already been supplied to UNFF, notably in your country's voluntary national report.

- [FO:EFC/2021/14 - Global processes and initiatives](#)
- [FO:LACFC/2021/11 Global Initiatives and Processes](#)
- [FO:NEFRC/2021/8 Update on Global Initiatives and Processes of Relevance for the Regional Forestry Commissions](#)
- [FO:NAFC/2021/5.1 Overview of major global processes and events](#)

Question F-4: What, in your view, are the main “regional and global issues of concern with regard to forests” in the early 2020s?

As stated in the FAO flagship report [The State of the World's Forests \(SOFO\) 2022](#), humanity is facing multiple global threats. These include the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic hardships, food insecurity, poverty, climate change, conflicts, land and water degradation, desertification and biodiversity loss. There will be no healthy economy on an unhealthy planet.

Forests and trees can play crucial roles in addressing these crises and moving towards sustainable economies. As the world looks for solutions at scale that are cost-effective and equitable and that can be implemented rapidly, [The State of the World's Forests \(SOFO\) 2022](#) presents three interrelated pathways involving forests and trees that can support economic and environmental recovery.

Addressing the regional and global issues of concern, the solutions pathways are:

- (1) Halting deforestation and maintaining forests;
- (2) Restoring degraded lands and expanding agroforestry; and
- (3) sustainably using forests and building green value chains.

Further, the FAO's [Global Forests Resources Assessment 2020](#) and a [FRA 2020 Global Remote Sensing Survey](#) presents a range of global and regional issues of concern, such as: changes in forest-related land use and land cover, drivers of forest losses and threatened forest ecological zones.

Such concerns are discussed at the regional level through the Regional Forestry Commissions, where the results of FRA were a common agenda item.

H. Questions related to the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

Question H-1: What progress has your Government/organisation made since 2015 in implementing the UNSPF communication and outreach strategy, as contained in Annex 1 of UNFF Resolution 13/1 (see [E/2018/42](#))? How could any challenges, including achieving greater visibility of the UNSPF and the global forest goals, be addressed?

FAO, including the six Regional Forestry Commissions, have implemented the UNSPF communication and outreach strategy and strongly supported all aims highlighted in the strategy.

These efforts were undertaken through communication and outreach targeted at the global, regional and national level. The International Days of Forests, the World Forest Weeks, and regional Forest Weeks were taken as occasions to communicate, reach out and raise awareness with all target audiences mentioned in the UNSPF communication strategy.

Communication and outreach efforts were amplified, designed and supported through the five regional Forest Communicator Networks (for Africa, Europe and Central Asia, Asia-Pacific, Mediterranean and Near East, Latin America and the Caribbean); the communication group of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; and the communication network of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

The mentioned communication networks operate both as think-tanks and communities of practice, several concrete opportunities have been identified and partners mobilized to implement communication campaigns and also to maintain steady flow of information from the forest sector to the general public. Strengthening these networks further, including through stronger engagement and participation from countries, offers an immediate and cost-effective solution for increasing impact.

How could any challenges, including achieving greater visibility of the UNSPF and the global forest goals, be addressed?

Greater visibility for the UNSPF and its GFG could be achieved by strengthening the above-mentioned forest communicator networks, groups and initiatives and by appointing national communication focal points. In addition, the CPF joint initiative on forest communication could be strengthened to further coordinate and streamline communication efforts on all levels using similar messaging and various channels.

Question H-2: When considering the overall impact of communication and outreach activities, including the International Day of Forests, undertaken since 2015 by members of the Forum, the secretariat, the CPF, regional organizations and relevant stakeholders, to promote the UNSPF and global forest goals, what do you regard as (i) the main successes and (ii) the main shortcomings?

- i) *the main successes:* Forests are increasingly put on the global agenda. This is increasingly visible at e.g., the COPs of UNFCCC, UNCCD, CBD, and the HLPF. Forests are also increasingly recognized for their climate change adaptation and mitigation potential by the private sector. From year-to-year campaigns such as the IDF have a wider reach and greater impact in the general public and policy stakeholders. E.g., the communication and outreach around the IDF 2022 by FAO under common theme: “Forest and Sustainable Production and Consumption”, resulted in over 320 articles published by major national and international news wires and online news sources. While the website was viewed over 16K times and 240 multilingual posts were shared on social media by FAO reaching 35.6 million accounts. FAO’s annual International Day of Forests video spot was produced in 11 languages and broadcast by Deutsche Welle in English, German, Arabic and Spanish, Euronews, Africanews and France24 in French, English and Arabic, and featured in El País and by the Italian news agency Ansa.
- ii) *the main shortcomings:* Limited resources for forest communication. Campaigns such as the mentioned IDF campaign are successful examples, but to get greater impact more targeted, appealing global campaigns are needed. An example could be a global campaign on the benefits of wooden products, with the target of changing a general public perception that does not recognize the benefits of forest management and use opposed to strict conservation and protection. These campaigns could be organized within the framework of the CPF Joint Initiative on Communication, subject to available extra budgetary resources.

Question H-4: What opportunities are there to make better use of the capacities of members of the Forum and other players and partners at the global, regional, and national levels to strengthen advocacy on the implementation of the UNSPF?

Strengthening the five FAO regional Forest Communicator Networks (for Africa, Europe and Central Asia, Asia-Pacific, Mediterranean and Near East, Latin America and the Caribbean); the communication group of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; and the communication network of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Assigning dedicated communication focal points per country and organization to support streamlined communication, exchange, and experience-sharing through these existing networks.

Facilitating and funding global communication campaigns, e.g. a global campaign on the benefits of wooden products, with the target of changing a general public perception that does not recognize the benefits of forest management and use opposed to strict conservation and protection.

I. Questions related to the involvement of regional and subregional partners

FAO's Regional Forestry Commissions have been providing a platform for discussing UNFF-related topics in a regional setup. It has been repeatedly brought to the attention of the Forum together with the recommendation to consider these bodies as a means to strengthen the regional dimension of UNFF. In spite of the progress made, this opportunity has yet to be tapped into and more effective collaboration and deeper involvement of the commissions could be envisaged for stronger regional involvement.

Question I-1: In your view, what are the top three areas in which regional and subregional partners have made the most important contributions to SFM policy development and dialogue since the 15th session of the UNFF?

For all regions:

- Goal 1 (reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM)
- Goal 4 (significantly increase financial resources for SFM and strengthen S&T cooperation);
- Goal 6 (enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues).

Specifically for the European Forestry Commission and the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry:

- (i) the circularity concept in forestry and forest products;
- (ii) urban forestry;
- (iii) forest landscape restoration

Question I-2: What are prime examples of regional and subregional partners successfully contributing to the practical achievement of GFGs under the UNSPF 2017-2030? [*alone or in partnership with governments or business community*]

- The FAO Regional Forestry Commissions
- UNECE
- EFI
- Forest Europe
- ASEAN

Question I-3: Given the power for good of the business and philanthropic communities, what are the key efforts of regional and subregional partners to partner with them? [*both within and outside the Business Council for Sustainable Development (UN-BCSD)*]

EFC: Strong cooperation with private sector on forest products market and circular economy (in forest products market).

LACF: Supports the identification of new markets for wood and non-wood forestry products and that the countries promote incentives for restoration and collaborates with the private sector to channel investment into restoration. Supports countries in accessing funding for restoration actions and developing public/private partnerships to facilitate investments in restoration processes.

J. Questions related to the involvement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders

As it has been noted in relation to Question A, strengthening the involvement of various stakeholders would allow for increasing effectiveness on multiple areas, due to stronger ownership and commitment. Several good examples of the power of stakeholder involvement could be taken from FAO's ongoing practices, which may include the activities of the Forest and Farm Facility, or the result of the collaboration with Youth in the context of the XV World Forestry Congress. Deepening and expanding partnerships with stakeholders is one of the pillars of FAO's reinvigorated business model, and based on the achievement so far, pursuing a similar approach by UNFF may be highly beneficial.