



## Enhancing the forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits: at the heart of achievement of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development

### State of progress towards the achievement of Global Forest Goal 2 and its implications for the SDGs and other International Agreements

The Global Forest Goal 2 (GFG 2) of the UNSPF 2017-2030 (UN DESA, 2017) seeks to “enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including the livelihoods of forest-dependent people”. A wide range of institutional, legislative, technical and financial actions are being undertaken by countries within the global forest monitoring network to advance the achievements of GFG 2 (FAO, 2020; UN DESA, UNFF Secretariat, 2021). This brief examines the state of progress towards the achievement of GFG 2 and highlights the central role that it plays in the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

The GFG 2 includes five targets. The first target (**GFG 2.1**) aims to *eradicate extreme poverty for all forest-dependent people*. While several countries successfully developed forest community plans and implemented legislations aimed at boosting the employment of forest-dependent people, it is still too soon to assess the full impacts of those actions on rural employment. Moreover, in most indigenous communities in developing countries, most jobs in the forestry sector are informal, and better data on those informal jobs are required for a more accurate picture on the employment in highly vulnerable communities. The accurate measurement of GFG 2.1 is all the more important since it supports and contributes to the realization of SDG 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere) and SDG 8.3.1 (Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex) as seen in Table 1.

In its second target (**GFG 2.2**), the GFG 2 seeks to increase the access of small-scale forest enterprises to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets. Countries took a wide range of measures to support small-scale

### Key Messages

- Progress towards the achievement of the Global Forest Goal 2 of the UNSPF 2017-2030 has been severely hampered by a number of issues including, limited technical capabilities, land tenure rights, insufficiency of public and private funding, lack of clarity in the definition of the indicators, and climate change; the combined effects of overlapping crises of COVID-19 pandemic, Russia-Ukraine war and commodity and energy price inflation have further limited investments in the implementation of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) practices, and in some cases reversed the progress already made.
- Critical linkages exist between GFG 2 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the realization of at least 10 SDGs (out of a total of 17) directly or indirectly supported by the achievement of the GFG 2 targets. Similarly, several actions undertaken under GFG 2 support and contribute to the achievement of the forest-related goals of the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC, and of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). These strong interlinkages call for an urgent acceleration of the efforts undertaken to achieve GFG 2, in order to save the 2030 global agenda for sustainable development.

enterprises by developing capacity building and promoting and strengthening programmes that facilitate their access to financing; however, the diversity of these actions made it difficult to determine a specific indicator to measure progress. Clear guidelines are needed to ensure a common understanding of the indicators and sub-indicators needed to measure this target.

The third target (**GFG 2.3**) aims to *significantly increase the contribution of forests and trees to food security*. The actions undertaken to achieve this target included the development and implementation of national policies that used forests to achieve greater food security. However, owing to the informal nature of the forestry sector in some developing countries, the full scope of the contribution of forests and trees to food security is believed to be undervalued. The measurement of this target is further complicated by the inability of many countries to estimate the value of their non-wood forest products.

The achievement of GFG 2.3 vital, as this target not only supports the realization of SDG 2 (“End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”), but also of target 10 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework GBF (CBD and UNEP, 2022), which relates to the development of SFM initiatives for sustainable food security and agricultural development.

The activities initiated to complete the fourth target (**GFG 2.4**) aim at strengthening the contribution of the forest industry to economic, social and environmental development. The assessment of progress on this target was limited by the challenges in estimating the value from social and environmental benefits of forests (ecosystem services). The monetary value of ecosystem services is particularly crucial in the context of the underfunding of forests through climate finance, which is mostly attributable to the inability to clearly communicate the full value of forest-based solutions for adaptation. In addition to fostering the realization of Article 5 of the Paris agreement (UNFCCC, 2015), target GFG 2.4 also supports the achievements of SDG 7, 11, 12, and 15, as well as targets 10 and 11 of the GBF.

All of the initiatives to accomplish the fifth GFG 2 target (**GFG 2.5**) support progress towards the objectives of the GBF, the Paris Agreement, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the UN Forest Instrument.

The achievements of the SDGs and of the forest-related goals in major international agreements are linked to the successful realization of the GFG 2 targets. Yet, several issues are currently hindering progress towards the achievement of GFG 2. This is a particularly worrying situation given that the progress on the cross-cutting global forest goals (GFG 4, GFG 5 and GFG 6), which provide some of the tools and means of implementation of GFG 2, is also lagging.

**Table 1.** Alignment of the SDGs with GFGs 2, 4, 5 and 6

Agenda 2030		Global Forest Goals
SDG	Targets & Indicators	GFG Targets
1	1.1	2.1
	1.a.1	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5
2	2.4.1, 2.3.2	2.3
5	5.a.1	2.2
	5.a.2	5.2, 5.3
6	6.6	2.4, 2.5
7	7.2.1, 7.a.1	2.4
8	8.3.1	2.1
9	9.3	2.2, 4.1, 4.2
11	11.4.1, 11.7.1	2.4, 2.5
12	12.2	2, 4, 5, 6
15	All	2, 4, 5, and 6
17	17.3.1, 17.7.1, 17.14, 17.16	2.2, 4.5, 5.1, 6.1 and 6.2

## Challenges, Gaps, Opportunities, and Potential Approaches to the Achievement of GFG 2

There are numerous issues hindering progress towards achieving the GFG 2 targets. Some of them are examined below.

**Climate Change Risks.** Extreme weather events degrade forests and thereby reduce the provision of forest goods and services, which negatively impact the achievement of GFG 2. According to the data from the Forest Resources Assessment 2020, a third of the world’s total forest area was affected by severe weather events such as forest fires, droughts, and other environmental disturbances between 2002 and 2015. A cost-effective strategy to respond to these events would be to adopt an ecosystem-based adaptation, which integrates the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services into an overall adaptation strategy. For example, forests have been successfully used as an effective risk-reduction measure against avalanches, rockfalls and landslides, high winds, drought (Dudley, et al., 2010; Field, et al., 2012).

**Impacts of COVID-19.** The COVID-19 pandemic has put the stability and viability of many forests in jeopardy (ILO, 2020) and compromised the achievement of GFG 2. A decrease in forest patrols and conservation activities have left forests more exposed to unlawful activities, such as poaching and logging. Furthermore, more people have turned to forest products for subsistence, which resulted in an overharvesting of natural resources; at the same time, the loss of biodiversity and the

reduction of forested areas are potential drivers of future viral epidemics. Despite being constantly under threat during the pandemic (UN DESA, 2020), forests were key in easing poverty in rural communities, and supported other crucial sectors such as public health, employment and disaster risk reduction. It is therefore critical to promote and invest into sustainable forest management practices, as a measure to combat future viral epidemics.

**The Russia-Ukraine War.** The Russia-Ukraine conflict has caused the displacement of 3.6 million people, the suspension of investments to improve the management of forested areas, and the halting of conservation activities, with the unfortunate consequence of setting back progress on GFG 2. The conflict has also severely disrupted the world timber trade (FAO Council, 2022), and many countries have eased SFM measures to increase production.

**Insufficient Financing and Access to Markets.** Some of the financing issues may be addressed within the Global Forest Financing Facility Network (GFFFN), which can step up its efforts in supporting countries to strengthen their capacity to mobilize funding for SFM, especially given that some countries cited the inability to develop “bankable” projects as one of their main obstacles in achieving GFG 2. A reforming of the land tenure policies in some countries would also incentivize private investment for SFM. The capacity in value-chain-marketing would be improved by tracking down illegal logging and the non-regulated market for non-wood forest products, and most importantly, by a better estimation of the monetary value of ecosystem services and a development of a payment system for them.

**Data Collection and Reporting.** Progress on some targets of the GFG 2 is difficult to track, either because of the lack of clarity on the indicators of those targets or because of a lack of standardized and comparable data. Technical assistance should be provided to countries to ensure a consistent approach to the measurement of the financial value of ecosystem services and non-wood forest products, which are necessary to accurately measure GFG 2.3 and GFG 2.4. Guidelines are also required on the indicators and sub-indicators of GFG 2.3.

**Commodity and Energy prices inflation.** Russia and Ukraine are key exporters of agricultural goods, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict directly disrupted exports of crude oil, natural gas, grains, fertilizer and metals, pushing up energy, food and commodity prices to rise. The surging inflation has worsened food insecurity and negatively impacted the achievement of GFG 2.1; there is a fear that higher food prices would lead to an intensification of agricultural practices into lands under forest cover and further undermine the achievement of GFG 2. Energy prices also soared to historically high levels, with price increases more prominent in countries with a high fossil fuel dependency in the country

electricity generation mix (Ari, et al., 2022). This has put the spotlight on our dependency on fossil fuel and revived the discussion about the use of forests for bioenergy production. In this context, technical and financial resources should be made available to accelerate the production of bioenergy as part of the activities to achieve the GFG 2.4.

## Suggested Actions for Acceleration of the Achievement of GFG 2

In the view of its multiple linkages and importance to the 2030 Agenda, the following recommendations (Komguem, 2022) could be considered for the acceleration of the realization of the GFG 2 targets:

- The UNFF should accelerate communication between its members to ensure a common understanding of the indicators needed for specific GFG targets. Specifically, guidelines should be provided on the indicators required for some GFG targets, namely GFG 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4.
- The CPF should increase the technical assistance and capacity building support to country members, in (i) the valuation of non-wood forest products and ecosystem services and (ii) the development of their sustainable forest management proposals.
- Forests provide nature-based solutions to mitigating and adapting to climate change, yet they remain underfunded through climate finance. In addition to supporting the efforts to develop standard approaches for full monetary valuation of ecosystem services, the CPF should also support the adoption of those approaches in the member countries' long-term national adaptation and sustainable development plans.
- At national and international levels, forest law enforcement and governance systems should be enhanced, by strengthening national forest authorities and measures to combat illegal logging.
- In addition to its economic value, forests provide a range of ecosystem services that are critical to human well-being; they are essential for our recovery from and protection against viral epidemics; they offer nature-based solutions to climate and ecological crises. The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will meet next September for the 2023 SDG Summit, at the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; as it examines the effective measures to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, it should consider a stimulus package for the acceleration of the achievements of the GFGs.

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