



**Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad hoc Expert Group on the  
Preparations for the Midterm Review of the International Arrangement on Forests**

**10-13 October 2023, United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), Austria**

**Concept Note**

**I. Background**

1. In its [resolution 2015/33](#), the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) strengthened and extended the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) to 2030. The Council further requested the Forum to undertake a midterm, and final review of the effectiveness of the IAF in achieving its objectives in 2024, and 2030 respectively. In accordance with the program of work of the Forum for 2022-2024, the seventeenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF17), which took place in May 2022, considered, and decided on the actions to be taken in preparation for the IAF midterm review in 2024<sup>1</sup>. These actions are contained in following ten sections in the annex to ECOSOC [resolution 2022/17](#):

- A. Actions related to the United Nations Forum on Forests and its members
- B. Actions related to the Forum secretariat
- C. Actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)
- D. Actions related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN)
- E. Actions related to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests
- F. Actions related to the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030
- G. Actions related to the contributions of the Forum to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- H. Actions related to the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030
- I. Actions related to the involvement of regional and subregional partners
- J. Actions related to the involvement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders

2. The activities in preparation for the midterm review of the IAF at UNFF19 in 2024 on the above-mentioned ten areas, as contained in annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, included:

- a. Preparation of assessment reports on the above-mentioned ten areas (A to J)
- b. Organization of intersessional meetings to review the findings in the assessment reports on sections C, D, F, G, I, and J, and,
- c. Organization of an Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) before the end of 2023 to review all the assessment reports and outcomes of the preparatory intersessional work, including intersessional meetings, with a view to making proposals to the Forum at its nineteenth session on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF, including the future steps to be taken by the IAF beyond 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> ECOSOC Resolution 2022/17: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/438/29/pdf/N2243829.pdf?OpenElement>

- d. Informal consultations to be conducted by the Bureau of UNFF19, following the conclusion of AHEG, with the view to producing zero draft resolution regarding the IAF midterm review.
3. In line with the guidance provided in ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, the UNFF Secretariat undertook the following steps:
    - a. Recruited nine consultants to carry out a total of eleven assessment reports regarding the areas identified in annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17<sup>2</sup>.
    - b. Organized an expert group meeting in Bangkok in January 2023 to review and discuss the assessment reports on section G of annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17 on the contribution of the Forum to 2030 Agenda, Section I on the involvement of regional and subregional partners, and Section J on the involvement of major groups.
    - c. Organized jointly with FAO, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) Organization-Led Initiative (OLI), in February 2023 in Rome, Italy to review and discuss the assessment report on section C of annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17 on actions related to the CPF.
    - d. Organized an expert group meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, in June 2023 to review and discuss assessment reports on Section D on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), and Section F on the implementation of the UNSPF<sup>3</sup>.
  4. Through paragraph 30 of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, the Council decided to establish an Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad hoc Expert Group (AHEG) on the preparations for the IAF midterm review to be convened by the Forum secretariat towards the end of 2023, to review all assessments and outcomes of preparatory intersessional work related to the IAF midterm review, as outlined in the annex to the resolution. In this respect, the UNFF Secretariat will organize the AHEG from 10 to 13 October 2023 at the UN Office in Vienna, Austria.

## **II. Objective of the AHEG**

5. In accordance with ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, the objective of AHEG is to review all assessments and outcomes of preparatory intersessional work related to the IAF midterm review, with a view to making proposals to the Forum at its nineteenth session on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF, including the future steps to be taken by the IAF beyond 2024.

## **III. Format and Modalities**

6. AHEG will be held from 10 to 13 October 2023 in a fully in-person format. The daily meetings will be held from 10:00 am to 1:00pm, and from 3:00pm to 6:00pm, local Vienna time. The draft agenda and programme of work of the AHEG is contained in the annex to this concept note. The meeting will be conducted in English, French and Spanish. While it was not feasible to hold the meeting in a hybrid format,

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<sup>2</sup> The list of consultants who carried out the assessments is available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/IAF-MTR-Consultants-list.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> During this meeting, experts reviewed the findings of the two assessment reports prepared by the consultants regarding Section D, namely, i) an assessment on the status of existing resources for forests available from all sources, including private funding, as well as the gaps and constraints with regard to gaining access to such funds, and ii) an assessment of the performance, impacts and resource sufficiency and longevity of the GFFFN, and other measures to strengthen its work. In addition, experts reviewed the assessment report prepared by the consultant regarding Section F on the implementation of the UNSPF, as well as a road map and timeline for the next reporting cycle, and options for establishing an online reporting platform for the Forum

a link will be made available to registered participants to be able to view the discussions during AHEG, using the online platform Interprefy. The meeting will be led by two Co-Chairs to be elected by the experts at the AHEG, with due regard to geographic and gender balance, as well as their expertise and familiarity with the IAF process.

7. The first part of AHEG will be devoted to presentation of the assessment reports on Sections A on UNFF and its Members, Section B on UNFF Secretariat, Section E on UNFF Trust Fund, and Section H on Communication and Outreach Strategy of the UNSPF, and discussions on their findings, as these assessment reports had not been previously discussed in any intersessional meetings. The consultants' presentations on Section A, B, E, and H will be followed by interactive discussions among participants regarding the findings, conclusions, and suggestions in those assessments, as well as the views and insights of participating experts on those issues.

8. During the second part of the AHEG, starting on Wednesday morning, participants will review and discuss the draft AHEG Co-Chairs proposal on Section A through Section J of annex to ECOSOC resolution. The Co-Chairs with the support of the UNFF Secretariat, will make every effort to share their initial draft proposal with the participants on Tuesday evening. The AHEG Co-Chairs initial draft proposal will be based mainly on the respective proposal parts of the Co-Chairs summaries of the Bangkok, Rome, and Nairobi meetings on Sections C, D, F, G, I, and J, as well as the discussions during the first part of AHEG on Sections A, B, E, and H. Following the conclusion of the first round of consultations on the initial draft AHEG Co-Chairs proposal, the Co-Chairs will revise their proposal, considering the views expressed during AHEG, and share their draft proposal with participants for final round of discussion on Friday.

#### **IV. Expected Outcome of AHEG**

9. Considering past practice, and the provisions of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, there will be no negotiated outcome for the AHEG. The outcome of the AHEG will be a concise summary of the discussions by the Co-Chairs, which will include the Co-Chairs proposal on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF, including the future steps to be taken by the IAF beyond 2024. In accordance with ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, the UNFF Secretariat should submit the outcome of AHEG to UNFF19. In addition, the Bureau of UNFF19, considering the outcome of AHEG, should conduct informal consultations with members of the Forum and prepare and submit to UNFF19 the zero draft of the resolution on the IAF midterm review, and the IAF beyond 2024.

#### **IV. Participants, Meeting Registration, and Travel Support**

10. The meeting will bring together designated experts from Members of the Forum, CPF member organizations, regional and subregional partners, as well as major groups and other relevant stakeholders. Through the letter of the UNFFS Director dated 28 April 2023, Members of the Forum, CPF member organizations, regional and subregional partners, and major groups were invited to nominate their respective experts to the UNFF Secretariat by 31 May 2023 through an official letter.

11. Limited resources were available for travel support and the deadline for such requests was 31 May 2023. Due to administrative constraints, no additional travel support requests can be considered at this point in time. Those who have not yet nominated their (self-funded) experts are invited to do so by 15 September 2023 at the latest. The nomination of experts of Members of the Forum should be sent to the UNFF Secretariat by an official communication from the respective Permanent Mission in New York; for the regional/subregional partners by the respective head of the entity on the entity's official letterhead, and for major groups by the respective group focal point.

12. All communications should be sent to UNFF Secretariat at: [unff@un.org](mailto:unff@un.org), with copy to Ms. Ninon Williams at: [thermidor@un.org](mailto:thermidor@un.org).

## VI. Background documents

13. The following are relevant documents for AHEG:

- ECOSOC Resolution 2022/17: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/438/29/pdf/N2243829.pdf?OpenElement>
- The Note by Secretariat to UNFF18, contained in document E/CN.18/2023/6 also provides most recent updates on the preparations for the midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the IAF in achieving its objectives. This document is available at UNFF18 webpage at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N23/055/53/PDF/N2305553.pdf?OpenElement>
- All assessment reports prepared by the consultants, and PPT of assessment reports are available on the dedicated page to the preparations for the IAF midterm review on the UNFF website at: <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/preparations-for-iaf-midterm-review/index.html>.
- Co-Chairs summary of discussions, and suggestions on the way forward during Bangkok expert group meeting on section G, I and J is available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Co-Chairs-Summary-Bangkok-EGM.pdf>
- Co-Chairs summary of discussions, and suggestions on the way forward during Rome CPF-OLI on Section C is available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CPF-OLI-Co-Chairs-Summary.pdf>
- Co-Chairs summary discussions and suggestions on the way forward during Nairobi Expert Group Meeting on Sections D, and F, and paragraph 24 of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, is available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/events/egm-iaf-mtr-gfffn-unspf-nairobi/index.html>

## VIII. Health insurance coverage, and visa-related matters

14. Those experts who are planning to participate in the AHEG are responsible for making all necessary arrangements to obtain their visas. Experts are also expected to be in good health to travel and to ensure that they have their own (international) health insurance arrangement, including experts whose travel will be financed by the United Nations. No health insurance coverage or visa-related fees or services will be provided by the United Nations.

## VIII. Contact Persons

15. For all issues related to AHEG, including registration and travel support, please contact Ms. Ninon Williams at: [thermidor@un.org](mailto:thermidor@un.org), with cc to Ms. Yan Lang at [yan.lang@un.org](mailto:yan.lang@un.org).

**Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad hoc Expert Group on the  
Preparations for the Midterm Review of the International Arrangement on Forests**

**10-13 October 2023, United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), Austria**

**Draft agenda and programme**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>TUESDAY, 10 OCTOBER</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY, 11 OCTOBER</b>	<b>THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER</b>	<b>FRIDAY 13 OCTOBER</b>
<b>10 AM – 1 PM</b>	<p><b>Item 1.</b> Opening remarks by the Director of the UNFF Secretariat</p> <p><b>Item 2.</b> Election of Co-Chairs &amp; their opening remarks</p> <p><b>Item 3.</b> Adoption of agenda and programme of work</p> <p><b>Item 4.</b> Preparations for the IAF midterm review</p> <p>a. Section A of annex of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17: Actions related to the United Nations Forum on Forests and its members</p> <p>- Presentation of the assessment report by the consultant followed by <i>interactive discussions</i></p> <p>b. Section B of annex of ECOSOC resolution: Actions related to the Forum secretariat</p> <p>- Presentation of the assessment report by the consultant followed by <i>interactive discussions</i></p> <p><i>(Co-Chair's highlight the key points of the discussions on item 4a &amp; 4b)</i></p>	<p><b>Item 5.</b> Consultation on the initial draft AHEG Co-Chairs proposal to UNFF19 on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF</p>	<p><b>Item 5.</b> Consultation on the initial draft AHEG Co-Chairs proposal to UNFF19 on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF</p>	<p><b>Item 5.</b> Consultation on the initial draft AHEG Co-Chairs proposal to UNFF19 on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF</p>
<b>1 – 3 PM</b>	<b>Break</b>	<b>Break</b>	<b>Break</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>3 – 6 PM</b>	<p><b>Item 4:</b> Preparations for the IAF midterm review</p> <p>c. Section E of annex of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17: Actions related to the UNFF Trust Fund</p> <p>- Presentation of the assessment report by the consultant followed by <i>interactive discussions</i></p> <p>d. Section H of annex of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17: Actions related to the Communication and outreach strategy of the UNSPF</p> <p>- Presentation of the assessment report by the consultant followed by <i>interactive discussions</i></p> <p><i>(Co-Chair's highlight of the key points of the discussions on item 4c &amp; 4d)</i></p>	<p><b>Item 5.</b> Consultation on the initial draft AHEG Co-Chairs proposal to UNFF19 on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF</p>	<p><b>Item 5.</b> Consultation on the initial draft AHEG Co-Chairs proposal to UNFF19 on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF</p>	<p><b>Item 6.</b> Finalization of the draft AHEG Co-Chairs proposal to UNFF19 on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF</p> <p><b>Item 7:</b> Next step and the closure of the meeting</p>