

Minutes of the Second Meeting of UNFF20 Bureau (Virtual)
18 December 2024, 8:00am-10:00am, NY time

Participation

Bureau Members: Mr. Ismail Belen (Türkiye), Mr. Javad Momeni (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Andres Napuri Pita (Peru), Ms. Maria Sokolenko (Russian Federation), Mr. Abderrahim Houmy (Morocco) accompanied by Mr. Khalid Cherki

UNFF Secretariat: Ms. Juliette Biao, Mr. Minoru Takada, Mr. Hossein Moeini-Meybodi, Ms. Nadine Souto

UNFF Secretary: Mr. Ziad Mahmassani

Key Actions/Decisions

The Bureau approved the provisional organization of work of UNFF20. The provisional organization of work of UNFF20 will be updated as needed in the period leading to UNFF20.

Provisional Agenda

- 1. Adoption of the provisional agenda**
- 2. Preparations for UNFF20:**
 - a. Review and finalization of the draft provisional organization of work of UNFF20
 - b. Expected outcome(s) of UNFF20
 - c. Update on the preparations of UNFF20 official documents
 - d. Update on the intersessional activities in preparations for UNFF20 (thematic priorities, CPF activities, preparations for discussions on emerging issues...)
 - e. Letter from the ECOSOC President requesting UNFF's input to the HLPF 2025 (*tbc*)
- 3. Update on new country and organization led initiatives**
- 4. Briefing on major forest related events:**
 - a. Participation of UNFF20 Chair in various events
 - b. Participation of the UNFFS Director in various events, including COPs of CBD, UNFCCC, and UNCCD
 - c. Briefing on the International Day of Forest 2025.
- 5. UN liquidity situation, and the status of the UNFF Trust Fund, and their implications on programme of UNFF20 and beyond**
- 6. Other matters**

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda

Chair (Türkiye) of the UNFF20 Bureau, opened the meeting and welcomed the Bureau members, the UNFF Secretariat Director and staff and the UNFF Secretary. He introduced the provisional agenda. Before its adoption, Vice-Chair (Russian Federation) requested to share information about Azerbaijan's proposal to hold an international conference on forests and biodiversity. This item was included for discussion of the Bureau under item 6 of agenda on other matters. The provisional agenda was subsequently adopted.

2. Preparations for UNFF20:

a. Review and finalization of the draft provisional organization of work of UNFF20

UNFF Secretariat introduced the draft provisional organization of work of UNFF20 and provided detailed explanation regarding the programme of different meetings during UNFF20. The Secretariat indicated that the views expressed in the post UNFF19 survey, which was conducted by the UNFFS, had been considered in this draft. The Secretariat reminded that UNFF20 session would be held in an in-person format from **5-9 May 2025** at UNHQ in New York, with its opening meeting on Monday morning, 5 May. After opening remarks and introduction of an official document of UNFF20, there would be an opportunity for delegations to make their general statements. There would be no pre-scheduled list of speakers for Monday morning meeting, or during UNFF20 session.

The discussion on **Monday** afternoon session will be devoted to item 3(a) and 3(b) under which the report of relevant Country Led Initiatives (CLIs held after UNFF19 and before UNFF20 would be presented to the Forum. In addition, any new announcement of Voluntary National Contributions (VNCs and update on the previous ones will be provided by the relevant delegations. CPF and its member organizations, as well as UNFF regional partners and major groups would also report on their activities since UNFF19. These will be followed by general discussions on these items.

On Tuesday morning, May 6th, under item 3(c), the Forum will discuss inputs to the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development \(HLPF\) 2025](#) and HLPF 2026, and the outcomes of major forest related developments, and forest related initiatives by UNFF members and partners. Tuesday afternoon session will be on item 3(d) on communication and outreach strategy, which would include the activities of the [International Day of Forests \(IDF\) 2025](#), and the announcement of the theme for IDF2026 by CPF Chair. This will be followed by a panel discussion on: Valuing forest's ecosystems in national policy and strategy, the experiences, challenges, and the way forward.

Wednesday morning, May 7th, the meeting will be devoted to discussion on item 3(e) on means of implementation, including the performance and operation of [the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network](#) (GFFFN). After introduction of the Secretariat Note and general discussion on this item, a panel discussion will be held on: Significance of a global hub on data, information, and knowledge on forest financing opportunities and best practices; and the role of GFFFN Clearing House. Item 3(f) on monitoring, assessment and reporting will be discussed on Wednesday afternoon. This discussion would include updates on voluntary national reports, report on the outcome of Global Workshop on capacity building for reporting; global core set of forest-related indicators; and the next Global Forest Goals Report.

On Thursday morning, May 8th, the Forum would consider the information paper on the needs, gaps and workload of the [United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat](#) (UNFFS) as decided in [Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\) resolution 2024/15](#), titled "Outcome of the 19th session of the United

Nations Forum on Forests". Under the agenda item on emerging issues, the Forum will discuss and hold a panel on dryland forests on Thursday afternoon.

On Thursday evening, the draft Chair's summary of UNFF20 discussions will be distributed electronically among delegations. On Friday morning, 9th of May, delegations would have an opportunity to share any factual correction to the draft Chair's summary. Friday afternoon will be devoted to adoption of report of UNFF20.

The UNFF Secretariat further informed that during UNFF20, there would be three parallel side events during lunch time each day. The guidelines for the organization of side events during UNFF20 will be shared with UNFF members and partners in February 2025.

Following the presentation by the UNFF Secretariat, the UNFF Secretary provided updates and clarifications on the procedural matters. He indicated that Item 1 of the provisional organization of work, as well as the "First meeting of the twenty first session of the Forum" on the last day of UNFF20, were placeholders in case the need should arise to hold elections for vacant Bureau positions. This is not currently anticipated, as the Bureau of UNFF20-21 was fully constituted. He also added that the Bureau would need to designate one of its Vice-Chairs to serve as Rapporteur for the 20th and 21st sessions. UNFF Secretariat also indicated that, based on the rotation, it would be the turn of the Vice-Chair from the Eastern European Group to assume this role. UNFF Secretary explained that information would be prepared and shared with delegations in advance of UNFF20, explaining logistical and registration matters. Under item 2, there would be also explanations by the Chair for participants related to procedural matters relevant to the conduct of the session.

After the explanations by the UNFF Secretariat and UNFF Secretary, the Bureau thoroughly discussed the draft and sought clarifications from the Secretariat.

- In response, the Secretariat clarified that, as a matter of principle, due regard would be given to the need for gender and geographic balance. On emerging issues, it was clarified that members of the Forum could propose their topics of concern for consideration as "emerging issues" in the future session of UNFF. The Bureau would review such suggestions and make a proposal on this matter. On the criteria for choosing topics for consideration as emerging issues, the UNFF Secretariat also clarified that emerging issues were those which were not usually on the official provisional agenda of the Forum's session but were of concern to a large group of Forum members.

- On the possibility of holding UNFF20 session in hybrid format, the UNFF Secretary explained that there was no intergovernmental agreement on the holding of hybrid or virtual formal meetings in New York. In addition, a hybrid component would reduce the interpretation allotment from three to two hours in each meeting, resulting in significant reduction in the working hours of the Forum. To this end, all UNFF meetings need to take place in person. However, virtual participation of invited keynote speakers or panelists can be accommodated on a case-by-case basis, provided that the total virtual interventions do not exceed 30 minutes in duration. He also stressed that, as in previous sessions, it would be important to communicate and strictly enforce time limits for interventions from the floor, to ensure that all who wish to speak can do so. The time limits were three minutes for statements delivered on behalf of individual countries, and four minutes for statements delivered on behalf of groups of countries. He further observed that, due to ongoing liquidity issues within the UN regular budget, the UN regular hours of 10:00AM-1:00PM and 3:00PM-

6:00PM would be strictly observed and it would not be possible hold formal meetings of the intergovernmental process outside of those hours.

UNFF20 Bureau after thorough review of the draft organization of work, and the information provided by the UNFF Secretariat and UNFF Secretary adopted the draft provisional organization of work, with the understanding that necessary adjustments would be made in the provisional organization of work, should the needs arise.

b. Expected outcome of UNFF20

UNFF Secretariat reminded that UNFF20 would be a technical session, and there would be no intergovernmental negotiated outcome for this session. The main outcome of UNFF20 will be a Chair's summary that might include proposals for consideration during the UNFF21 policy session in 2026. The draft Chair's summary will be shared with UNFF members in advance of the final day of the session. The Chair's summary will not be for negotiations or agreement among delegations. Under item 9 on the last day, UNFF members and partners can provide factual corrections, or any major missing points that they previously raised during UNFF20 for reflection in the Chair's summary. The Chair's summary will also include inputs to the HLPF 2025, and HLPF 2026.

c. Update on the preparations of UNFF20 official documents

UNFF Secretariat briefed Bureau members on the preparation of official documents which was progressing according to schedule. Two out of six official documents have already been submitted to the ?? for publication, including editing and translation. Advance unedited versions of all documents will be available by the end of February on the UNFF website. The official documents of UNFF20 in all UN official languages will be ready a few weeks before UNFF20.

d. Update on the intersessional activities in preparations for UNFF20 (thematic priorities, CPF activities, preparations for discussions on emerging issues...)

UNFF Secretariat briefed the Bureau on preparations for various intersessional activities in preparation for UNFF20 as follows:

- Organization of two Expert Group Meetings for engagement of Major Groups and regional and subregional organizations to be held from 21 to 23 January 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand.
- The CPF would also hold its annual retreat in January 2025. CPF is currently working to develop its workplan for 2025-2028 in line with the quadrennial programme of work of UNFF, and in response to UNFF19 resolution. The UNFF Secretariat is also working with CPF members to prepare a policy brief on the thematic priorities of UNFF20-21. Ahead of UNFF20, it is expected that the CPF would hold a virtual briefing for UNFF members on implementation of CPF related provisions of UNFF19 resolution.
- In January 2025, a notification would be sent to UNFF National Focal Points regarding the new format and modality for submission of next voluntary national reports to UNFF. A new online platform for reporting will be used to increase and enhance the quantity and quality of national reports.

- From 18-20 March 2025, UNFF Secretariat in collaboration with FAO will organize a capacity-building workshop on monitoring, assessment and reporting at the UN Office in Nairobi, Kenya. The purpose of the workshop is to facilitate and support the submission of national reports to UNFF by the deadline of 30 June 2025. Based on the submitted reports, the UNFF Secretariat in consultation with relevant partners will prepare the second Global Forest Goals Report, to be launched in 2026.
- In preparation for UNFF20, the UNFF Chair would hold a briefing for Permanent Missions in the weeks leading up to the session.

Following the presentation by the UNFF Secretariat, Vice-Chair (Morocco) and Chair (Türkiye) suggested strengthening interaction between UNFF Bureau and the CPF and sought guidance from the UNFF Secretariat. Vice-Chair (Islamic Republic of Iran) emphasized that each CPF member organization has its own governing body, and the interaction of UNFF Bureau with CPF should be guided by the relevant provisions of ECOSOC resolution 2024/15.

In response, the UNFF Secretariat explained that CPF is an important component of the [International Arrangement on Forests](#) (IAF). CPF members are composed of secretariats of sixteen international forest related organizations and entities, and UNFF secretariat is a member and the CPF secretariat. There is already specific modality for interaction between UNFF Secretariat and CPF members. The Secretariat also recalled para 5(a) of ECOSOC resolution 2024/15 in which the Council invited the Forum and its Bureau to proactively reach out to the governing bodies of CPF member organizations to strengthen collaboration and support to the work of the Partnership”.

In follow up to this invitation, the UNFF Secretariat also recalled the letter sent by UNFF20 Chair to the Chairs/Presidents of the governing bodies of CPF member organizations in June 2024. The Secretariat advised the Bureau to consider options for engaging with the Bureau and Chairs of governing bodies of CPF member organizations within the scope provided in ECOSOC resolution 2024/15. It was noted that only two responses were received from the Chairs of governing bodies to letter of UNFF20 Chair. The UNFF Secretariat indicated it would follow up with those organizations which have not yet responded. After receiving the responses, a compilation of all responses received would be prepared for review, based on which the Bureau could consider appropriate follow up actions for engagement with the governing bodies of CPF member organizations. Vice-Chair (Morocco) also offered to share his suggestions on this matter. In conclusion, the Bureau agreed with the suggestion made by the UNFF Secretariat to follow up with those Chairs of governing bodies which have not yet responded.

e. Letter from the ECOSOC President requesting UNFF’s input to the HLPF 2025

UNFF Secretariat informed that the Bureau Chair would soon receive, before the end of the year, a letter from the [ECOSOC President](#), inviting the UNFF to provide input on the SDGs under review of HLPF 2025. As in the past, once this invitation is received, the UNFF Secretariat will prepare and share an initial draft input with the Bureau for review and revision. The draft will be then circulated informally among UNFF National Focal Points to solicit their feedback. Once finalized, the input will be submitted by the Chair of UNFF20 to ECOSOC President by the deadline of 3 March 2025. In addition, according to the Quadrennial Programme of Work of UNFF for 2025-2028, UNFF20 will also need to reflect on the SDGs under review at the HLPF in 2026. This matter is included in the UNFF20 organization of work for Forum’s discussions.

3. Update on new country and organization led initiatives

UNFFS Director briefed the Bureau on the Country and Organization Led Initiative proposals currently on the table for 2025 and 2026.

- Morocco (from Africa) has proposed a CLI, tentatively scheduled for June 2025. This CLI will consider the topics of forest finance, community-based forest management and technology. Arrangements are moving forward on this CLI.
- Saudi Arabia (Asia-Pacific States), following successful organization of a side event during UNCCD COP16, has proposed a CLI on dryland forests. The timing is tentatively scheduled for April 2025, and the preparations are ongoing.
- Austria (from Western European and other States) has also proposed a Country and Organization Led Initiative (COLI) focusing on sustainable forest-based bioeconomy. The UNFF Secretariat has already provided its substantive views and inputs on the relevant proposal and waits for the response from Austria and the updated proposal. The COLI is currently scheduled to be held in February 2026.
- Finally, Nigeria has proposed a CLI, though timing and its focus are not yet confirmed. The UNFF Secretariat will keep the Bureau informed on the status of this and other proposals.

4. Briefing on major forest related events:

a. Participation of UNFF20 Chair in various events

Chair (Türkiye) briefed the Bureau on his attendance at the following meetings and events:

- **G7 Special Event: Forests for the World** – 26 March 2024, Rome, Italy, with kind invitation of Italy
- **CBD COP16** – 21 October to 1 November 2024, Cali, Colombia, with kind support of Türkiye
- **The European Wood Policy Platform (woodPoP)** – 6 November 2024, Brussel, with kind invitation of Austria.
- **UNFCCC COP29** – 11-22 November 2024, Baku, Azerbaijan, with kind support of Türkiye
- **UNCCD COP16** – 2-13 December 2024, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, with kind support of Türkiye

He added that his participation in these meetings and events were very important in terms of cultivating relationships with UNFF members and gathering feedback from them. He appreciated the close collaboration with and support of the UNFF Secretariat at these events.

b. Participation of the UNFFS Director in various events, including COPs of CBD, UNFCCC, and UNCCD

UNFFS Director thanked the Bureau, especially the Chair, for their support at COPs engagement. She stressed the importance of UNFF presence at these meetings to raise the profile of forests in global fora. She also recalled that, for many years, UNFF outcomes have called for increased synergy and coherence between UNFF and the Rio Conventions. She referred to organization of the Forest Pavilion during COP29

of UNFCCC and stressed that the Forest Pavilion is not the end result, but rather it was a means to achieve progress on the GFGs.

c. Briefing on the International Day of Forest 2025

UNFF Secretariat provided a brief update on the organization of International Forest Day (IDF) on Friday, 21 March 2025. The theme will be Forest and Food. The Secretariat is collaborating with partners to put together an event on that day at UNHQ. It is expected to have participation from the UNFF Bureau, country and UN senior officials, UNFF members, and partners. A communications and outreach package, including videos, social media elements, and key messages, will be shared in due course.

5. UN liquidity situation, and the status of the UNFF Trust Fund, and their implications on programme of UNFF20 and beyond

UNFF Secretariat provided an update on the UN liquidity crisis. Due to the late payment or non-payment of member state contributions to the Regular Budget, the UN Secretariat has had to tap into reserve accounts and enforce stringent spending restrictions to avoid defaulting on its financial obligations. This is affecting programme delivery and mandate implementation. Some measures with the potential to disrupt activities of the UNFF Secretariat relate to the availability of resources to provide travel support to representatives of developing countries to attend UNFF20. Conference services for meetings of the intergovernmental process may also be affected. It is likely that restrictions in 2025 will be similar to those already enforced in 2024, however it is too early to know the exact implications. UNFF Secretariat also faces a difficult situation regarding extrabudgetary resources, as very few countries are currently contributing to the UNFF Trust Fund. The Secretariat is working on a fundraising proposal to present to donor countries in conjunction with UNFF20. The Secretariat requested Bureau's support to advocate within the regions to increase contributions to UNFF trust fund to offset the restrictions associated with the regular budget.

Several Bureau members expressed their support to the UNFF Secretariat to navigate this challenge. Vice-Chair (Morocco) suggested that a meeting to be organized on the margins of UNFF20 with donors. Vice-Chair (Islamic Republic of Iran) and Vice-Chair (Peru) expressed their willingness to engage with colleagues in the Fifth Committee and stressed the importance of availability of donor contributions to support participation of developing countries in UNFF sessions. Vice-Chair (Russian Federation) informed the Bureau that the Russian Federation was willing to contribute to the UNFF Trust Fund but was prevented from doing so due to the current sanctions.

6. Other matters

Vice-Chair (Russian Federation) brought to the attention of the Bureau a proposal by Azerbaijan to organize an international conference on forests and biodiversity in June 2025, and the involvement of the UNFF Secretariat in this conference.

In response to Vice-Chair (Russian Federation), UNFFS Director referred to her discussion during COP29 with delegation of Azerbaijan on a conference on forest finance and not forests and biodiversity. Further clarification is needed from Azerbaijan about the nature of the conference. If this is going to be a UNFF CLI, it requires to align with the relevant CLI guidelines adopted by UNFF. These guidelines will be shared with the partners. The UNFFS Director also drew the attention of the bureau member on the busy schedule of work of the UNFFS in 2025, and the potential agenda clash with the already planned CLI in

Morocco. Finally, she added that regardless of the nature of the conference, there will be an opportunity for Azerbaijan to make a brief presentation at UNFF20 to inform UNFF members and partners about this conference and invite them to join it.

Vice-Chair (Russian Federation) thanked the UNFFS Director for these clarifications and informed that she would inform Azerbaijan accordingly. She also requested the Secretariat to share the CLI guidelines with her.

- Following the discussions among Bureau members, the Bureau requested Vice-Chair (Russian Federation) to seek further clarification from Azerbaijan regarding the exact nature of the proposed international conference on forests and biodiversity, and whether or not Azerbaijan intends to hold this conference as a CLI in support of UNFF.

The Chair of the Bureau (Türkiye) highlighted his participation in the COP29 President's High-Level Event on "Forests for Climate, Nature and People: Harnessing Climate Finance for Forests" held in Baku and thanked Azerbaijan for its warm hospitality and strong support to UNFF work.

Vice-Chair (Russian Federation) suggested to consider holding a tree-planting campaign on the margins of the UNFF20 session. She requested UNFF Secretariat to update the UNFF Bureau on the regulations the UN Headquarters may have in this regard.

Before closing the meeting, Chair (Türkiye) thanked all Bureau members, UNFF Secretariat, and UNFF Secretary for their active participation and the fruitful discussions during the second meeting.

The meeting finished at 11:05am