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United Nations Forum on Forests**Twentieth session**

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Item 3 (a), (c), (d) and 6¹ of the provisional agenda**Technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030: Activities in support of the thematic priorities for the biennium 2025-2026****Note by the Secretariat*****Summary***

In accordance with ECOSOC resolution 2024/15, the United Nations Forum on Forests at its twentieth session will hold technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and consider the activities in support of the thematic priorities for the biennium 2025–2026 undertaken since the nineteenth session of the Forum. The present note serves as the basis for discussion during the twentieth session of the Forum on agenda item 3 and its sub-items (a), (c), (d), and item 6 on emerging issues.

¹ *E/CN.18/2025/1

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025–2028² contained in the annex to Council resolution 2024/15, the Forum at its twentieth session will hold technical discussions on its thematic priorities in support of the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030.

2. The present note serves as the basis for discussions of the Forum under agenda item 3 and its sub-items (a), (c) (d), as well as item 6. Under agenda item 3 (a), and its subitems (i), (ii) and (iii), the Forum will consider contributions of members of the Forum to implementing the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including the report on the outcomes of the country-led initiatives held since the nineteenth session of the Forum, new announcements of voluntary national contributions, and updates on voluntary national contributions and their follow-up related to the thematic priorities. Under agenda item 3(c), the Forum will discuss interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2025 and 2026, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, including the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme, and other international forest-related developments. The Forum will also consider implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including activities regarding the International Day of Forests 2025 under agenda item 3(d).

3. The present note serves as the basis for discussion of the Forum on item 6 on emerging issues and contains information on the progress on the implementation of relevant provisions of Council resolution 2024/15 since the nineteenth session of the Forum. This note also includes proposals for discussion by the Forum at its twentieth session.

II. Background

4. In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025-2028, contained in annex to ECOSOC resolution 2024/15, the twentieth session of the Forum is a technical session. The outcome of the twentieth session will be a concise Chair's summary that may include proposals for consideration at the Forum's policy session in 2026. For the biennium 2025–2026, the thematic priorities for the twentieth and twenty-first sessions of the Forum, in 2025 and 2026, will be global forest goals 1 (Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change), 3 (Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests) and 5 (Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the United Nations forest instrument, and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

III. Technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

5. In response to paragraph 25 (d) of Council resolution 2024/15 and to facilitate the technical discussion of the Forum at its twentieth session on its thematic priorities, the Forum secretariat is producing a policy brief with the support of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. This policy brief will be presented during the twentieth session of the Forum to provide a substantive context for the discussion of the Forum on its thematic priorities.

A. Activities in support of the thematic priorities for the biennium 2025–2026; Contributions of Members of the Forum to implementing the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030

a. Report on the outcomes of the Country-Led Initiatives (CLIs)

² E/RES/2024/15

6. In accordance with the Annex of Council resolution 2017/42, the overall purpose of a country-led initiative is to support the work of the Forum. Since the nineteenth session of the Forum, the Government of Congo organized a country-led initiative. This CLI took place from 2 to 5 July 2024 in Brazzaville, Congo, with a focus on afforestation and reforestation. Once available, the report of the CLI will be posted on the website of the Forum. The organizer will also present the outcome of the CLI during the twentieth session of the Forum.

b. New announcements of voluntary national contributions

7. In accordance with the strategic plan³, members of the Forum may, on a voluntary basis, determine their contributions towards achieving the global forest goals and targets, taking into account their national circumstances, policies, priorities, capacities, levels of development and forest conditions. Members may include in their voluntary national contributions, as appropriate, the forest-related contributions they intend to make with regard to other international forest-related commitments and goals, such as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and actions to address climate change under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change³ and the Paris Agreement.

8. Members may, on a voluntary basis, communicate their progress on the voluntary national contributions to the United Nations Forum on Forests at regular intervals determined by the Forum, in accordance with paragraph 67 of the strategic plan. In order to avoid any additional reporting burden, such voluntary communications on their voluntary national contributions may be part of their voluntary reporting on the strategic plan and the United Nations forest instrument.

9. Since the nineteenth session of the Forum, Georgia has announced its voluntary national contribution.

c. Updates on voluntary national contributions and their follow-up related to the thematic priorities

10. As of January 2025, 27 countries (Australia, Botswana, Canada, China, Ecuador, Germany, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, New Zealand, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Thailand, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Uzbekistan) had officially announced their voluntary national contributions. All contributions communicated to the secretariat have been compiled in a publicly accessible and centralized repository on the Forum's website⁴.

11. Since the nineteenth session of the Forum, there has been no update provided. Given the importance of the voluntary national contributions, the Forum members that have already announced voluntary national contributions are encouraged to actively monitor progress in the implementation of their respective voluntary national contributions and provide update to the Forum.

B. Interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2025 and 2026, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at its COP15, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme, and other international forest-related developments

12. Since the conclusion of the nineteenth session of the Forum, several conferences, summits and meetings have taken place, and important developments related to forests have happened. A brief description of these developments and related interconnection with forests is presented below. A brief description on interlinkages of global forest goals and targets and these developments is also presented in this section.

³ A/RES/71/285

⁴ See <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/documents/un-strategic-plan-for-forests-2030/vncs/index.html>.

General Assembly resolution 78/320 “Fostering sustainable forest management, including afforestation and reforestation, in degraded lands, including drylands, as an effective solution to environmental challenges”

13. On 14 August 2024, the General Assembly adopted resolution 78/320 “Fostering sustainable forest management, including afforestation and reforestation, in degraded lands, including drylands, as an effective solution to environmental challenges”.

14. Through this resolution, the General Assembly emphasized the economic, social and environmental benefits of sustainable forest management, and invited Member States to implement, participate in and support, as appropriate, sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation projects and initiatives incorporating tree planting, seeding or regeneration in degraded lands, including drylands, noting that the General Assembly would strive to strengthen the provision and mobilization of and access to new and additional resources from all sources for the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of forests, in particular developing countries, and provide support for efforts towards halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.

15. The General Assembly also recognized the need to work collaboratively to protect, conserve, sustainably manage and restore forests and forest ecosystems in line with the Global Forest Goals and all relevant multilateral agreements and related processes, including through meaningful engagement with and supporting the contributions of partners and stakeholders at all levels. A brief presentation on this resolution will be made during UNFF20.

Summit of the Future

16. At the Summit of the Future held from 22 to 23 September 2024, the Heads of State and Government adopted the Pact for the Future, including the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations as annexes.⁵ This Pact serves as a strong statement of countries’ commitment to the UN, the international system and international law, and outlined 56 actions in the areas of sustainable development and financing for development, international peace and security, science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation, youth and future generations, and transforming global governance.

17. Through the Pact, world leaders called for action to accelerate efforts to restore, protect, conserve and sustainably use forests and other ecosystems. They emphasized the importance of conserving, protecting and restoring nature and ecosystems towards achieving the Paris Agreement temperature goal, including through enhanced efforts towards halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030, and other terrestrial and marine ecosystems acting as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases and by conserving biodiversity, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards, in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework under Action 9 “We will strengthen our actions to address climate change” .

18. World leaders also expressed their deep concern about rapid environmental degradation, and recognized the urgent need for a fundamental shift in our approach in order to achieve a world in which humanity lives in harmony with nature, noting that we must conserve, restore and sustainably use our planet’s ecosystems and natural resources to support the health and well-being of present and future generations through addressing the adverse impacts of climate change, sea level rise, biodiversity loss, pollution, water scarcity, floods, desertification, land degradation, drought, deforestation and sand and dust storms.

19. In particular, the Heads of State and Government decided to take ambitious action to improve the health, productivity, sustainable use and resilience of the ocean and its ecosystems, and conserve and sustainably use and restore seas and freshwater resources, as well as forests, mountains, glaciers and drylands, and protect, conserve and restore biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife under Action 10 “We will accelerate our efforts to restore, protect, conserve and sustainably use the environment”.

20. The Pact and its annexes provide concrete follow-up mechanisms, including a high-level review for the Global Digital Compact in 2027, a high-level plenary meeting in 2028 for the Declaration on Future Generations, and a Heads

⁵ A/RES/79/1

of State and Government meeting at the beginning of the eighty-third session of the General Assembly in 2028 for a comprehensive review of the Pact.

Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at its COP15

21. The sixteenth session of the conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held from 21 October to 2 November 2024 in Cali, Colombia, and adopted several decisions that are directly relevant to forests before the session was suspended on 2 November 2024.

22. The parties took stock of progress in implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) since its adoption at COP15, highlighting the need to accelerate action. 119 countries submitted national biodiversity targets reflecting alignment with the KMGBF. Additionally, 44 countries submitted National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) that support the implementation of national targets.

23. In the decision 16/12 on the Scientific and technical needs⁶, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to conduct a strategic review and analysis of the programmes of work in the context of the Framework to facilitate its implementation and to prepare draft updates, taking into account documents prepared for the twenty-sixth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice related to that work, and submit them for consideration by the Subsidiary Body at a future meeting held before the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Based on the availability of resources and the agenda of the subsidiary body meetings, the revision of the Forest Biodiversity programme of work will be carried out before the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

24. Through decision 16/22 on Biodiversity and climate change⁷, the Conference of the Parties emphasized the ecosystems that are important for the full carbon cycle and contributing to climate change adaptation as effective social and environmental safeguards for climate actions. The same decision requested the Executive Secretary of the Convention, including when supporting activities undertaken under the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, to promote synergies and closer cooperation with the biodiversity-relevant multilateral environmental agreements, organizations and processes, and integrated approaches to addressing biodiversity loss, climate change and land and ocean degradation. This decision calls for due consideration of forest biodiversity when undertaking actions to increase forest carbon sinks.

25. During COP16, the Forum secretariat, the Convention secretariat, UNEP, ITTO, UNDP, IUCN and other partners co-organized the Forests and Water Day on 25 October 2024 comprising sessions focused on the interlinkages between forests and water-related ecosystems as a key to implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

26. During these sessions, speakers highlighted the critical role that forests play in supporting livelihoods and the role of various stakeholders along the supply chain in ensuring sustainable forest management to benefit people, forests, climate regulation, and biodiversity conservation. The need for better integration of forests into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and the importance of leveraging synergies between the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework were also underscored.

27. During the Forests and Water Day, the Forum secretariat in collaboration with the Convention secretariat and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests launched two publications: a joint information note “Towards a Coherent Forest Agenda” and “the Forest Factor”. The former outlines a framework for aligning global forest-related efforts, including the UNSPF and the KM-GBF, and the SDGs, marking the first deliverable from the joint initiative signed between the UNFF and CBD Secretariats in December 2023, aimed at enhancing cooperation to meet the Global Forest Goals (GFGs) and support the KM-GBF. The latter, The Forest Factor, was launched by the CPF, and emphasizes the critical role of forests in achieving the KM-GBF, highlighting

⁶ CBD/COP/DEC/16/12

⁷ CBD/COP/DEC/16/22

how forest protection, restoration, and sustainable management can contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, helping parties implement the global biodiversity framework effectively.

28. The second resumed session of the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is scheduled to be held from 25 to 27 February 2025 in Rome, Italy. The second resumed session will consider decision 16/30 on Cooperation with other conventions and international organizations that would invite the Parties to the Convention that are members of the Forum to consider, as appropriate, the alignment of forest-related commitments and actions in their national biodiversity strategies and action plans and voluntary national contributions with the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. The same decision would request the Executive Secretary of the Convention to strengthen collaboration with the Forum and other relevant organizations, such as the International Tropical Timber Organization, and within the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to support the coherent implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, the Convention and the Framework. This decision would also provide the secretariat of the Convention with the reinforced mandate to support in collaboration with the Collaborative Partnership for Forests the alignment of forest-related commitments. The report on the implementation of the activities would be provided to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, at a meeting to be held before the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement

29. During COP29 held from 11 to 22 November in Baku, Azerbaijan, the sixth meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA6) adopted a decision on the new collective quantified goal on climate finance, with a goal of at least USD 300 billion per year by 2035 for developing country Parties for climate action, which includes climate action in forests. The CMA also adopted standards for Article 6.4, clarifying that for consideration as Article 6.4 project activities, for those activities falling under Article 5.2 of the Paris Agreement the host Party is required to demonstrate that the activity is included in all the elements required of the host Party as per decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 71. Finally, the COP and CMA both welcomed the adoption of the Green Climate Fund policy for results-based payments for REDD+ activities.

30. For Parties to the Paris Agreement, the deadline for submitting the next nationally determined contributions is 10 February 2025, and the submission shall be informed by the outcome of the first global stocktake contained in decision 1/CMA.5. In the global stocktake outcome, Parties have emphasized the need for enhanced collaboration on efforts towards halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, in accordance with Article 5 of the Paris Agreement, including through results-based payments for policy approaches and positive incentives for activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries; and alternative policy approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests, while reaffirming the importance of incentivizing, as appropriate, non-carbon benefits associated with such approaches.

31. During COP29, the Forest Pavilion was held within the SDG Pavilion organized by UN DESA.⁸ The COP29 Forest Pavilion was the first such convening at a session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, and hosted over fifty sessions on the daily themes, including: Forest Finance, Investment and Trade; Forest Policy and Legal Instruments; Science, Technology and Innovation / Digitalization; Women, children and youth, Indigenous Peoples; Multi-stakeholder Partnerships; Sustainable forest-based bioeconomy for climate change mitigation and adaptation; and Forests, Nature and Biodiversity. The planning and organization of the Forest Pavilion events were led by the organizing committee of the pavilion co-chaired by the government of Canada and the Asian Development Bank. On 22 November 2024, the founding partners of the pavilion released a communique “From Baku to Belém: Forests for Climate, People and the Planet” as the outcome of the pavilion to highlight key points and recommendations from the pavilion events on scaling up forest-based climate actions and a roadmap from Baku to Belém.⁹ These partners through this communique reaffirmed their commitment to utilize the interconnected nature of forests as an indispensable means of achieving all SDGs, and leverage action towards the Global Forest Goals to catalyse progress towards overcoming

⁸ <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/outreach/the-forest-pavilion-at-climate-cop29/index.html>.

⁹ https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Communique_Forest-Pavilion_UNFCCC-COP29.pdf.

some of the world's most pressing global challenges and crises. The partners also called on all governments and all other stakeholders to deliver on the existing pledges and commitments on forests, and enhance their ambitions to secure just and equitable net-zero transitions.

32. During COP29, the COP29 President and the Forum Secretariat co-organized the High-level Event on “Forests for Climate, Nature and People: Harnessing Climate Finance for Forests” on 21 November 2024. During the event, the Presidency announced the roadmap from Baku to Belém, outlining several priorities towards COP30 to be held from 10 to 21 November 2025 in Belém, Brazil.¹⁰ These priorities are: i) the need for elevating the forests as a top priority at all levels; ii) the importance of scaling up forest financing, leveraging both existing and new innovative mechanisms; iii) addressing the critical gaps in forest-related data by improving access; and iv) catalyzing and expanding strategic partnerships to accelerate impactful actions on forests. The Presidency also announced the plan to organize an international conference on forests and biodiversity in 2025 in Azerbaijan to provide an opportunity to join forces under this roadmap and to make tangible progress in preparations for COP30 in Belém.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme

33. The sixteenth session of the Conference of Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) took place from 2 to 13 December 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The meeting resulted in a series of commitments to accelerate action and investments on land and drought resilience. Parties to the Convention made strides in laying the groundwork for a future global drought regime, which they intend to complete at COP17 in Mongolia in 2026. Other key agreements reached included the creation of a Caucus for Indigenous Peoples and a Caucus for Local Communities; a continuation of the Convention's Science-Policy Interface to strengthen science-based decision-making, and the mobilization of private sector engagement under the Business4Land initiative. In addition, more than USD 12 billion were pledged to tackle desertification, land degradation and drought, especially in the most vulnerable countries.

34. During COP16, the Forum secretariat participated in activities aimed at highlighting the importance of forests and sustainable forest management in combatting drought, desertification and land degradation. These events provided an opportunity to emphasize the role of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) and its Global Forest Goals (GFGs) as a useful framework to effectively promote collective forest-based actions, while advocating for a whole of government and whole of society approach that addresses the drivers of deforestation, as well as the need for adequate financing from all sources.

35. On 6 December 2024, the Forum secretariat and the National Centre for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC) of Saudi Arabia co-organized a side event titled “Significance of dryland forests for achieving land degradation neutrality, combatting biodiversity loss and climate change”. Further explanation on this side event is provided in paragraphs 57 and 58 of the present note.

Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2025 and 2026

36. The 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development will be held from 14 to 23 July 2025 at United Nations Headquarters under the theme “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind”.¹¹ The Forum will review in depth Sustainable Development Goals 3 on good health and well-being, 5 on gender equality, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 14 on life below water and 17 on partnerships for the Goals. 39 countries will present voluntary national reviews (VNRs) of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level.

The 2025 HLPF is expected to adopt a Ministerial Declaration. The President of the Council will also prepare a summary with the key policy messages of the deliberations during the Forum.

¹⁰ See press release of this event at: https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/COP29-Presidency-UNFF_Press-Release.pdf.

¹¹ A/RES/78/285

37. In a letter dated 18 December 2024 soliciting input from the functional commissions of the Council, the President of the Council invited the Chair of the Forum at its twentieth session to provide substantive input to the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development by 3 March 2025. The President has requested that the input to be on the following points: (a) assessment of the impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17; (b) three key areas where sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for achieving the Goals and leaving no one behind are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of Goals under review in 2025, also bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets; (c) three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards the Goals through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale (food security, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), building on interlinkages between the Goals to ensure cohesive progress; (d) follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by the Forum to support implementation of the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and (e) recommendations and key messages to be considered for inclusion in the ministerial declaration of the 2025 forum.

38. In response to the letter from the President of the Council, as of February 2025, the UNFF20 Bureau is preparing its input in consultation with members of the Forum for submission to the President as the input of the Forum to the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development. The input will be made available on the websites of UNFF and HLPF.

39. In accordance with quadrennial programme of work of UNFF for 2025-2028, the Forum at its twentieth session, should also discuss its input to 2026 HLPF. The 2026 high-level political forum on sustainable development will be held under the theme “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all”.¹² During its 2026 session, HLPF will also review in depth Sustainable Development Goals 6 on clean water and sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

40. UNFF’s input to the 2026 HLPF should focus on actions taken by the Forum, its members, partners and stakeholders at the policy, technical and operational level to implement the strategic plan, and achieve the global forest goals and the SDGs, while leaving no one behind. The input should identify key areas where solutions are being effectively delivered, as well as recommendations for follow-up action, especially as they relate to Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

41. A summary of discussions of the Forum at its twentieth session on the interlinkages of GFGs with the SDGs under review of 2026 session of the HLPF will be included in the UNFF20 Chair’s summary and will be submitted to the President of the Council at the time of soliciting inputs for HLPF 2026. This input will be adjusted as necessary in accordance with the template for inputs to be provided by the President of the Council, in consultation with members of the Forum.

42. Furthermore, the General Assembly through its resolution 78/285 agreed to fully review at its eightieth session in September 2025 the arrangements contained in resolutions 75/290 A on the strengthening of the Council and 75/290 B on the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level.

Interlinkages between the global forest goals, sustainable development goals under review by the 2025 and 2026 sessions of the high level political forum on sustainable development and international forest-related developments

43. There is growing recognition in various intergovernmental forums of the critical role of forests in providing livelihoods, supporting sustainable future for all, increasing employment, protecting biodiversity, contributing to food security through non-timber forest products, mitigating climate change through carbon

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sequestration, and adapting to its adverse impacts , as well as reducing the risk of natural disasters, floods, droughts, sand and dust storms, landslides and other extreme events.

44. The below table presents an overview of the interlinkages between the global forest goals and the discussions and outcomes of international forest-related developments that took place since the nineteenth session of the Forum, as explained in paragraphs 12 to 44 of the present note.

Interlinkages between the global forest goals, the Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in-depth by the 2025 and 2026 high-level political forum on sustainable development and international forest-related developments

<i>Global Forest Goals</i>	<i>Interlinkages of global forest goals, the Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in-depth by the 2025 and 2026 high-level political forum on sustainable development</i>	<i>International forest-related developments</i>
Global Forest Goal 1. Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change	6 (2026), 14 (2025)	2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development 2026 high-level political forum on sustainable development Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
Global Forest Goal 2. Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people	6 (2026), 8 (2025), 9 (2026)	Twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification
Global Forest Goal 3. Increasing significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests	7 (2026), 14 (2025), 17 (2025, 2026)	Summit of the Future General Assembly resolution 78/320 “Fostering sustainable forest management, including afforestation and reforestation, in degraded lands, including drylands, as an effective solution to environmental challenges”
Global Forest Goal 4. Mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation and partnerships	17 (2025, 2026)	
Global Forest Goal 5. Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the United Nations forest instrument, and enhance the	5 (2027), 17 (2025, 2026)	

contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Global Forest Goal 6. Enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels, including within the United Nations system and across member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as across sectors and relevant stakeholders 17 (2025, 2026)

C. Implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including activities regarding the International Day of Forests 2025

45. In accordance with the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, raising awareness of the vital role forests play in global sustainable development as a nature-based solution to the most pressing global challenges, remains a cornerstone of the work of the secretariat of the Forum. Delivering targeted communications to raise awareness, within and outside the forest sector to a diverse range of stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and the private sector continues to be a priority for all key actors, including the Secretariat of the Forum. Synergistic implementation of the strategic plan, the 2030 Agenda, the Rio conventions, and other key frameworks underpins these communication efforts.

46. Section H of ECOSOC resolution 2024/15 also contains additional provisions for UNFF members, UNFF partners and the Forum Secretariat to promote communication activities, including through producing various communication products and services.

47. In advancing implementation of the Communication and Outreach Strategy, and in response to requests made to the UNFF Secretariat in section H of ECOSOC resolution, since the conclusion of the nineteenth session of the Forum, and despite the scarcity of resources, the secretariat of the Forum has undertaken a wide range of measures. These measures included a wide range of communication methods to advance the Secretariat's outreach goals, including through preparation of presentations, statements and video messages at international events, as well as targeted digital campaigns. In addition, and as a major step forward, the Secretariat launched its monthly "UNFF Updates", with the objective of informing UNFF members and stakeholders on the work and achievements of the secretariat of the Forum and its partners. During COP29 of UNFCCC, the Secretariat issued "UNFF Updates Forest Pavilion" daily.

48. The Forum Secretariat has also promoted collaboration with partners, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), and regional communications networks such as those hosted by FAO. The Forum Secretariat has also enhanced collaboration with the UN Department of Global Communications (DGC), which assists in aligning forest messaging with broader United Nations narratives on sustainable development and climate action. These partnerships amplify the impact of outreach efforts and ensure coherence in messaging. These collaborative efforts were showcased during the joint DESA SDG Pavilion and Forest Pavilion at COP29 of UNFCCC in Baku, where partners hosted and promoted their events collaboratively. These events demonstrated synergies between forests, the Sustainable Development Goals, and innovative solutions to global challenges.

49. Furthermore, in response to provision of ECOSOC resolution 2024/15, the Forum secretariat has taken initial steps with the objective of updating the UNFF website through a survey¹³ shared with national focal points through the UNFF Updates monthly bulletin. The survey will remain active until the end of UNFF20 to best gather input from Member States. The plan and timeline for the redesign and migration of the UNFF website to the platform recommended by the UN Office of Information and Communications Technology has been developed but is already delayed due to lack of available funds. Initial steps have also been taken to identify a consultant to carry out the technical work. Nevertheless, the pace of work of the Forum Secretariat to update the UNFF website is severely impacted by lack of human and financial resources.

50. In 2025, the theme for the International Day of Forests is “Forests and Foods”. The communication and outreach activities planned for the occasion will follow a similar approach as for previous International Days, with a focus on social media-friendly products and the organization of a special event at United Nations on 21 March 2025. Detailed information about International Forest Day 2025 and its programme will be made available soon on the UNFF and DGC International Day of Forests website.

51. Social media played a key role in the outreach campaign for the International Day of Forests in 2024. Multimedia products included digital posters, animated GIFs, and suggested social media posts, which were made available online through the Trello Board¹⁴ in the six official United Nations languages. Although the Facebook and Twitter social media accounts of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs were the primary channels for dissemination of the social media content, all digital resources were shared with United Nations system social media focal points, Forum national focal points, CPF members, and regional entities - further extending the reach of the campaign. The hashtag “#IntlForestDay” was widely used and was included in over 3,600 posts with 25,700 engagements, reaching 164.1 million users on Twitter during the International Day itself.

52. Promoting communication and outreach activities is a key component of the work of the Forum Secretariat. These activities require sustainable financial resources, as well as skilled human resources. Considering increased demand from the Forum and increased expectation by UNFF members from the Forum’s Secretariat to promote this area of work, and in the absence of a dedicated permanent post for communication activities in the Forum Secretariat, urgent action has to be taken by the Forum to address this gap. Currently, the activities in this area of work of the Secretariat are being conducted on an ad hoc basis. In addition, the pace of work in the communication area, including the ongoing work on updating the UNFF website is severely impacted by the lack of human and financial resources. In this respect, and in the context of discussion at UNFF20 on the Information Paper on the workload, gaps and needs of the Forum Secretariat, members of the Forum are encouraged to address this human and financial gap in a sustainable and reliable manner. This Information Paper will be posted in advance of the upcoming session of the Forum on the UNFF website and will be discussed under agenda item 4 during UNFF20.

IV. Emerging issues

53. In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025–2028 contained in the annex of Council resolution 2024/15, an item on emerging issues has been included in the provisional agenda for the twentieth session of the Forum. Under this item, the Forum will discuss emerging issues and challenges of global significance that are related to and/or have an impact on forests and sustainable forest management that are urgent, and not already addressed in the agenda of the session.

54. For the twentieth session of the Forum, the Bureau recommended that “dryland forests” be discussed under agenda item 6 on emerging issues. Dryland forests play an essential role in combating desertification, preserving biodiversity, supporting livelihoods, and regulating local climates. Drylands are home to about 2 billion people, the majority of whom depend on ecosystem services from forests and trees outside forests. Trees and forests are critical resources for both people and animals in drylands, where livestock production is the primary livelihood activity of many rural people and is considered key for food security and resilience.

¹³ https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=2zWeD09UYE-9zF6kFubccHbqOR-70NJLk32v_Q18zKRURUwyOFJRS0sxRlQzU0M3VzNOSEJTS1JSTi4u

¹⁴ See <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/outreach/international-day-of-forests/social-media-campaign/index.html>

Despite numerous environmental, social, and economic benefits, there is a lack of sufficient awareness and recognition of the significance of dryland forests. These ecosystems and their contributions have received limited attention in national and regional policy and planning frameworks. Their potential to enhance local and national economies has been overlooked, and their role in sustainable environmental management remains underappreciated. Therefore, it is essential to provide a space for UNFF members, partners and stakeholders to discuss policies, best practices and innovative solutions, including opportunities for increased international cooperation and mobilization of resources in support of dryland forest conservation, restoration, and sustainable management.

55. Several activities have been conducted in preparation for the discussions of the Forum on “dryland forests” at its twentieth session under the agenda item of emerging issues. During the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties of the UNCCD, the Forum Secretariat and Saudi Arabia organized a side event on: “Significance of dryland forests for achieving land degradation neutrality, combatting biodiversity loss and climate change”. The side event provided a space for representatives of UNFF members, UN entities and other experts to discuss the challenges and threats faced by countries with dryland forests and share information on best practices.

56. The discussions at the side event emphasized the need for innovative, bold and articulated actions to protect, restore and expand dryland forests at all levels. Experts highlighted the importance of knowledge sharing among practitioners to help identify and support the dissemination of innovative practices. Further, significant efforts should be undertaken to bring further visibility to dryland forests and their contributions, including dryland forests in natural capital accounting can ensure the economic value of dryland forests is considered in decision-making and that the right fiscal and policy incentives are put in place. Finally, working in partnership with communities is critical to the conservation, effective management and restoration of dryland forests.

57. In addition, a panel discussion on dryland forests will be also held during UNFF20 under the agenda item on “emerging issues”. It is expected that the discussions during the intersessional activities and UNFF20 panel discussion on dryland forests encourage the interested countries to move towards developing common policies for the conservation and sustainable management of dryland forests.

V. Conclusion

58. The outcome documents and discussions of recent international meetings and conferences highlight close interlinkages between forests and other ecosystems, biodiversity and climate change. They also emphasized the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems, as well as ensuring their sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources.

59. These interlinkages between forests and their significance in addressing the global challenges demonstrate the importance of ensuring a coherent approach to the accelerated implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the achievement of the global forest goals by 2030. Such a coherent approach should include addressing financial, technical and technological needs through strengthening international cooperation and enhancing coordination. It is also critical to promote forest governance and forest law enforcement, increase the involvement of local communities and relevant stakeholders in decision-making and the implementation of policies, and improve communication on full values of forests.

60. Furthermore, the outcomes of recent COPs of the CBD, UNFCCC, and UNCCD with regard to the accelerated implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement, and the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting provide additional avenues for further integration of forest-based actions and solutions into the revised and updated NBSAPs, and the updated NDCs in synergy with the voluntary national contributions towards achieving the Global Forest Goals and targets.

61. Communication and outreach activities remain a critical area of work for all components of IAF, including UNFF members, UNFF Secretariat and the CPF. Important progress has been made by the Secretariat to advance this area of work. Nevertheless, continuation of this level of activities and advancing

effective implementation of the Communication and Outreach Strategy of the UNSPF require urgent action by the Forum to strengthen the human and financial resources of the Secretariat in this area of work.

VI. Proposals

62. The following points are suggested for discussion during the twentieth session of the Forum and for inclusion in the Chair's proposals for submission to the twenty-first session of the Forum:

- (a) Invite Members of the Forum to take concrete steps to accelerate efforts towards achieving global forest goals 1, 3, and 5, including through mainstreaming and upscaling of forest-related actions in their national development programmes, as well as developing joint initiatives and partnerships on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan on forests.
- (b) Invite Members of the Forum that have not done so to announce their voluntary national contributions in support of the global forest goals and targets, and further encourage those members that have already announced voluntary national contributions to update the Forum on their progress.
- (c) Encourage the further integration of forest-based actions in the national sustainable development strategies, the updated nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement, and the revised and updated national biodiversity strategies and action plans for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the respective goals and objectives.
- (d) Request the Forum Secretariat to explore the possibility of institutionalizing the forest pavilion at the UNFCCC in cooperation with the CPF member organizations and relevant partners to keep the momentum to raise awareness on the significance of forests as a climate solution.
- (e) Encourage UNFF members and partners, as well as the Forum Secretariat to effectively apply communication tools to raise awareness on the significance of forests, and engage in celebrating the IDF, and invite the Forum to address the related human and financial gaps and needs of the Forum Secretariat in a sustainable manner.