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Trust fund of the United Nations Forum on Forests
Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025-2028, contained in annex to ECOSOC resolution 2024/15, the United Nations Forum on Forests at its twentieth session, will consider the item on the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests. The present note provides information on the contributions from donor countries and organizations to the trust fund during 2024. The generous contributions of these donors to the trust fund are gratefully acknowledged. Without their support, the implementation of many mandated Forum activities would not have been feasible.

Since the Forum's inception, its mandates and outputs have expanded significantly, while allocations from the regular budget have not kept pace with this growth. Sustained, predictable and adequate human and financial resources remain crucial to enable the secretariat of the Forum in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to effectively support and promote the implementation of the provision of ECOSOC resolution 2024/15 on the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in ten areas of action. These contributions are also crucial for enabling the secretariat to continue to provide its support to Forum's members and partners in advancing implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests and the achievement of the six global forest goals and the 26 associated targets by 2030.

¹ *E/CN.18/2025/1

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025-2028, contained in annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 2024/15, the United Nations Forum on Forests at its twentieth session, will consider Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests under item 5 of its provisional agenda. Through this resolution, the Economic and Social Council invited members of the Forum in a position to do so to provide sustainable and consistent voluntary funds to the trust fund to enable the Forum secretariat to perform its functions and activities in support of the work of the Forum, its members and its partners, including a balanced representation of developed and developing countries at Forum-related meetings; and to explore options to attract further voluntary contributions to the trust fund.

2. The present note provides an overview of the amounts contributed, the sources of these contributions and the expenditures of the trust fund for 2024. It is submitted for information purposes. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as of 6 February 2025. Activities were carried out pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 71/285, on the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 and 62/98, on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, and resolutions pertaining to the Forum including Council resolutions 2015/33, , 2020/14, 2021/6, 2022/17 and 2024/15.

II. Contributions to the trust fund in 2024

3. In 2024, seven donor countries and three intergovernmental organizations contributed to the trust fund in support of the Forum's mandates, sessions and intersessional activities, as well as the work of the Forum secretariat (see table 1). The contributions amounted to USD \$1,184,378 inclusive of programme support costs. These contributions were essential for implementing the core activities of the Forum and are gratefully acknowledged. The Forum secretariat also acknowledges the support provided by the International Council of Forest and Paper Associations (ICFPA), the International Sustainable Forestry Coalition (ISFC) and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, which contributed to the successful organization of the Forest Pavilion at the twenty-ninth Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Table 1
Contributions to the trust fund 2024
(United States dollars)

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Total</i>
China	298,345
Canada	183,016
Germany	154,140
Republic of Korea	16,862
Spain	21,786
United States	350,000
Switzerland	23,229
Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCo)	60,000
International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)	2,000
UNEP Secretariat Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	75,000
Subtotal	1,184,378
Opening balance, 1 January 2024	2,084,046
Total	3,268,424

III. Expenditure of the trust fund in 2024

4. In 2024, travel related to capacity development of countries accounted for around 20 per cent of expenditures from extrabudgetary resources. The staffing costs, including staff posts, other staff-related expenses and consultants' fees accounted for around 32 per cent of expenditures. Further information on the expenditure of the trust fund is presented in table 2 and the related figure.

Table 2
Expenditures of the trust fund, 2024
(United States dollars)

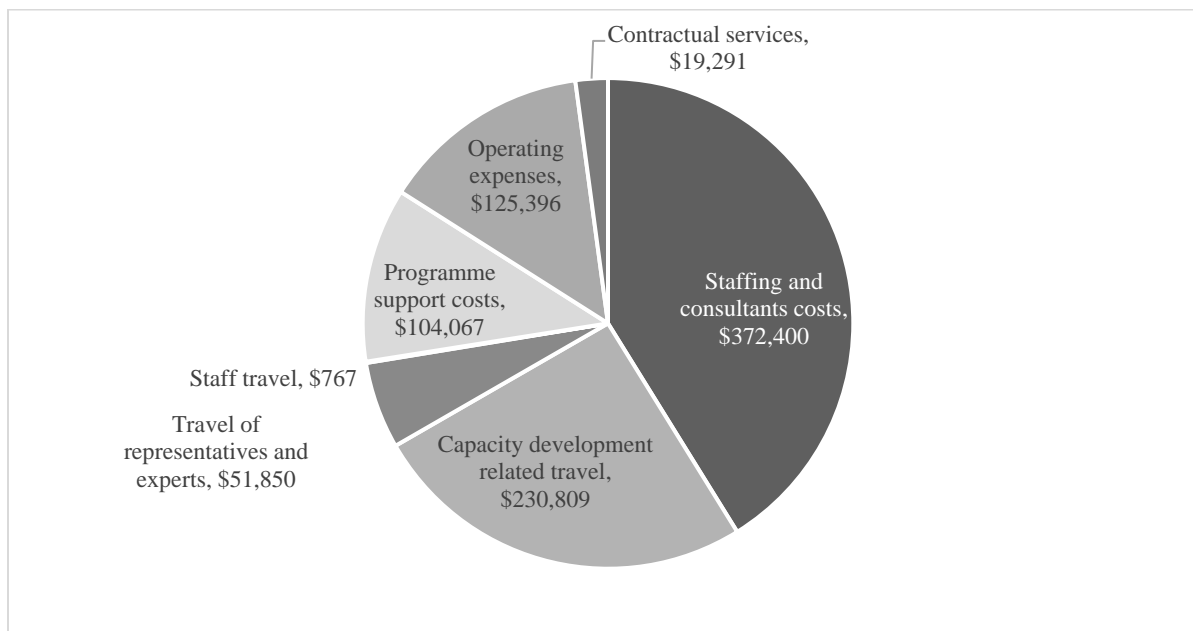
<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Staffing and consultancy costs ^{a/}	372,400
Capacity development related travel ^{b/}	230,809
Travel of representatives and experts	51,850
Travel of staff	767
Contractual services	19,291
Operating expenses ^{c/}	125,396
Subtotal	800,513
13 per cent programme support costs	104,067
Total	904,580

^{a/} Includes staff posts funded from extrabudgetary resources, other staff-related expenses and consultants' fees

^{b/} Includes travel related to capacity development for participants, experts, consultants and staff

^{c/} Includes the rental of premises, information technology, training, conference-servicing costs and bank fees.

Expenditures of the trust fund, 2024



5. During 2024, extrabudgetary funds were used to supplement funds from the regular budget (programme 7, Economic and social affairs, subprogramme 8, Sustainable Forest management). These contributions funded a significant part of the work of the Forum secretariat in 2024, including the following:

(a) **Secretariat staff and consultants and technical experts to support Forum activities.** In order to implement mandated activities related to the communication strategy and the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and its clearing house, two P-3 level posts were funded from extrabudgetary resources in 2024. These same resources also financed consultancies and technical expertise to support work related to the Network, as well as intersessional activities leading up to the twentieth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

(b) **Travel related to capacity development.** In 2024, the secretariat continued to provide technical support, through the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, to four members of the Forum and one regional organization: namely, Burundi, Mozambique, Suriname, Uzbekistan and the Amazon Treaty Organization (ACTO) using extrabudgetary resources of the trust fund. This support included capacity development workshops in focused on enhancing national and subregional capacities for developing national and regional forest financing strategies and project proposals, as well as, validating the strategies and proposals. The Forest Pavilion at the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP29), held in November 2024; the expert group meeting on strengthening the engagement of regional and subregional entities in the work of the Forum and the training workshop to strengthen civil society and forest stakeholder's capacity to contribute to implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests both held in January 2025; and the capacity building workshop on reporting to UNFF in March 2025, were all funded using extrabudgetary resources. The cost of organizing meetings and workshops included costs related to travel of participants, consultants and secretariat staff, as well as conference services.

(c) **Travel of representatives and experts.** Travel assistance was provided to facilitate the participation of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition in Forum-related meetings held in 2024, including the nineteenth session of the Forum, held in May 2024.

(d) **Travel of staff.** Fund resources supplemented the regular budget funds to cover secretariat staff travel costs to key international and intergovernmental forest-related events. These included the twenty-ninth session

of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the sixteenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and other meetings related to the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations.

(e) **Contractual services, conference services and operating expenses.** During 2024, extrabudgetary funds were used to cover costs relating to the rental of premises, information technology, training, conference services costs and bank fees.

IV. Achievements and results

6. The following achievements and results are attributable to contributions made to the trust fund:

(a) At its nineteenth session, held from 5 to 9 May 2024, the United Nations Forum on Forests undertook a midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives based on the preparatory actions taken since the conclusion of the seventeenth session of the Forum; identified key opportunities and challenges in this regard, including; the 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 2024; and adopted the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2025–2028, including consideration of priority actions and resource needs.

(b) Fund resources were used to supplement funds from the regular budget and the regular programme of technical cooperation for the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. These activities included further development of the online clearing house and the production of the “Forest financing quarterly highlight” communication product, which were carried out with funding for human resources from the trust fund. Further details on the activities of the Network are contained in the note by the Secretariat entitled on “Means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network” (E/CN.18/2025/4).

(c) Resources from the fund were essential in supporting work related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including the development of an online reporting template and the organization of the capacity building workshop on reporting to UNFF in March 2025. Further details on key activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting are contained in the note by the secretariat entitled “Monitoring, assessment and reporting” (E/CN.18/2025/5).

(d) Resources from the trust fund were used to support: i) development of a new work plan for 2025–2028 of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests for the period 2025–2028, ii) development of a joint Major Groups and other stakeholders workplan for the period 2025–2028, iii) organization of the training workshop to strengthen civil society and forest stakeholder’s capacity to contribute to implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests, and iv) organization of expert group meeting on strengthening the engagement of regional and subregional entities in the work of the Forum. Further details on the activities of the Partnership, Major Groups and regional and subregional entities are contained in the note by the Secretariat entitled “Contributions of, and enhanced cooperation with partners to achieving the thematic priorities” (E/CN.18/2025/3).

(e) The trust fund continues to be a critical source of supplementary funding for meeting the staffing needs of the secretariat of the Forum in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to manage the secretariat’s growing mandate. In 2024, the fund covered the staffing costs of two staff members at the P-3 level to support the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and implementation of the relevant provisions of ECOSOC resolution 2024/15 on communications, as well as communication and outreach strategy of the UNSPF. It is expected that two P-3 posts will be funded from extrabudgetary resources in 2025, which will support the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, communication related activities including the development of a new Forum website and new information services and products.

V. Priorities and challenges

7. While the Forum's mandates and outputs have expanded since its inception, its regular budget allocations have not kept pace, creating persistent challenges in securing human and financial resources for the secretariat to effectively support the Forum and its members. The need for adequate human and financial resources for the secretariat to effectively support the Forum and its members has been repeatedly acknowledged, including in Council resolution 2015/33. Furthermore, Council resolution 2024/15 tasked the secretariat with additional responsibilities, including engaging with national focal points conducting voluntary national reviews to promote SDG interlinkages, producing communication materials on forest contributions to the SDGs (particularly Goal 15), enhancing the Forum website, and developing a communication and outreach plan. The secretariat is also requested to submit an information paper detailing its workload, needs, and gaps in advance of the twentieth session, for final consideration at its twenty-first session in 2026. This information paper has been prepared and will be presented at UNFF20 for discussions. Given the current liquidity crisis, which has significantly diminished non-staff resources from the regular budget, voluntary contributions to the trust fund are crucial to supplement regular budget funding and enable the secretariat to fulfil its mandated activities.

8. The scaling up of the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network continues to be limited by the availability of adequate resources. While the clearing house of the Network continues to be developed cost-effectively by utilizing existing information technology services from within the United Nations; nevertheless, such expenditures also rely on the availability of voluntary contributions.

9. Securing dedicated contributions for travel by representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition is crucial to ensure balanced representation at Forum meetings. A decline in such contributions threatens the secretariat's ability to maintain this balance in future meetings. A trend of declining contributions has emerged; should this trend continue, the secretariat's capacity to facilitate balanced representation between developed and developing countries at future Forum meetings will be significantly constrained.

10. Sustained, predictable and adequate human and financial resources are essential for the secretariat to effectively support and advance implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests and the achievement of the six global forest goals and the 26 associated targets. The late arrival of some has hampered the secretariat's ability to efficiently execute its mandate. Predictable, on-time receipt of these resources is crucial to strengthen the secretariat's work in capacity development; forest financing; monitoring, assessment, and reporting; enhancing cooperation and coordination; promoting regional collaboration, communication, and outreach; and strengthening stakeholder engagement.

Table 3 Estimated expenditures of the trust fund for 2025

Table 3. Estimated expenditures from the Forum Trust Fund, 2025	
<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Staffing Costs ^{a/}	408,600
Consultants, experts and contractual services ^{b/}	230,809
Travel of representatives and experts ^{c/}	400,000
Travel of staff	80,000
Subtotal	1,119,409
13 per cent programme support costs	145,523
Total	1,264,932
Closing balance, 31 December 2024	2,458,098
Expected contributions, 2025 ^{d/}	900,00

Total expected funds, 2025	3,358,098
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Note: Estimated expenditures refer to funds required to implement the current programme of work of the secretariat of the Forum; they do not include funding for any additional activities that may be decided upon by the Forum at its twentieth session.

^a Estimate based on the cost of funding two P-3 post to support the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and communication activities for the full year.

^b Includes costs of engaging consultants to support the preparations for the twenty-first session of the Forum, in 2026, and the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network.

^c Includes travel cost of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to participate in the Forum-related meetings during 2025, including intersessional activities.

^d Includes expected contributions from donors who have previously contributed to the trust fund only.