Twentieth session of the UN Forum on Forests
Item 3(e): Means of Implementation
Panel Discussion on: *Significance of a global hub on data, information, and knowledge on forest financing opportunities and best practices, and the role of the GFFFN Clearing House*
Wednesday 7 May 2025 (10am to 1 pm), Trusteeship Council Chamber UNHQ, New York
Concept Note

I. Background

Significant financing gaps remain for forests, limiting efforts to halt deforestation, restore degraded lands, and sustainably manage existing forests. Estimates indicate that achieving global forest-related targets will require tripling forest financing by 2030 and quadrupling by 2050, surpassing USD 200 billion annually (FAO, 2022). In recent years, growing political will to protect forests—alongside increasing international financial commitments to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation—has created new opportunities to enhance resource mobilization.

However, persistent financial gaps remain, particularly for developing countries. In the Declaration of the High-Level Segment of UNFF19, Member States expressed deep concerns that, despite recent increases in forest finance pledges, funding remains insufficient to support conservation, restoration, and sustainable forest management. They emphasized the urgent need to further support developing countries, by facilitating access to existing resources and strengthening multilateral funding mechanisms in support of sustainable forest management.

A critical first step in addressing these concerns and unlocking potential financing opportunities is to provide comprehensive data, information, and knowledge on forest financing. Strengthening access to such resources is essential for enhancing countries' capacity to secure funding. In the same vein, the importance of access to data, information and knowledge on forest financing was highlighted at the Presidency High-level Event of the 29th UN Climate Change Conference (COP29), titled "Forests for Climate, Nature and People: Harnessing Climate Finance for Forests". The discussion at the event highlighted key challenges, including data gaps, fragmentation, and limited accessibility and suggested developing a global hub on forest financing building on the UNFF Clearing House on Forest Financing. Such a hub would serve as a unique platform to provide comprehensive, and easily accessible data, information, and knowledge on forest financing in collaboration with all relevant partners.

In this context, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) will host a panel discussion at its twentieth session (UNFF20) on the topic: "*The Significance of a Global Hub for Data, Information, and Knowledge on Forest Financing, and the role of the GFFFN Clearing House*" This discussion will explore the benefits and potential of developing a comprehensive global hub, building on the existing platforms, to bridge the knowledge gaps, facilitate access to resources from all funding sources, and support more effective and sustainable forest financing.

II. Context for the Panel Discussion

Forest financing is drawn from diverse sources, domestic and international, public and private. These financial resources are channeled through various organizations and entities with different mandates and target different recipients.

Various organizations have made ongoing efforts to provide data, information, and knowledge on forest financing. The UNFF Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) was established with a key priority "to serve as a clearing house and database on existing, new, and emerging financing opportunities and as a tool for sharing lessons learned and best practices from successful projects" (ECOSOC resolution 2017/4). The Clearing House website, launched in 2021, continues to be updated and expanded. By the end of 2024, it contained over 300 data entries, including 164 financing opportunities, 109 learning materials, and 44 good practices and lessons learned. It also publishes quarterly highlights to disseminate updates on forest financing developments.

Many other organizations and initiatives focus on different aspects of forest financing based on their mandates and expertise. For example, some work on improving the effective use of domestic public finance and mobilizing private investment, reviewing financing mechanisms and exploring ways to leverage private capital. Some others support the mobilization of private financing and track financial flows for nature-based solutions, covering a broader scope beyond the forest sector. Additionally, various international organizations, research institutions, and NGOs produce valuable publications and analyses, further enriching the knowledge base on forest financing.

Financial data, information and knowledge play a key role in supporting countries' ability to identify financing opportunities and apply best practices. This includes guidance on funding sources and eligibility criteria to help countries navigate the financing landscape, knowledge of effective policy, regulatory frameworks, and financing mechanisms to mobilize resources efficiently, and best practices and lessons learned that can be adapted and applied to different national and regional contexts. In the particular area of forest financing, information and knowledge of data in addition allows for informed decision-making regarding forest conservation and management, enabling stakeholders to accurately attract necessary funding, monitor progress, and ultimately contributing to more sustainable forest practices and climate change mitigation effort.

Strengthening access to data, information, and knowledge is particularly critical for developing countries, enabling them to mobilize resources more effectively and align financing efforts with national situation and priorities. It can also offer practical guidance for national actions, such as valuing forest ecosystems, which is crucial for attracting finance and investment in forests in long term.

Despite ongoing efforts, gaps and fragmentation in data, information, and knowledge on financial flows, funding opportunities, and best practices persist. The diversity of these resources, the inconsistency in data collection methods, fragmentation of relevant data and information related to forest financing, and the insufficient transparency in private sector investments have made it hard to accurately assess the total amount of funding directed towards forest conservation and management, and to understand its effectiveness. A comprehensive platform which provides a one-stop shop for countries and stakeholders to access data, information and knowledge on forest financing will significantly contribute to the followings:

i)   **Monitoring the financial flow to forests**: At the global level, data, information and knowledge on forest financing serve to inform and enhance resource mobilization for forests, and the effective use of existing resources from all sources. In this context, forest financing data refers, inter alia, to information and figures related to the sources of funding, their flows, recipients, delivery mechanisms, and funded activities. The existing fragmentation and the absence of a comprehensive platform of such data and information adversely impact the feasibility of systematic monitoring of global trend in financial flow, the effectiveness of the resource mobilization activities, and the assessment of progress towards relevant global goals on forest financing, including Global Forest Goal 4. When aggregated at a global scale, such data on financial flow to forests also provide insights into funding gaps and trends, assisting relevant key players and partners to make informed decisions on mobilization of funding for forests. Analyzing financial flows by source helps assess how effectively funds are being mobilized for forests from various channels, such as climate change and biodiversity conservation, and identifies opportunities to further

scale up financing, and effective use of existing funding. Such analysis can also inform the intergovernmental discussions within the climate and biodiversity-related processes, including the UNFCCC thirtieth Conference of Parties in November 2025, while raising awareness on the critical role of forests in addressing these global challenges. Data-driven policy recommendations based on financing trends are crucial for shaping international forest financing strategies and guiding national policies and action plans.

ii) **Common methodology:** While partial data can be gathered from various sources, the absence of a standardized methodology for estimating costs and aggregating financial flows for forests remains a significant barrier. Although data limitations affect the entire environmental sector and will take time to address, an immediate and cost-effective step would be to establish a recognized methodology for estimating financing needs and tracking existing flows. The last global-level estimation was conducted in 2012 through a study by CPF members. Since then, a few academic and independent consultant studies have been conducted for forest financing flows, but differences in the scope and methodology make it difficult to compare findings over time and analyze trends effectively. More importantly, these studies have not systematically examined the underlying reasons behind financial trends, such as why funding levels fluctuate and what measures could be taken to increase financial flows toward forests.

iii) **Matching funding and needs**: Another challenge is the fragmentation of information and knowledge on forest financing. Different organizations produce information based on their own mandates and priorities, leading to gaps and overlaps over time. When these fragmented knowledge products are presented individually on the Clearing House website, it is still difficult for countries to navigate and identify relevant approaches suited to their needs and circumstances. This challenge is particularly acute for developing countries, where limited technical expertise makes it harder to access and utilize financing effectively.

iv) **Planning**: Additionally, there is a need to strengthen foresight-based knowledge as new financial instruments gain traction. The rapid development of mechanisms such as carbon markets, green bonds, and biodiversity credits—along with recent advancements in Article 6 of the Paris Agreement—could open new avenues for forest financing. To help countries harness these opportunities, insightful analyses must be provided on these emerging trends and their potential applications in forest finance.

Given the broad scope of forest financing and the need for cost-effectiveness, the hub should be built on the existing initiatives and efforts. A strategic and systematic partnership among leading organizations that provide data, information, and knowledge on forest financing—such as the World Bank, FAO, GEF, GCF, UNEP, UNDP, IUFRO, OECD, UNFF, and other key data holders—is crucial to ensure its effectiveness.

III. Objectives

The main objective of the panel discussions is to discuss the benefits, scope and requirements for developing a Global Hub on Forest Financing, building on the work of the GFFFN Clearing House, and based on the needs of member states and global stakeholders. The panel discussion will focus on the following guiding questions:

- What are the most significant challenges at the national and international levels regarding data, information, and knowledge on forest financing? How can Global Hub help address these challenges?

- What should be the scope, objectives, requirements and structure of the Global Hub to ensure it is effective, transparent, and user-friendly in providing up-to-date data and information on forest financing?

- What roles should the Clearing House, CPF members, and other key stakeholders play in shaping and supporting a global hub?

IV. Programme and Modalities of the Panel

The panel will include the following:

Moderator: Ms. Maureen Whelan, Manager, Multilateral Affairs, Canadian Forest Service

Keynote speaker: Mr. Tuukka Castern, Senior Forestry Specialist/Acting Practice Manager, Global Environment Department, The World Bank (7min)

Panelists:

- Ms. Katalin Solymosi, Senior Advisor International Forest Policy, European and International Forest Policy, Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Germany (6min)
- Mr. Garo Batmanian, Director General, Brazilian Forest Service, Brazil (6min)
- Mr. Pascal Martinez, Forests and Wildlife Thematic Lead, Integration & Knowledge Management Division, The Global Environment Facility (GEF) (6min)
- Mr. Fritjof Boerstler, Senior Forestry Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (6min)
- Mr. Thomas M. Clark, General Counsel, Asian Development Bank (ADB) (video-message)

Following the keynote statement and presentation by panelists, the Moderator will open the floor for an interactive discussion. There will be no pre-determined list of speakers for the discussion. Delegations who wish to intervene should request the floor by pressing their microphone button when the floor is opened by the presiding officer. Priority will be given to delegations speaking on behalf of a group of States, pursuant to customary protocol. Delegations speaking on behalf of a group of States are asked to inform the Secretariat in the room to be accorded priority. The time limit for interventions will be 5 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of a group of States, and 3 minutes for individual delegations. In the event of time constraints, the time limit for individual delegations and delegations speaking on behalf of groups will be reduced further, as needed. These time limits will be strictly enforced including through the muting of microphones.

V. Panel Coordinator

For further information, please contact Ms. Yan Lang at the UNFF Secretariat at yan.lang@un.org.