

## Forests featured in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

After intense consultations which concluded at 1:20 pm on Saturday 19 July 2014, the Open Working Group on the SDGs agreed to propose 17 SDGs. Forests received significant attention in these discussions and are addressed directly under two proposed goals, namely SDG6 and SDG15:

- Proposed SDG6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Proposed SDG15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Reference to sustainable forest management (SFM) is included in the title of SDG15, and the goal includes two forest-specific targets. Target 15.2 relates to implementation of SFM, while target 15.b relates to means of implementation for SFM.

15.2 by 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests, and increase afforestation and reforestation by x% globally

15.b mobilize significantly resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management, and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance sustainable forest management, including for conservation and reforestation

The multiple functions of forests, in particular, its water supply function also received significant attention, with references to forests in two targets included under SDG6 and SDG15:

6.6 By 2020 protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes

15.1 by 2020 ensure conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements

The proposed SDGs and targets, in particular, those related to forests is a major achievement for the international community and is expected to significantly facilitate the formulation and subsequent adoption of an effective post 2015 development agenda.

The terminologies and concepts reflected in the forest-related SDG and targets are consistent with the comprehensive approach of Member States of the UN Forum on Forests such as: "sustainable management of all types of forests", "recognition of the definition of the SFM as enshrined in the Forest Instrument as the most inclusive framework for all actions on forests", "financing SFM from all sources and at all levels", "multi-functionality of forests"...

The agreement by the OWG on the proposed SDGs is a positive step forward towards an effective and stronger post 2015 development agenda and the post 2015 International Arrangement on Forests. This achievement is a credit to the extensive collaboration and coordination undertaken by countries and international bodies and organizations working together to ensure that forests, and their multiple functions, were integrated and reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Co-Chairs of the OWG will report on this outcome to the upcoming session of the General Assembly. It is up to Member States to adopt the proposed goals as presented by the OWG, or to negotiate them.