

Statement by the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat

Forest Europe Expert Level Meeting

Bratislava, 11 and 12 May 2016

Dear colleagues,

It is a pleasure for the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests– UNFF to attend this Forest Europe Expert Level Meeting. I would like to thank the Liaison Unit Bratislava for the kind invitation and wish our Slovak colleagues all the success in this first meeting as well as in all endeavours of your Chairmanship.

I would like to seize this opportunity to update you on the latest UNFF related developments.

Last year the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in New York, and Sustainable Forest Management - SFM will be an important instrument in the effort to end poverty, and to promote prosperity and people's well-being while protecting the environment, by 2030. Forests are essential to the implementation of this sustainable development agenda, which, in its Goal 15, enshrines the objectives of protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managing forests, combating desertification, halting and reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss. The sustainable management of forests is also vital for the achievement of several other goals, such as achieving food security, and sustainable agriculture and the sustainable management of water, as well as in the mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

As you may know, discussions on the implementation, follow-up and review framework for the 2030 Agenda are still ongoing. While the specific modalities of how functional commissions of the UN Economic and Social Council – ECOSOC will align their work to address the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is still being developed, but the forest community is getting ready. Member States at UNFF11 specifically decided that the UNFF should offer to contribute to the implementation, follow-up and review of the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda, including its forest-related goals and targets. Furthermore, the Strategic Plan of the International Arrangement on Forests for the period 2017-2030, currently under development, is expected to provide the framework for how the Forum will incorporate the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda in its work.

One of the practical considerations in tracking progress in implementation of the 2030 Agenda, is to develop a coherent monitoring framework, with improved data collection and analysis. In this regard, the forest community will need to put forth a set of indicators demonstrating contributions of forests not only to SDG 15 and SDG6 but also to other SDGs. Monitoring, assessment and reporting on SFM and implementation of the UN Forest instrument is part of the core work of the UNFF Secretariat. In this regard, we recently hosted an informal meeting organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization – FAO on indicators to monitor progress towards Sustainable Forest Management – SFM and forest-related SDG indicators. The meeting aimed at discussing issues related to the SDG indicator 15.2, “progress towards SFM” and to further work on indicators addressing key forest-related contributions to other SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Through resolution 2015/33, adopted in July 2015, ECOSOC endorsed the UNFF11 Resolution on the International Arrangement on Forests beyond 2015. Among the landmark decisions included in the UNFF11 Resolution were important recommendations that prompted the General Assembly to take action. Through its Resolution 70/199, dated 22 December 2015, the General Assembly approved the Forum's recommendations to extend the timeline of the Global Objectives on Forests to 2030, in line with the timeline of the 2030 Agenda, and renamed the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests - the UN Forest Instrument.

Since UNFF11 the main focus of our intersessional activities has been related to development of Strategic Plan. Last month, the first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental *Ad Hoc* Expert Group (AHEG1) to develop proposals for the Strategic Plan of the International Arrangement on Forests for the period 2017-2030 took place in New York. The meeting attracted over 130 participants, from 56 countries, 9 international and regional organizations, including eight members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and 4 Major Groups.

AHEG1 explored the required strategic approaches and actions to achieve the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) objectives, including the mission, vision, communication strategy, possible goals, targets and priority actions, the roles of IAF components, and the organizational structure of the Strategic Plan; suggestions for the Quadrennial Programme of Work (4POW) for 2017-2020; possible elements for the "framework for reviewing implementation" of the Strategic Plan; and planned follow-up activities leading to AHEG2, which will meet in October 2016. The expert groups' inputs will be forwarded to the UNFF Working Group and UNFF12 Special Session, scheduled to gather in January 2017 in New York to deliberate on those issues. Finally, in May 2017, the 12th Session of the UN Forum on Forests will take place.

Colleagues,

UNFF11 recognized the importance of our partners, including regional and sub-regional organizations and processes. Forests do not stop at a country's boundary, and SFM can only be successful if all stakeholders are part of the effort toward its promotion and implementation. In this regard, UNFF11 decided to restructure the Forum's sessions and enhance its intersessional work, including by fostering an exchange of experiences and lessons learned. From now on, the odd-year sessions of UNFF will serve as an opportunity for all stakeholders, including our regional and sub-regional partners, to provide technical advice and input to the Forum.

Moreover, Member States emphasized the importance of strengthening the collaboration between UNFF and relevant regional and sub-regional partners with a view to facilitate the implementation of the UN Forest Instrument, as well as to facilitate the inputs of those entities to sessions of the Forum. The UNFF Secretariat is to consult with relevant regional and sub-regional partners on means to enhance collaboration, and regional and sub-regional entities are invited to consider developing and strengthening programs on SFM, as well as to provide coordinated inputs and recommendations to sessions of the Forum.



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Therefore, we look forward to an even more fruitful collaboration with Forest Europe. All stakeholders working together will ensure the successful promotion and implementation of Sustainable Forest Management all over the world.

I wish us all a very productive meeting, and thank you for your attention