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## United Nations Forum on Forests

### Fifteenth session

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

**Implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for  
forests 2017–2030**

## **Implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including the contributions of the Forum’s regional and subregional partners and major groups, as well as involvement of its secretariat in major meetings**

### **Note by the Secretariat**

#### *Summary*

In accordance with its quadrennial programme of work, the United Nations Forum on Forests will consider the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 at its fifteenth session. The present note provides background information and highlights intersessional activities conducted by and contributions of the Forum’s regional and subregional partners and major groups since the fourteenth session of the Forum. The note also contains information on the involvement of the secretariat in major meetings and provides input for discussion on agenda item 3 at the fifteenth session of the Forum.

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\* E/CN.18/2020/1.



## **I. Introduction**

1. In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2017–2020, the Forum will consider the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 at its fifteenth session. Under agenda item 3, it will focus on policy dialogue on the thematic and operational priorities, with the engagement of, and exchange of experiences among, States members of the Forum, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional organizations, major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

## **II. Background**

2. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution [2015/33](#), decided to request the Forum to dedicate its odd-year session to discussions on implementation and technical advice and stated that the summaries of those discussions, including possible proposals, would be reported to the Forum at its subsequent sessions in the even years for further consideration and recommendations. At its fourteenth session, the Forum focused on implementation and technical advice and at its fifteenth session it will therefore consider the pertinent content of the Chair's summary, including the proposals therein.

3. The areas of work proposed by the Chair of the fourteenth session regarding the issues discussed in the present note include strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement and dialogues at the national and local levels and actively involving the private sector (small, medium and large forest enterprises) and philanthropic organizations in the work of the Forum (see [E/2019/42](#), annex I, sect. II.B).

4. The note has been prepared to provide input for discussion under agenda item 3, in particular regarding cooperation and collaboration with the Forum's regional and subregional partners, as well as major groups and other stakeholders. Information on collaboration with the regional and subregional partners regarding the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network is contained in the note by the Secretariat on the means of implementation for sustainable forest management ([E/CN.18/2020/5](#)). It includes an overview of the Forum secretariat's involvement in major international meetings and conferences, as well as its key interdepartmental activities related to forests and the Sustainable Development Goals since its fourteenth session.

5. The note also contains proposals for discussion by the Forum, taking into consideration the summary by the Chair of the fourteenth session, as well as intersessional activities that occurred prior to the fifteenth session.

## **III. Cooperation with regional and subregional partners**

6. In the multi-year programme of work of the Forum for the period 2007–2015 (see [E/2007/42](#), chap. II), relevant regional and subregional entities were invited to address issues and agenda items planned for each session of the Forum and to submit a concise summary of their deliberations to its secretariat prior to the relevant session. The entities were also invited to contribute to discussions at Forum sessions, in accordance with their respective mandates, while the Secretary-General was requested to prepare a report summarizing the entities' submissions. In order to facilitate the submission of inputs, until the eleventh session, the entities responded to a questionnaire prepared by the Forum secretariat, and the inputs received were

summarized and published in relevant reports of the Secretary-General, as well as being posted on the Forum's website.

7. Over the past year the Forum secretariat continued to actively engage with regional and subregional organizations and processes. The Forum's regional and subregional partners were invited to submit written input, on a voluntary basis, on progress towards the achievement of the global forest goals and targets using the format agreed upon in the expert group meeting held in Bangkok in January 2019<sup>1</sup> and following the time frame agreed by member States in terms of voluntary national reporting.

## **A. Input from regional and subregional organizations and processes**

8. The Forum secretariat received written input, submitted on a voluntary basis, from 11 regional and subregional entities, namely the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, the African Forest Forum, the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan, the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat, the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific, the Tehran Process Secretariat for Low Forest Cover Countries and the joint Forestry and Timber Section of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and FAO. All inputs received are posted on a page on the Forum's website<sup>2</sup> and the majority of entities prepared their written input using the agreed format.

9. The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization coordinates procedures under the Treaty for Amazonian Cooperation and implements the decisions taken by its eight member States. The Treaty is aimed at promoting the integral and harmonic development of the Amazonia region, in particular the well-being of its population, while reinforcing member States' sovereignty over their territories in that region. Cooperation at the regional and international levels is the main instrument for achieving those objectives.

10. Actions were reported by the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization under the six global forest goals. Under target 1.3 of goal 1, a project aimed at building technical capacity for biodiversity conservation in managed forests in Amazonia, which ended in March 2019, helped to facilitate the integration of forest and biodiversity conservation into the management of forests, as well as the responsible use of forest resources in the Amazonia region. In relation to target 2.5 of goal 2, a project proposal approved in September 2019 aspires to improve member States' knowledge of the state of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the region, and the trends and threats relating thereto, with a view to enhancing capacity, promoting dialogue and building a regional action plan for the sustainable management of forests and biodiversity.

11. Composed of over 2,000 individuals from 52 African countries and from 33 countries outside Africa who are interested in the promotion of the sustainable management and use of Africa's forests and tree resources to enhance livelihoods, national incomes and continental environment stability, the African Forest Forum provides a platform for information- and expertise-sharing and creates an enabling environment for independent and objective analysis, advocacy and advice, with a

<sup>1</sup> See [www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Summary-EGM-Reg-Bangkok-Jan-19.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Summary-EGM-Reg-Bangkok-Jan-19.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/documents/regional-reports/unff15>.

view to reducing poverty, promoting economic and social development and protecting the environment.

12. The African Forest Forum reported actions pertaining to the six global forest goals. With regard to all the targets of goal 1, studies were carried out to improve understanding, decisions and actions related to, among others, drivers of forest cover loss, the status and potential of forest certification, forestry and green economic development, the management of forests and landscapes in the context of climate change and forest law enforcement and good governance, as well as transboundary forests, throughout the continent. The studies helped to build capacity in the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument and other multilateral environment agreements. Finally, the African Forest Forum organized activities aimed at enhancing the participation of delegates from Africa in meetings of the United Nations Forum on Forests and to mainstream international agreements into national processes.

13. The establishment of the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation was agreed by the members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) at its fifteenth meeting, held in Sydney, Australia, in September 2007, to provide a platform to APEC its members to share best practices, conduct policy dialogue and carry out personnel training on forest rehabilitation and management. It promotes and improves sustainable forest management and rehabilitation in the Asia-Pacific region through capacity-building, information-sharing, regional policy dialogues and pilot projects.

14. The Asia-Pacific Network reported on action aimed at achieving all the global forest goals. In order to advance forestry research in the region and to make progress on goal 4 and its targets, in March 2018 the Network officially launched the Sino-Association of Southeast Asian Nations Network for Forestry Research Institutes mechanism, providing a communication platform for forestry research institutes in the region and a channel for the capacity-building of young forestry researchers. Regarding target 6.5, the Asia-Pacific Network, together with the Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association and the Ministry of Forest and Environment, has been empowering women in central Nepal by teaching them how to sustainably manage their community forests while developing new handicraft enterprises and promoting ecotourism.

15. The Economic Community of Central African States seeks to promote and strengthen harmonious cooperation in order to realize balanced and self-sustained economic development, in particular in the fields of industry, transport and communications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, trade, customs, monetary and financial matters, human resources, tourism, education, culture, science and technology and the movement of persons, with a view to achieving collective self-reliance, raising standards of living, maintaining economic stability and fostering peaceful relations among its 10 member States and contributing to the development of the African continent.

16. While actively pursuing the achievement of all global forest goals, it is worth noting the following actions taken to make progress on goal 5 and its associated targets: the elaboration of sustainable forest management plans by each member State before exploiting their productive forests; the adoption of a common regional and national set of principles, criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management to serve as a reference for the elaboration of forest management plans; the adoption of a regional and national chain-of-custody system for the trade in logs and processed wood products; and the adoption of regional and national anti-poaching plans. With regard to goal 3 and its associated targets, ECCAS reported the creation in 2016 of Bouba Ndjida, a new transboundary park between Cameroon and Chad, as well as the

establishment of bodies in member States specifically for the management of national parks and protected forest areas.

17. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has six regional forestry commissions covering the world, with largely identical mandates. They were established between 1947 and 1958 to advise on the formulation of management policy for forests (and rangelands and wildlife, as applicable), as well as review and coordinate the implementation of the policy at the regional level. The commissions also serve as a platform to exchange information and, generally through special subsidiary bodies, advise on suitable practices and action regarding technical problems, as well as to make appropriate recommendations in that regard. The secretariat of each commission provided written inputs.

18. The secretariat of the FAO African Forestry and Wildlife Commission reported the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative was a success story. The Great Green Wall is a flagship initiative in Africa to combat climate change and desertification and address food insecurity and poverty. It could be transformational for Africa, transforming the lives of millions of people by creating a great mosaic of green and productive landscapes across North Africa, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Endorsed by the African Union in 2007, the Initiative brings together more than 20 African countries with international organizations, research institutes and civil society and grass-roots organizations.

19. The secretariat of the FAO Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission informed the Forum that the legislative and policy actions aimed at achieving global forest goal 1 and its associated targets included a regional strategy and action plan for forest and landscape restoration endorsed by the Commission, as well as support for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to draft guidelines on agroforestry development, for Bangladesh to develop an investment plan on environment, forestry and climate change, for Timor-Leste to develop its first basic forest law and for various countries to develop community forestry policy or enabling conditions.

20. The secretariat of the FAO European Forestry Commission reported that its path towards achieving global forest goal 2 and its associated targets consisted of technical assistance for improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people using wood energy (in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, for example), together with a technical report on current wood fuel consumption and supply (in the same States). In addition, FAO intends to support a food system, land use and restoration project in the Pamir-Alai mountain landscape in Kyrgyzstan, which is aimed at implementing an integrated landscape management plan, cohesively bringing together and building on various lower-level resource management plans, such as forest and pasture management.

21. With regard to achieving global forest goal 5 and its associated targets, the secretariat of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission informed the Forum of the use of various strategies, including forestry actions related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as biodiversity. It was reported that a sustainable forest management connectivity project on the Caribbean coast of Colombia, involving river forest restoration, connectivity and the designation of protected areas, with national government and local participation, had successfully resulted in the restoration of 15 million ha and had benefited 15,000 families.

22. The Near East Forestry and Range Commission reported, in relation to progress on targets 4.1 and 4.2, an increase in the allocation of trust funds for forestry projects, including in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and Tunisia, as well as the enhanced mobilization of financial resources from the Global Environmental Facility. Furthermore, Lebanon is establishing a national forest fund to finance its national afforestation and restoration plan, in order to plant 40 million trees. The main

challenge in mobilizing financial resources is that most of the countries in the region are classified as high- and middle-income countries, which makes it difficult to obtain funds from bilateral and multilateral sources. In addition, several countries do not have significant forest cover, and forestry therefore may be perceived as a low-priority matter.

23. Finally, the secretariat of the North American Forest Commission reported on completed and ongoing actions related to the achievement of global forest goals 1 and 2, specifically regarding targets 1.4 and 2.5. The actions included the compilation of scientific manuscripts, such as those entitled “Assisted migration of forest populations for adapting trees to climate change” and “Convergent local adaptation to climate in distantly related conifers”, the development of provisional climate-based seed zones for Mexico for contemporary and future climates, the use of scenario models linking landscape-level adaptation strategies and genetics with other broad-scale processes, dialogue on permanent forest health monitoring and the integration of climate change indicators, and geographic expansion of the Seed Selection Tool for application throughout North America.

24. Forest Europe, which comprises 46 signatory countries and the European Union, is the pan-European high-level voluntary political process for dialogue and cooperation on forest policies in Europe. Its Liaison Unit in Bratislava reported on action aimed at achieving all six global forest goals.

25. With regard to global forest goal 1 and its associated targets, Forest Europe adopted a decision at its expert-level meeting held in Bratislava on 6 December 2018 to resume negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe, which was subsequently endorsed by ministers responsible for forests in Europe. In terms of goal 2 and its associated targets, the Liaison Unit informed the Forum of the existence of a web portal on valuation and payments for forest ecosystem services, which aggregates available and published information on the issue and serves as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and information on valuation methodologies and payment for those services, as well as for sharing best practices in the field.

26. The mission of the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan is to improve the well-being of producers and users of bamboo and rattan within the context of a sustainable bamboo and rattan resource base by consolidating, coordinating and supporting strategic and adaptive research and development. Its secretariat informed the Forum of actions related to the achievement of all six global forest goals.

27. The secretariat of the Network reported that the Dutch-Sino-East Africa bamboo development programme, which was conducted from 2017 to 2019, successfully contributed to the achievement of global forest goals 1, 2 and 4. Its overall objective was to contribute to green economic growth, as well as international trade and investment in East Africa, Europe and China, specifically by developing pro-poor industrial value chains for bamboo in East Africa with Dutch and Chinese expertise and by restoring degraded lands in Africa, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation. The main outcomes of the programme are as follows: the development of bamboo forest mapping for East Africa; support for national standards agencies in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda in adopting and developing international standards for bamboo products; the training of 1,450 people on bamboo product development and the establishment of eight micro-enterprises dealing with bamboo crafts and furniture; as well as the establishment of over 700 ha of bamboo plantation and the sustainable management of 850 ha of bamboo forests and farms.

28. The Tehran Process Secretariat for Low Forest Cover Countries reported on action contributing to the achievement of all six global forest goals. The successful example reported was not specifically related to the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 but to the national macro strategic plan on climate change research

for agriculture and natural resources, which partly considered the impact of climate change on forest ecosystems. As Executive Director of the strategic plan, the Head of the Tehran Process Secretariat cooperates with approximately 60 scientists in four subplan groups. To date, several goals and targets have been achieved, including the following: impact and vulnerability assessments in different sectors, including forests; an adaptation measures programme; and mitigation plans, including the role of forests therein. Among the outcomes and results achieved are the preparation and publishing of a report, which was enriched by comments from institutions and individual scientists, and the reviewing and publication of an updated report.

29. The secretariat of the Pacific Islands Forum shared information about its 2018 *Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report*, in which it stated that habitat loss continued to be an issue in the region and was caused by the following factors: human impact and unsustainable practices, such as unsustainable logging and forest conversion for plantation and agriculture; land-based activities that contribute to marine pollution and other forms of improper waste management; the clearance of mangrove areas, foreshore reclamation, coral harvesting, dredging, sand mining and coastal development; poorly managed mining operations; and the impact of natural disasters and extreme events. Ecosystem-based approaches were being integrated into national and sectoral plans and could help to reduce vulnerability to climate and non-climate risks, contributing to multiple economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits, such as a reduction in disaster risk, enhanced livelihood opportunities and food security, increased biodiversity conservation and improved carbon sequestration and sustainable water management.

30. The Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific, also known as the Centre for People and Forests, reported on action aimed at achieving all six global forest goals and shared two examples of successful action. The first, which addressed goals 2 and 3, concerned the Centre's efforts to connect teak smallholders with the Government and the private sector so as to secure tenure rights and improve their livelihood and the sustainable management of their forests in Bokeo, Lao People's Democratic Republic. As a result, local communities were provided with certificates that secured their right to sustainably manage their forests, and their livelihoods were improved because they received the tools to process small-diameter teak. The second example concerned a regional training course hosted by the Centre, aimed at developing the capacities of non-governmental organizations and government staff to initiate tenure reform in their countries. Consequently, participants from across South-East Asia were better equipped to instigate tenure reform in their countries and developed road maps for that purpose.

31. The joint Forestry and Timber Section of ECE and FAO reported on action to make progress on all global forest goals. In addition to sharing their input, prepared in the requested format, and because several actions refer to more than one goal, the Section also sent a report prepared in an alternative format (Excel) with a view to reducing overlaps and facilitating the analysis of the information. With regard to goal 4, green jobs in the forest sector were promoted through publications and a policy brief. The Section also serves as secretariat for the Team of Specialists on Green Jobs in the Forest Sector, a joint ECE-FAO expert network that also includes the International Labour Organization. The dissemination of information on forest landscape restoration, through publications, capacity-building workshops, studies and events, was also highlighted.

## **B. Joint organization and sponsorship with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations of stream 5 of Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2019**

32. The secretariat of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission and the Forum jointly led, sponsored and organized stream 5 of Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2019, which was held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 17 to 21 June 2019, in parallel with the twenty-eighth session of the Commission. With the overall theme of “Innovating governance and institutions”, stream 5 events attracted many of the more than 2,000 participants brought together by both events. The Forum secretariat hosted sessions on voluntary national contributions to the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, forest finance, the Forum’s major groups and the contribution of the Forum in implementing sustainable forest management.

33. The event provided the Forum secretariat with exposure, visibility and access to an unprecedented variety and number of forest actors in the Asia-Pacific region who usually do not attend its sessions; a new audience was thus made aware of the international arrangement on forests and its key successes, including the United Nations forest instrument and the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, as well as the work on forest finance and monitoring, assessment and reporting. The important role of non-governmental stakeholders in the Forum was also showcased. Furthermore, in the report of the twenty-eighth session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission,<sup>3</sup> FAO and the Forum were encouraged to seek opportunities in the context of other regional forestry commissions to replicate the strong collaboration evident in jointly organizing stream 5 of Asia-Pacific Forestry Week.

## **C. Seventy-seventh joint session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry of the Economic Commission for Europe and the European Forestry Commission**

34. The Forum secretariat participated in the seventy-seventh joint session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission, held from 4 to 7 November 2019 in Geneva. Several decisions adopted at the meeting contained references to the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, its implementation and the achievement of its global forest goals. There was also one decision that called specifically for FAO and the Forum secretariat to explore opportunities during the technical sessions of the Forum, for the FAO forestry regional commissions and the Forum’s other regional and subregional partners to inform the Forum of their contributions to the implementation of the strategic plan.

## **IV. Major groups and other stakeholders**

35. The scientific and technological communities major group provided input on building blocks for consideration and inclusion in the zero-draft declaration of the high-level segment of the Forum’s fifteenth session. Noting the importance of science and technology in understanding the dynamics of forests and for the achievement of sustainable forest management and forest-related Sustainable Development Goals, the group stressed the need for an evidence-based framework for monitoring, assessing and reporting on the implementation of sustainable forest management. Data are fundamental assets and central to designing, monitoring, assessing and reporting on the implementation and achievement of global forest goals and forest-related

<sup>3</sup> See [www.fao.org/3/ca7191en/ca7191en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/ca7191en/ca7191en.pdf), para. 30 (a).



Sustainable Development Goals. Data gaps currently exist in social, economic and environmental trends in the forestry sector and there is massive inequality in availability, accessibility and usability. Progress towards sustainable forest management requires enhancing scientific research to generate data and new knowledge to inform policy. Several studies have shed light on the contribution of scientific research to improved income, forest productivity and protection, environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods. Scientific and technological advances and tools have helped in forest inventory and land-use planning, the rehabilitation of degraded forests and mined sites, and in identifying ecophysiological markers for the selection of provenances for tree plantations and for the improved processing and utilization of wood and wood traceability, including the tracking of illegal logging activities. The Forum should therefore raise the discourse on the role of science and technology in sustainable forest management and the science-policy interface and seek support for the scientific and technological communities in developing countries to contribute to the achievement of the global forest goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through scientific capacity enhancement, research and development financing and networking and partnerships.

36. Brazilian Tree Industry, a private sector entity that represents an industry that is based on the cultivation of trees for industrial purposes, generating nearly 5,000 types of products, including lumber, pulp, paper, flooring, wood panels and charcoal, also provided input for consideration and inclusion in the declaration of the high-level segment of the fifteenth session of the Forum. With a prominent position in the development of a low-carbon economy, planted trees supply various industries and through investments in research and innovation allow wood to be used sustainably in even more applications. Considering the role of the planted forest sector in response to the many challenges contained in the United Nations strategic plan for forests, Brazilian Tree Industry stressed that the achievement of the global forest goals and forest-related Sustainable Development Goals would depend on the involvement, knowledge and practices spread by the private sector, along with Governments, companies, banks, investors, non-profit organizations, civil society and academic institutions.

37. With financial support from the Government of Germany, an initiative led by the major groups in support of the Forum is expected to be held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi in March 2020. The objective of the initiative is to strengthen the capacity of major groups and other stakeholders to effectively engage in advancing implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the work of the Forum, in particular regarding their contribution to the high-level segment of its fifteenth session and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2021–2024. The report of the initiative is expected to be shared with the Forum before its fifteenth session.

## **V. Involvement of the Forum secretariat in key international meetings and conferences, as well as interdepartmental activities related to forests and the Sustainable Development Goals**

### **A. Involvement of the Forum secretariat in meetings and conferences**

#### **Consultation workshop with parties to the biodiversity-related conventions on a post-2020 global biodiversity framework**

38. The secretariat participated in the consultation workshop with parties to biodiversity-related conventions on a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, held

from 10 to 13 June 2019 in Bern, Switzerland. The workshop was organized by the Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat to consider potential scenarios for a post-2020 global biodiversity framework and propose recommendations to the open-ended working group under the Convention on a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

39. At the meeting, the secretariat provided updates on the work of the Forum and its secretariat with a focus on the overview and status of implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the achievement of its global forest goals and targets. The importance of forest biodiversity and the possibility of greater synergies and collaboration between the Forum and the Convention on Biological Diversity was highlighted in the development of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, including through the following actions: the potential integration of the strategic plan and the global forest goals into the goals and targets of the post-2020 framework; possible cooperation in implementation activities and reporting mechanisms; collaboration through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; and partnerships between the two secretariats, including through joint events and activities.

40. Key points highlighted in the discussions included a need to maximize the contribution of forests and other ecosystems to the implementation of the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda and the need for greater cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and other processes, while ensuring a high level of ambition for a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

#### **Fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**

41. The fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, on the theme “Investing in land, unlocking opportunities”, was held in New Delhi from 2 to 13 September 2019.

42. The Forum secretariat participated in the ministerial round table on fostering a global movement for ecosystem restoration and highlighted the socioeconomic and environmental benefits of ecosystem restoration in general and forest landscape restoration as an effective means of restoration. Reference was made to the United Nations strategic plan for forests, in particular global forest goal 1 and its target on increasing forest area by 3 per cent by 2030, as well as Sustainable Development Goal 15, as forest-based ecosystem restoration targets. The secretariat communicated its readiness to collaborate to advance a joint forest-based ecosystem restoration agenda.

43. In the context of the discussion held at the Conference of the Parties on strengthening relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies, the secretariat made a statement to emphasize its existing collaboration with the secretariat of the Convention and the importance of forests in the context of strategies, project opportunities and implementation activities for leveraging the implementation of the Convention and land degradation neutrality, as well as linking land degradation neutrality targets with the Sustainable Development Goals, climate and biodiversity agendas.

44. Finally, the Forum secretariat held a side event entitled “Promoting synergies: sustainable land management, forest financing and the Sustainable Development Goals”, which highlighted the synergies between sustainable forest management and land degradation neutrality, including in the context of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, the global forest goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. The secretariat of the Convention seized the opportunity to launch a brochure entitled “Forest and trees at the heart of land degradation neutrality”.

### **Twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

45. The twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held in Madrid from 2 to 13 December 2019.

46. The Forum secretariat organized the Department of Economic and Social Affairs forest event at the Sustainable Development Goals pavilion, entitled “Realizing forest-based climate actions: global forest goals, Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement”. The event featured a keynote address by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, in which he highlighted, among other issues, the role of the Forum in elevating the significance of forests in the global policy agenda, as well as the need to accelerate implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and its six global forest goals.

47. Moreover, the Under-Secretary-General participated in the leadership dialogue with the heads of United Nations system entities, on the theme “Turning the tide of deforestation”, convened by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in partnership with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to provide visibility on forest issues and demonstrate that the United Nations system works as one and stands ready to strengthen efforts to support country-level sustainable land and forest management. In his remarks, he highlighted the Department’s vital role in supporting global efforts to halt deforestation and in promoting sustainable forest management, in particular through the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the United Nations Forum on Forests. In addition, the importance of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 as an integrated framework of action for all to tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation was emphasized, as well as the urgency of making progress to achieve the six global forest goals and their targets.

### **Twenty-fifth World Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations**

48. The twenty-fifth World Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations was held in Curitiba, Brazil, from 29 September to 5 October 2019. The theme of the meeting was “Forest research and cooperation for sustainable development”, and the discussions were focused on sharing evidence-based knowledge across disciplines and across regions, as well as on the state of forests, challenges and solutions.

49. The secretariat representative moderated a debate among high-level federal authorities of Brazil and the private sector on the role of forests in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the Forum secretariat, together with a representative of Austria (the host country of the Union’s secretariat), the Chief of the United States Forest Service and the Executive Director of the International Tropical Timber Organization, were invited to address the plenary session and deliver statements on their relationships with the Union. The secretariat emphasized its long and fruitful collaboration with the Union and the institution’s important role within the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and in the Forum, where it provides important science-based input.

## **B. Interdepartmental activities related to forests and the Sustainable Development Goals**

50. The secretariat continued to provide forest-related inputs to the relevant reports and background documents of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development, as well as information and policy recommendations relevant to the themes being considered by the Council.

51. The Forum secretariat represents the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the inter-agency task force established to provide an effective and coherent United Nations response to illicit trafficking in wildlife and forest products. In order to raise awareness of the problem at hand and maximize the audience, the task force created a massive open online course, which is expected to be available to the public in early 2020. The announcement of the course was made during the eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, held in Geneva, from 17 to 28 August 2019.

## **VI. Conclusion**

52. Collaboration with the Forum's regional and subregional partners, as well as with major groups and other stakeholders, increased during the implementation of the quadrennial programme of work for 2017–2020. The secretariat was able to organize expert group meetings with those actors on a frequent basis, often annually. Such enhanced collaboration had positive outputs, for instance, in reaching agreement on a format for written input to be submitted voluntarily by regional and subregional entities, as well as through the development of dedicated implementation work programmes by major groups.

53. The increased involvement of the partners was also highlighted in the Forum's discussions and decisions. One of the main points in the discussion on regional and subregional cooperation during the fourteenth session of the Forum, according to the Chair's summary, was that those bodies are advancing the implementation of the strategic plan and the achievement of the global forest goals and targets, incorporating them, as appropriate, into their respective work programmes. The written inputs received from the Forum's regional and subregional partners confirm that observation.

54. Regional and subregional efforts in advancing the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 should be also supported. Some of the entities that submitted written contributions on a voluntary basis, as well as some that did not, indicated that it might have been useful for them to have received additional training in preparing their input using the agreed format. A few suggested that the regional and subregional questionnaire used until the Forum's eleventh session could be adapted and updated to incorporate questions related to the strategic plan and the global forest goals. Following the fifteenth session, the Forum secretariat intends to consult these partners to evaluate the reporting exercise and the current format for written input and to discuss future procedures.

55. Major groups and other stakeholders continue to play a very important role in the achievement of the global forest goals. During the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2019, the session hosted by the Forum secretariat on the role of non-governmental actors in the Forum had the largest audience of all the sessions organized by the Forum. It is also worth noting that two substantive contributions regarding the outcome of the high-level segment of the fifteenth session of the Forum were

received, from the scientific and technological communities major group and Brazilian Tree Industry. These inputs confirm the interest of non-governmental stakeholders in the Forum process, as well as their commitment to achieving the global forest goals and the forest-related Sustainable Development Goals. The input of Brazilian Tree Industry is particularly meaningful, since it represents a concrete and substantive contribution to the Forum from the private sector, which until recently was not very active in the Forum.

56. It is imperative to build on the successful collaboration with the regional, subregional and major groups and other stakeholders achieved during the implementation of the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017–2020 and to further advance such collaboration in the next quadrennium. Enhancing collaboration with these partners holds great potential in advancing implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and its global forest goals, and the means to support their activities during the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2021–2024 should be explored.

57. The Forum secretariat continues to collaborate with other international bodies on forest-related issues, including through its participation in international meetings and conferences and contributions to various processes. The United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 is being actively promoted as an integrated framework for forest-based national actions and international cooperation to accelerate progress towards achieving the global forest goals, the forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and other forest-related international goals and commitments. In addition, the Forum secretariat continues to work with other areas of the United Nations system to support similar efforts.

## VII. Proposals

58. In order to advance collaboration with relevant stakeholders and partners, the Forum may wish to consider the following actions:

(a) Welcome the written inputs voluntarily submitted to the fifteenth session of the Forum by the regional and subregional entities, as well as the contributions of major groups in preparation for the session, and encourage these stakeholders to continue to advance the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the achievement of the global forest goals and targets;

(b) Welcome the participation of the private sector in the fourteenth session of the Forum and its input towards the outcome of the fifteenth session;

(c) Welcome further the fruitful collaboration between the Forum secretariat and the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and request the Forum secretariat to continue to work closely with those counterparts with a view to further enhancing cooperation on forest-related issues;

(d) Emphasize the need to further strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement in the work of the Forum during the implementation of the quadrennial programme of work for 2021–2024;

(e) Request the secretariat to continue to explore and pursue ways and means to actively involve philanthropic organizations and the private sector in the work of the Forum.