



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 December 2013

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests

Open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the international arrangement on forests

First meeting

Nairobi, 24-28 February 2014

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

Tasks of the expert group

International arrangement on forests

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In its resolution 10/2, the United Nations Forum on Forests established an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the international arrangement on forests, tasked with reviewing the performance and effectiveness of the international arrangement within the context of Economic and Social Council resolutions 2000/35 and 2006/49 and the attainment of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum for the period 2007-2015. It will review the input provided by various stakeholders during the intersessional period and, on the basis of that review, propose a set of recommendations providing a strategic direction on the function and institutional arrangements of the international arrangement for the period beyond 2015 to the Forum at its eleventh session. The present note provides background information on the international arrangement and the tasks of the expert group.

* E/CN.18/AEG/2014/1.



I. Introduction

1. According to the multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2007-2015, adopted in 2007, the overall theme of the eleventh session of the Forum, to be held from 4 to 15 May 2015, will be “Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward for the international arrangement on forests”. At that session, there will be a high-level segment of the Forum to review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

2. The Forum has taken several decisions over the past 14 years in preparation for the review. Most recently, at its tenth session, held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 8 to 19 April 2013, the Forum adopted resolution 10/2, in which it decided to undertake preparatory intersessional activities to ensure that, at its eleventh session, it would have a strong basis on which to review the effectiveness of the international arrangement and make a decision on its future.

3. The present note provides information on the main tasks of the Forum at its eleventh session with regard to the international arrangement and its scope and components, in addition to the previous decisions of the Forum on the matter. It also includes information on the key intersessional activities on the issue that were agreed upon at the tenth session of the Forum and the tasks of the expert group.

II. Background

4. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/35, laid the foundation for the international arrangement by establishing the Forum. In the resolution, the Council refers to the components of the international arrangement and their functions and tasks.

5. The term “international arrangement on forests” encompasses the Forum and its member States, acting both individually and together as the Forum; the secretariat of the Forum; the voluntary partnership of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other relevant intergovernmental organizations that contribute to the work of the Forum individually and collectively; regional organizations and their processes; and major groups who take part in the sessions of the Forum. The implementation of the resolutions of the Forum is also considered to be part of the international arrangement.

6. The main objective of the international arrangement is to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end. Its purpose is to promote the implementation of internationally agreed actions on forests, at the national, regional and global levels, to provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global framework for policy implementation, coordination and development.

7. The main functions of the international arrangement are:

(a) To promote the implementation of internationally agreed actions on forests at the national, regional and global levels;

(b) To provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global framework for policy implementation, coordination and development;

(c) To provide a forum for continued policy development among Governments, international organizations and other interested parties to foster a common understanding on sustainable forest management and to address forest-related issues and emerging areas of priority concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner;

(d) To enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues among relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, as well as to contribute to synergies among them, including coordination among donors;

(e) To foster international cooperation, including North-South and public-private partnerships, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation at the national, regional and global levels;

(f) To monitor and assess progress at the national, regional and global levels through reporting by Governments, as well as by international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, and on this basis consider future actions needed.

8. In 2006, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/49, strengthened the international arrangement by agreeing upon the following three additional principal functions for it:

(a) To enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and to the implementation of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, bearing in mind the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development;

(b) To encourage and assist countries to maintain and improve their forest resources with a view to enhancing the benefits of forests to meet present and future needs, in particular the needs of indigenous peoples and local communities whose livelihoods depend on forests;

(c) To strengthen interaction between the Forum and relevant regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organizations and processes, to facilitate enhanced cooperation and effective implementation of sustainable forest management.

9. In its resolution 7/1, the Forum agreed upon the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and its four shared global objectives on forests, which, as a result of the successful negotiations and agreement, became integral parts of the international arrangement. In the same resolution, the Forum adopted its multi-year programme of work. As indicated above, according to that programme of work, the theme of the eleventh session of the Forum will be "Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward for the international arrangement on forests".

10. The above-mentioned resolutions and the multi-year programme of work contain important provisions concerning the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement, some of which are referred to in section III of the present note.

11. At its tenth session, the Forum further elaborated the elements of the review and agreed upon intensive intersessional activities on the matter that would lead up

to its eleventh session. Those activities include soliciting views and proposals from countries and other relevant stakeholders on the international arrangement, carrying out an independent assessment of the international arrangement and holding a maximum of two meetings of the expert group to review the input provided and the outcome of the independent assessment, to discuss the issues and to submit recommendations on the international arrangement to the Forum at its eleventh session.

III. Elements of the review of the international arrangement on forests

12. Resolutions 2000/35 and 2006/49 of the Economic and Social Council and 7/1 and 10/2 of the Forum provide the framework for the Forum, at its eleventh session, to review the effectiveness of the international arrangement and take a decision on its future. In accordance with those resolutions, the review will encompass:

(a) Consideration of a full range of options, including a legally binding instrument on all types of forests, strengthening of the current arrangement, continuation of the current arrangement and other options;

(b) Past performance of the Forum, its processes and multi-year programme of work, including ad hoc expert groups and country-led initiatives, in addition to future options for the Forum;

(c) Progress towards the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and achievement of the four global objectives on forests, including a review of the relationship of the instrument with international conventions and intergovernmental organizations that have a bearing on the mandate of the Forum;

(d) Effectiveness of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(e) Contribution of forests and the international arrangement, including the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, to the internationally agreed development goals;

(f) Forum secretariat;

(g) Both the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its contribution to the work of the Forum and related activities by individual member organizations of the Partnership in support of the Forum;

(h) Means of implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and relevant subsequent resolutions, and the facilitative process;

(i) The Forum within the context of the United Nations sustainable development framework, including the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.

IV. Tasks of the expert group

13. The first component of the intersessional activities on the review of the international arrangement, as outlined in resolution 10/2, is to solicit views from countries and other relevant stakeholders on the international arrangement. Specifically, the Forum invited countries, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, its member organizations, other relevant organizations, relevant regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes, major groups and other stakeholders to submit views and proposals to the secretariat of the Forum on the six key issues set out in paragraph 5 of the resolution and the full range of options on the future international arrangement. Drawing on that mandate, a format for soliciting views was prepared and sent to countries and other stakeholders in June 2013. The responses received have been made available in document [E/CN.18/AEG/2014/INF/1](#).

14. The second component is to carry out an independent assessment of the international arrangement. The terms of reference for the assessment, devised in accordance with the annex to resolution 10/2, were finalized by the Bureau in June 2013.¹ They include the scope of and framework for the assessment, its objectives, the deliverables and a substantive context for the work of the consultants and the co-facilitators.

15. Following the selection of relevant consultants and the appointment of the co-facilitators, work began in October 2013. An initial report thereon will be submitted to the expert group at its first meeting, with the final output to be prepared by mid-September 2014 for submission to the expert group at its second meeting.

16. The third component of the intersessional activities is the work of the current expert group, established by the Forum in its resolution 10/2 and tasked with reviewing the performance and effectiveness of the international arrangement within the context of Economic and Social Council resolutions 2000/35 and 2006/49 and the attainment of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum. It will review the input provided by various stakeholders and, on that basis, propose a set of recommendations providing a strategic direction on the function and institutional arrangements of the international arrangement for the period beyond 2015 to the Forum at its eleventh session.

17. In performing its mandate, the expert group should also take into account the connection with and implications of the continuing deliberations on the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 United Nations development agenda. It will hold no more than two meetings before the eleventh session, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources. The first meeting, in Nairobi, provides a good opportunity for all stakeholders to discuss all components and elements of the international arrangement and the views and proposals that have been submitted thereon and to hear a preliminary report by the team conducting the independent assessment. The discussions and the report of the meeting will inform the continuing work on the independent assessment, in addition to serving as a basis for further reflection by the expert group in preparing for its second meeting, at which it is to propose recommendations and conclusions with regard to the international arrangement for the Forum at its eleventh session.

¹ Available from www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/aheg/TOR-IAF.pdf.