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Monitoring, assessment and reporting: progress on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including the United Nations forest instrument, and voluntary national contributions

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In accordance with its quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017–2020, the United Nations Forum on Forests will consider monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including the United Nations forest instrument, and voluntary national contributions at its fifteenth session. At its thirteenth session, the Forum invited its members to submit their voluntary national reports to the Forum secretariat by mid-November 2019 and decided to consider the results of the first round of voluntary national reporting at its fifteenth session.

The present note provides an overview of the national reports submitted to the fifteenth session of the Forum. Specifically, the note contains consolidated information provided by 50 Member States in their reports to the fifteenth session of the Forum and includes an overview of the actions taken and the challenges encountered in pursuing the global forest goals of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. In addition, the note includes an update on the progress made on a global core set of forest-related indicators and on the flagship publication, to be published in 2021, which will draw upon the information provided in the national reports.

* E/CN.18/2020/1.



I. Introduction

1. The present note provides an overview of the national reports submitted to the fifteenth session of the Forum on Forests and contains a brief summary of intersessional activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting. The note is provided to facilitate discussion on item 4 of the provisional agenda. It is expected that, under item 4, the Forum will consider: (a) the status of the national reports submitted to the fifteenth session of the Forum; (b) the timing of the next round of reporting to the Forum; (c) progress made on a global core set of forest-related indicators; and (d) an update on the issuance of the flagship publication in 2021.

II. Background

2. The General Assembly adopted the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 in its resolution [71/285](#). The strategic plan provides a global framework for action at all levels to sustainably manage all types of forests and trees outside forests and to halt deforestation and forest degradation.

3. In accordance with paragraph 69 of the strategic plan, at its thirteenth session, the Forum adopted the format for voluntary national reporting on progress towards the implementation of the strategic plan, including the United Nations forest instrument and voluntary national contributions. The format is structured around the global forest goals and targets of the strategic plan and, as requested by Member States, is largely qualitative. The information submitted by Member States will be supplemented with quantitative data mainly from the Global Forest Resources Assessment of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

4. In United Nations Forum on Forests resolution 13/1, the Forum decided that it would consider the results of the first round of voluntary national reporting at its fifteenth session and invited members of the Forum to submit their voluntary national reports to the Forum secretariat by mid-November 2019. In the same resolution, members of the Forum decided that, at its fifteenth session, the Forum would consider the timing of the next round of reporting, bearing in mind the midterm review by the Forum of the international arrangement on forests in 2024. Also in resolution 13/1, the Forum secretariat was requested to prepare, on the basis of the initial round of reporting and in consultation with members of the Forum, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and relevant stakeholders, a concise “flagship” publication on progress towards achieving the global forest goals for release by the end of 2021 ([E/2018/42–E/CN.18/2018/9](#), chap. I, sect. B, paras. 9–11).

5. During the fourteenth session of the Forum, members discussed issues related to monitoring, assessment and reporting.¹ The Chair included the following suggestions relevant to monitoring, assessment and reporting in his summary of discussions of the fourteenth session in the list of potential intersessional activities of the Forum secretariat:

(a) Organize with FAO an expert meeting in the near future to further consider data-related issues related to third-tier indicators of a global core set of forest-related indicators;

(b) In consultation with interested members of the Forum, establish an informal advisory committee to take forward the flagship publication, taking into

¹ A brief summary of the discussion is provided in the report on the fourteenth session of the Forum ([E/2019/42–E/CN.18/2019/9](#)), annex I, paras. 19–21.

account the outcome of the brainstorming meeting hosted by Australia during the fourteenth session of the Forum;

(c) Organize an additional expert workshop on reporting to the Forum, before the submission deadline of mid-November 2019.

6. Information on the voluntary national contributions, including relevant suggestions made by the Chair for indicative intersessional activities, is included in the note by the Secretariat on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 ([E/CN.18/2020/2](#)).

7. Following the discussions held at the fourteenth session of the Forum, in July 2019, the Forum secretariat circulated the reporting format to Member States, along with the explanatory notes for reporting, which had been presented during the fourteenth session.

8. In October 2019, the Forum secretariat organized a capacity-building workshop on national reporting on progress made towards the achievement of the global forest goals and targets of the strategic plan. The workshop addressed challenges that countries had experienced when preparing their national reports and clarified the type of information to focus on in reporting to the Forum. Moreover, the workshop provided an opportunity for countries to share their knowledge, experiences, challenges and lessons learned in preparing their national reports and in tracking progress made towards achieving the global forest goals and implementing the United Nations forest instrument.

III. Reports submitted to the fifteenth session of the Forum

A. Issues to consider

9. Only a handful of countries submitted their national reports by the required deadline of 15 November 2019. Most reports were received after the deadline, with some received in January 2020. The secretariat, therefore, had limited time for a thorough analysis and synthesis of the reports. However, the reports will be analysed further and will provide the basis for a full, in-depth assessment of progress made towards achieving the global forest goals and targets, which will be included in the flagship publication scheduled for release in 2021. The publication will enable the inclusion of national examples and submitted success stories. Moreover, the full assessment of goals and targets will be supplemented by quantitative biophysical data, mainly from the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020 of FAO, which was not available at the time of drafting of the present note. The summary of reports provided below should thus be seen as a work in progress and read with those limitations in mind.

B. Overview of reports received

10. The overview is based on information submitted by 50 Member States on actions taken and progress made towards implementing the six global forest goals and associated targets of the strategic plan.

11. The 50 submissions received by the Forum secretariat were from Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Botswana, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, the Central African Republic, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, the Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United

Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Zimbabwe and the State of Palestine.

12. Most of the reports received were from Africa (23), followed by Asia (10), Europe (8), the Americas (6), Oceania (2) and the Caribbean (1).

13. Many of the reports were comprehensive and well documented, with extensive background information, weblinks and references clearly presented. Some were much longer than others, and some questions were interpreted differently by different respondents. In many cases, there were overlaps and duplication between the information for the various goals and targets and between the actions listed under each goal.

14. About half of the respondents made clear references to specific targets. In many reports, the references were made partially, while several reports had general descriptions of actions under each global forest goal, but did not make references to specific targets.

C. Methodology

15. The information contained in the national reports was analysed with the help of qualitative research software to enable in-depth analysis of large and small volumes of rich text-based and/or multimedia information. The software allowed for the creation of nodes and sub-nodes as a way to organize and store relevant information in the appropriate boxes created for each of the six goals.

16. All of the data from the national reports were uploaded into the software, and nodes were created for all six goals and sub-nodes for relevant themes emerging from each of the goals. Using the word cloud, tree map and text search functions embedded in the software, frequently occurring keywords and themes were captured and coded as a sub-node.

17. For example, the words “afforestation” and “reforestation” occurring frequently in a national report were coded as a sub-node, and any related action, whether legislative, financial, institutional or technical, was stored in that sub-node. To the extent possible, all the actions and activities have been captured and sometimes merged into a single umbrella theme in order to make the workflow of the analysis easy to understand. In such cases, explanations have been provided, suggesting what the umbrella theme or term includes or excludes. The analysis was exported into an Excel spreadsheet, and graphs, which are included in the present report, were created. As mentioned above, further and more detailed analysis of the submitted reports will be featured in the flagship publication.

D. **Global forest goal 1:² reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change**

18. In the national reports of 50 Member States, it is evident that countries have taken a substantial number of actions to implement global forest goal 1 and its

² Goal 1 and its targets support and contribute to the achievement of, among others, targets 6.6, 12.2, 13.1, 13.3, 14.2, 15.1–15.4 and 15.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5, 7, 9, 11, 14 and 15 and are supported by paras. 6 (o) and 7 (d) and (e) of the United Nations forest instrument.

associated targets. All but one country took significant legislative, policy and technical and scientific actions, while 48 countries took financial actions and 46 took institutional actions. Figure I shows the 10 thematic areas of action that emerged from the four broad types of actions, namely, legislative and policy; institutional; financial; and technical and scientific. It should be noted that some thematic areas may be exclusive to certain broad actions. For example, in the case of wood energy, only legislative and policy actions were taken by countries.

19. Each thematic area in figure I includes all of the actions taken by countries related to the given theme. The Afforestation and reforestation category includes all the actions related to tree planting, green shelterbelts and corridors, plantations and increasing forest cover. Carbon includes all the actions related to carbon sequestration, carbon sinks, carbon offsets, carbon credit sales, carbon taxes, carbon fund development and carbon investments. Climate change includes all the actions related to adaptation, mitigation, building resilience, financing and addressing climate change risks, such as forest fires, pests and diseases, floods, droughts and desertification. Conservation and protection includes all of the actions related to the conservation and protection of biodiversity, forest ecosystems, watersheds, soil, protected areas and the environment. Forest management includes all the actions related to sustainable forest management, forest management plans, forest operations, silviculture practices, forest inventory and monitoring and forest technology. Illegal logging and trade includes actions related to curbing illegal logging and trade. REDD-plus (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and promoting the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries) includes all the actions related to the REDD-plus programme, plus the reduction or curbing of greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing deforestation includes all the actions that are related to halting or reducing the conversion of forest land, exclusive of the REDD-plus programme or initiative. Restoration and rehabilitation includes all the actions related to restoring degraded forest ecosystems, soil and watersheds, as well as other land use and the environment. Wood energy includes all the actions related to energy from wood-derived products.

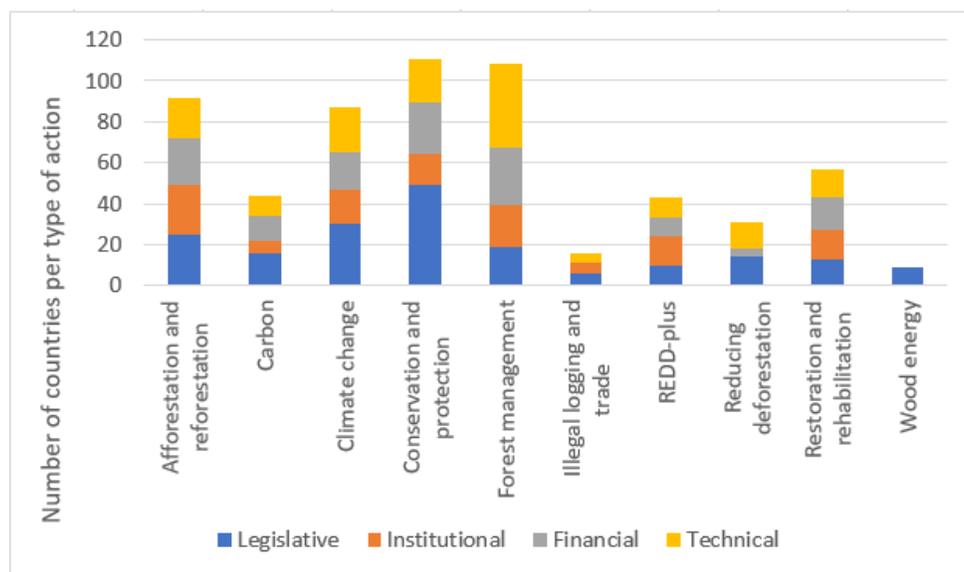
Legislative and policy actions

20. Figure I shows that most of the legislative and policy actions taken by countries were in the category of conservation and protection (49 of 50 countries), followed by climate change (30) and afforestation and reforestation (25). Interestingly, nine countries took legislative and policy actions on wood energy, a thematic area that is not reflected in any other broad actions. Legislative and policy actions include strengthening laws and policies; establishing policies, plans and laws; revising or reviewing laws, acts, plans and policies; and amending laws, acts and policies.

Institutional actions

21. Also shown in figure I is the wide range of institutional actions taken by Member States, which included establishing new institutions and networks; community engagement, including that of local, indigenous and forest communities; private sector engagement; promoting an enabling environment; establishing or improving partnerships and collaborations; and strengthening institutions, capacity and networks. Major institutional actions were taken towards afforestation and reforestation (24 of 50 countries). In all, 20 countries focused on forest management, and 17 focused on climate change. Only 5 countries took action on illegal logging and trade.

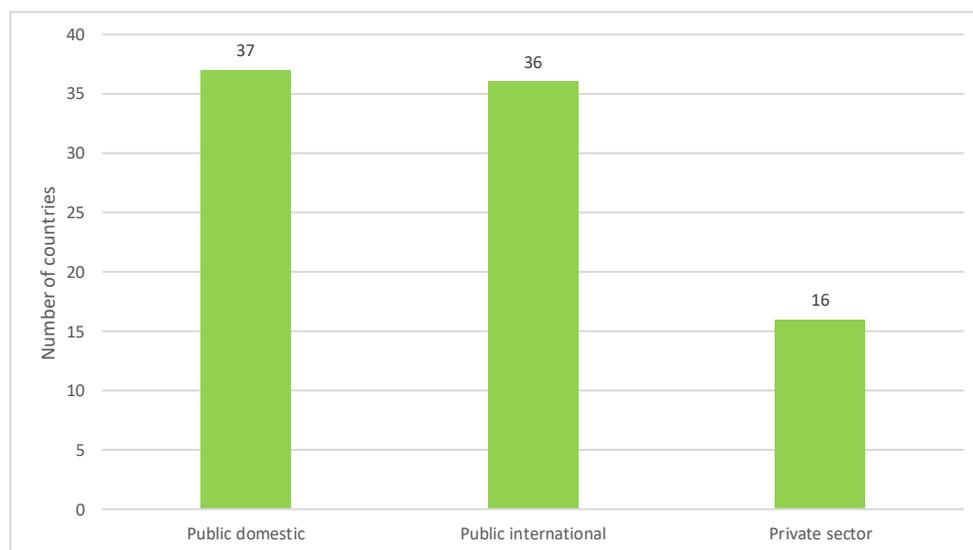
Figure I
Thematic areas of action for global forest goal 1



Financial actions

22. As shown in figure II, countries made significant efforts towards mobilizing all types of financial resources to implement global forest goal 1 and its associated targets. A total of 37 of 50 countries were able to mobilize public domestic funds, which include taxes, subsidies, annual budget allocations, the funds of national banks, public investments and state grants. Many countries (36) were also able to mobilize public international funds, which include the funds of international development banks, multilateral and bilateral funds, philanthropic funds and the funds of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Private sector funding needs to be increased, with only 16 countries being able to mobilize or obtain access to it.

Figure II
Sources of mobilized funds



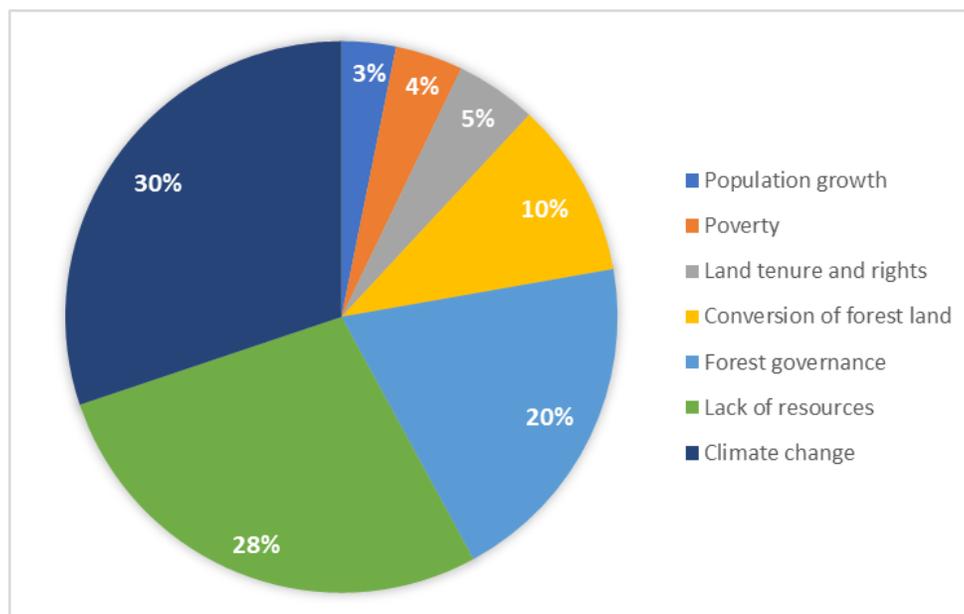
Technical and scientific actions

23. Countries placed an emphasis on improving their technical and scientific capacities, with 49 of 50 taking this type of action. Technical and scientific actions included the following: scientific and technical research related to forest and forestry; studies on invasive species, tree species, seedlings and endangered species; developing and or improving forest inventory and monitoring systems; conducting forest resources assessments; building human resource capacity and institutional capacities for the implementation of sustainable forest management; conducting technical training and workshops; and developing or improving data and information management systems. Figure I shows 41 countries focusing on forest management as they make progress towards improving their technical and scientific capacities in order to implement sustainable forest management. This is followed by countries building their technical and scientific capacities or expertise in addressing climate change risks and impacts (22 countries) and making efforts to conserve and protect the remaining forest resources and the environment (22). On the other hand, not many countries (5) reported actions that are being taken to address illegal logging and trade.

Challenges to the implementation of global forest goal 1

24. Figure III shows the major challenges faced by Member States in the implementation of global forest goal 1. Climate change and its associated risks and impacts, such as forest fires, floods, droughts and other natural disasters, as well as pests and disease, were the greatest challenges to implementing global forest goal 1, with 38 of 50 countries considering climate change to be a major challenge. A lack of resources, such as financial, human capacity, productive land areas, data and information, was considered to be the second major challenge, with 35 countries citing the need for improvement in the area. Forest governance was another important challenge cited by 25 countries, including a lack of political will or incentives; continued illegal practices, such as illegal logging, mining and poaching; and a lack of cross-sectoral coordination on sustainable forest management. Other significant challenges cited may be specific to only some countries, including the conversion of forest land (13); land tenure and rights (13); poverty, which includes a lack of livelihood options (5); and population growth (4).

Figure III
Challenges to the implementation of global forest goal 1



E. Global forest goal 2:³ enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people

25. Member States reported having made noticeable progress in taking a wide range of actions to implement global forest goal 2. A majority of countries took actions to strengthen and their technical and scientific capacity, with 48 of 50 taking such actions. Countries also looked into strengthening their laws and regulations and institutions through legislative actions (46 countries) and institutional actions (46) and made efforts in mobilizing financial resources, with 44 taking such actions.

26. As shown in figure IV, countries directed their broad actions to 11 common thematic areas that emerged from the analysis of the 50 national reports. It is to be noted that some thematic areas may be exclusive to certain broad actions. For example, in the case of wood energy, only technical and scientific and financial actions were taken.

27. Each thematic area in figure IV includes all the actions taken by countries related to the given theme. Communities indicates actions related to support given to community forestry groups and indigenous and local communities. The Food security category includes actions taken by countries to address the issue directly. Conservation and protection include all the actions related to the conservation and protection of biodiversity, forest ecosystems, watersheds, soil, protected areas and the environment. Forest products and services indicates timber, non-timber forest products, forest ecosystem services and forest business enterprises, markets and value chains. Rural development indicates actions taken to improve social and economic development, reduce poverty, improve livelihoods and provide access and benefit-

³ Goal 2 and its targets support and contribute to the achievement of, among others, targets 1.1, 1.4, 2.4, 4.4, 5.a, 6.6, 8.3, 9.3, 12.2, 12.5, 15.6 and 15.c of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as Aichi Biodiversity Targets 4, 14 and 18, and are supported by paras. 6 (d)–(f), (h), (j), (p), (q), (t)–(v) and (y) and 7 (k) of the United Nations forest instrument.

sharing mechanisms. Climate change includes all actions related to adaptation, mitigation, building resilience and addressing climate change risks, such as forest fires, pests and diseases, floods, droughts and desertification. Restoration and rehabilitation includes all the actions related to restoring degraded forest ecosystems, soil and watersheds, as well as other land use and the environment. Forest management includes all the actions related to sustainable forest management, forest management plans, forest certifications, forest inventory and monitoring and forest technology. Afforestation and reforestation includes all the actions related to tree planting, agroforestry and plantations. Wood energy includes all the actions related to energy from wood-derived products. Forest governance refers to actions taken to address illegal logging, poaching and so on.

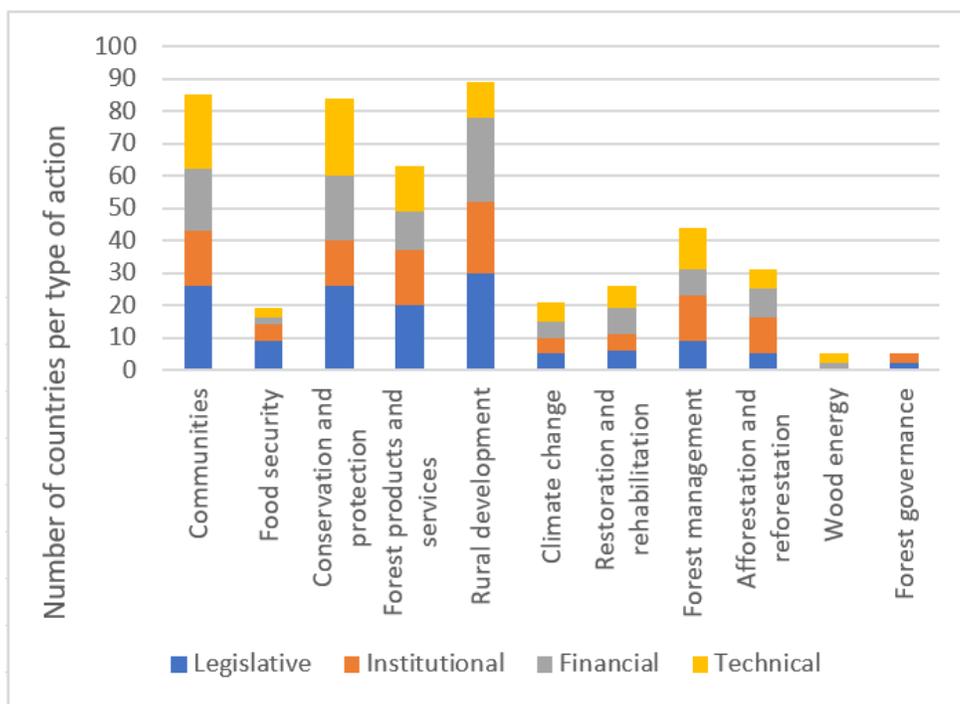
Legislative and policy actions

28. Member States made progress in taking significant actions towards implementing the targets of global forest goal 2. Legislative and policy actions include strengthening laws and policies; establishing new policies, plans or revisions; and amending and reviewing forest laws and acts. In all, 30 of 50 countries took steps towards working on rural development – improving social and economic development, reducing poverty and improving livelihoods. A total of 26 countries are taking initiatives to support communities and address poverty eradication. Overall, 20 countries are taking actions to enhance forest products and services, support forest business enterprises and improve market access and linkages. In terms of food security relating to target 2.3, fewer countries were seen taking actions thereon, in comparison with other targets of goal 2, with only 9 citing food security in their reports.

Institutional actions

29. As shown in figure IV, countries are taking proactive steps in establishing institutions and networks to make progress towards achieving the targets of goal 2. The steps include revising laws, regulations and policies; strengthening forest business enterprises; establishing processes and institutional bodies; and supporting communities and livelihood development. In general, the actions were directed mostly towards rural development (22 of 50 countries), communities (17) and forest products and services (17), indicating that countries are making progress on targets 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4. Food security relating to target 2.3 did not receive much attention, with only 5 countries taking institutional actions on it.

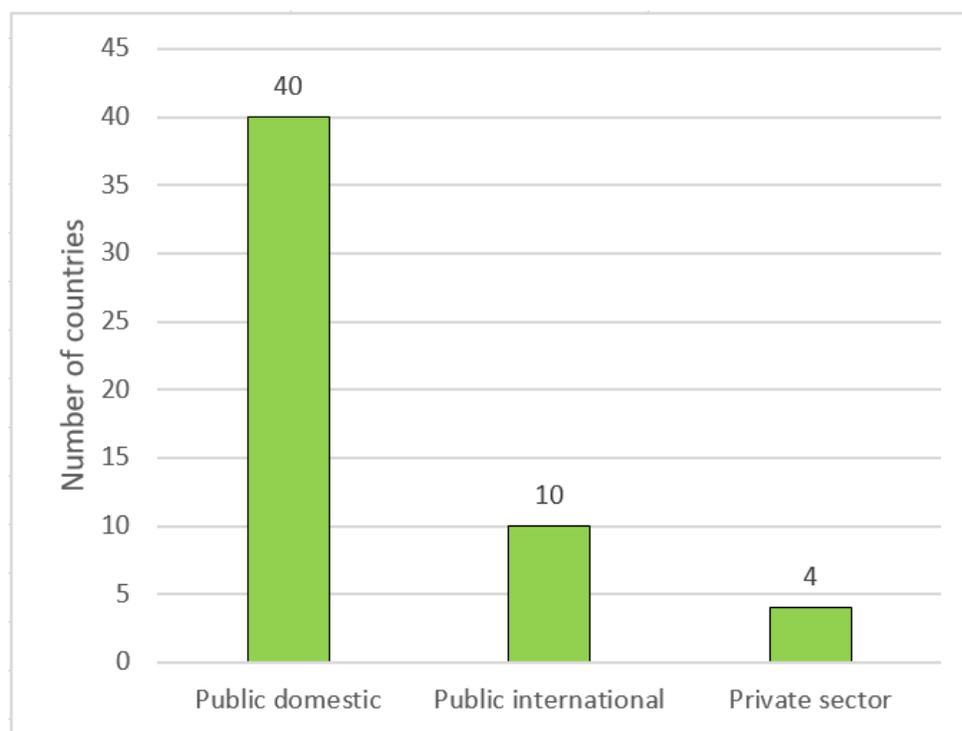
Figure IV
Thematic areas of action for global forest goal 2



Financial actions

30. Figure V shows the sources of funding that countries mobilized to implement global forest goal 2. Countries have mobilized funds largely through public domestic sources, with 40 of 50 countries having created and or acquired funds through taxation, subsidies and annual budgetary allocations, to name a few. A total of 10 countries have been able to secure public international funding, such as from international development banks, multilateral and bilateral funds, philanthropic funds and the funds of NGOs. Countries continue to face challenges in providing the private sector with an incentive to contribute to global forest goal 2, with only four countries reporting having achieved it.

Figure V
Sources of funding mobilized to implement global forest goal 2



Technical and scientific actions

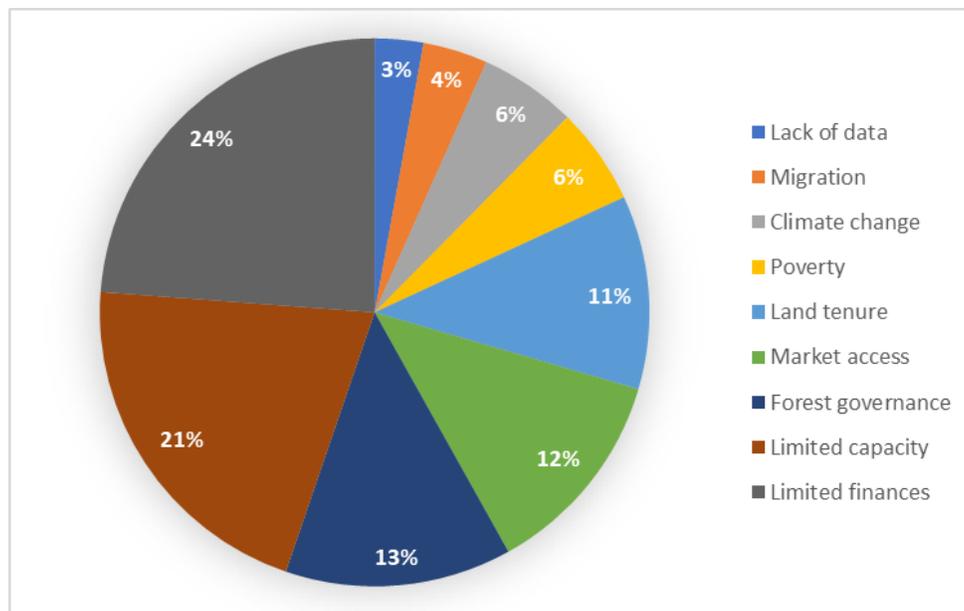
31. As shown in figure IV, countries have taken significant technical and scientific actions to build capacity in management and institutions and to strengthen research in sustainable forest management, markets and value chains and forest products and services. Overall, 24 of 50 countries directed such actions towards conservation and protection of forest ecosystems and the environment. The capacity-building and training of forest-dependent communities, including indigenous peoples, was another area of focus for 23 countries. Forest products and services, rural development and forest management were other areas in which countries took proactive technical and scientific actions. Food security seems to be a challenging issue to address, with only 3 countries reporting being able to take some technical and scientific actions on it.

Challenges to the implementation of global forest goal 2

32. Major challenges limiting countries in their implementation of global forest goal 2 are inadequate finances and limited human resources and capacity-building. A total of 25 of 50 countries considered finance, which includes limited funds, difficulty in obtaining access to funds, financial governance problems, diversifying sources of finance and limited funds to support indigenous peoples, to be the biggest challenge. In total, 22 countries stressed the need for additional human resources and training, for local peoples in particular. Figure VI shows some of the major challenges to implementing global forest goal 2. In all, 14 countries were concerned about forest governance problems, such as corruption, weak enforcement and exploitation of forest resources, to name a few. A total of 13 countries cited market access – including access to proper market prices, a lack of markets for community forestry-managed timber, a lack of markets for non-timber forest products, access to national and international markets, limited market linkages and market-driven instruments, such

as certifications – as another bottleneck. Land issues, such as land tenure and rights and legal access to land, were another critical challenge noted by 12 countries.

Figure VI
Challenges to the implementation of global forest goal 2



F. Global forest goal 3:⁴ increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests

33. Countries demonstrated their commitment to implementing global forest goal 3 and its targets through various actions and activities. A majority of countries (47 of 50) took legislative and policy actions to establish protected areas and networks and implement a wide array of conservation measures. Most countries (44) were proactive in mobilizing finance from various sources, both public and private. The strengthening of institutions and the establishment of formal bodies and networks through institutional actions were other significant steps taken by 43 countries. A total of 41 countries worked on their technical and scientific capacity to achieve progress on global forest goal 3. As with the other two goals, common thematic areas of action emerged from the four broad actions taken by countries to implement goal 3. Figure VII shows 11 important thematic areas of action, with certain actions being exclusive to some areas. For example, in the case of land tenure, only institutional actions were taken, and in the case of wood energy, only financial actions were taken.

34. Conservation and protection includes all the actions related to the conservation and protection of biodiversity, forest ecosystems, watersheds, soil and protected areas. Restoration and rehabilitation includes all the actions related to restoring degraded forest ecosystems, soil and watersheds, as well as other land use and the environment. Afforestation and reforestation includes all the actions related to tree

⁴ Goal 3 and its targets support and contribute to the achievement of, among others, targets 7.2, 12.2, 12.6, 12.7, 14.2, 14.5, 15.2 and 15.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as Aichi Biodiversity Targets 7, 11, 12 and 16, and are supported by paras. 6 (p), (q) and (x) and 7 (f) and (g) of the United Nations forest instrument.

planting, agroforestry and plantations. Forest management includes all the actions related to sustainable forest management, forest management plans, forest certifications, forest inventory and monitoring. Forest products includes timber and non-timber forest products. Illegal activities includes illegal logging, land encroachment and poaching. Wood energy includes all the actions related to energy production from wood-derived products.

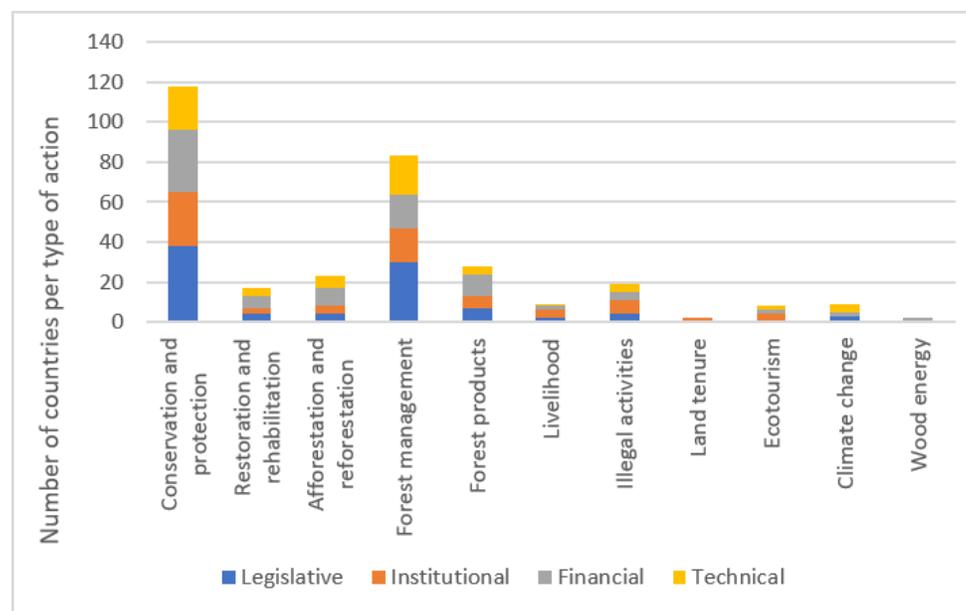
Legislative and policy actions

35. Countries took various legislative and policy actions, such as establishing new legislation, revising and reviewing policies and plans and strengthening certain laws and acts aimed at conserving fragile protected areas. It can be observed in figure VII that most such actions were taken for the conservation and protection of forests (38 of 50 countries) and other ecosystems and improving forest management (30 countries), including implementing forest management plans, certifications and forest monitoring. Few countries (7) took actions related to target 3.3, to increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.

Institutional actions

36. Figure VII shows most of the institutional actions being taken for conservation and protection and improving forest management. Institutional actions ranged from establishing institutional bodies, such as councils, committees and expert and working groups, to taking measures to strengthen governance systems and cooperation between ministries and departments and fostering bilateral and multilateral engagement in national and international forums. Land tenure was considered critical, with countries taking exclusive institutional actions on it. Other important areas of action included curbing illegal activities, such as illegal logging, and promoting ecotourism.

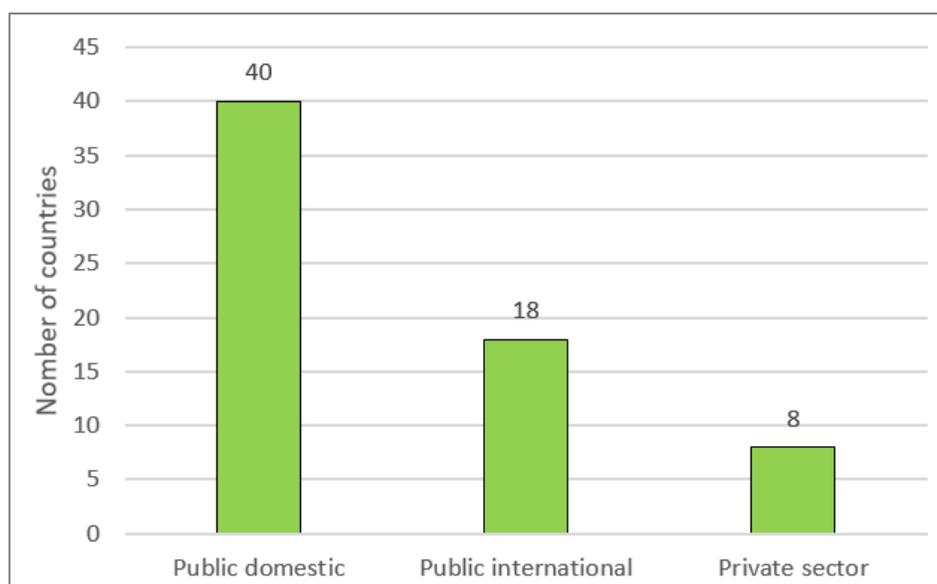
Figure VII
Thematic areas of action for global forest goal 3



Financial actions

37. As shown in figure VIII, countries were proactive in mobilizing funds from various sources, both public and private. In all, 40 countries were able to mobilize funding from public sources, which included the national and the local budget, taxes, subsidies, bonds and investments and cross-sectoral funds. Overall, 18 countries mobilized public international funds, which consisted mostly of donors, international organizations and multilateral and bilateral organizations. As with the other two goals, access to private sources of funding remained challenging, with only 8 Member States being able to mobilize funds from this source.

Figure VIII
Sources of mobilized funding



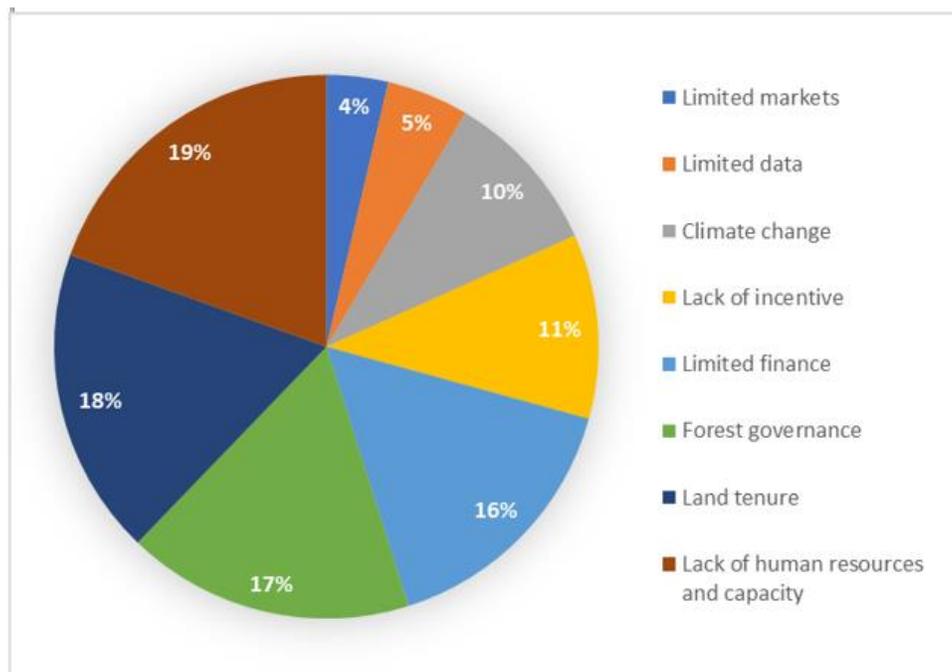
Technical and scientific actions

38. Countries implemented significant technical and scientific actions related to conservation and protection and forest management. Such actions include research to identify areas for protected forests; developing forest inventory and forest evaluation methods; developing and improving management plans, policies and strategies; training and capacity-building in technical aspects of forestry; fostering the use of technology, such as geographic information systems, remote-sensing renewable technologies and breeding technology; and the production of publications, reports on the state of forestry, technical manuals and guidelines. Other areas of action addressed climate change; afforestation and reforestation; restoration and rehabilitation; and illegal activities.

Challenges to the implementation of global forest goal 3

39. Figure IX shows the major challenges to the implementation of global forest goal 3. A total of 16 countries cited a lack of human resources and institutional capacity as a significant challenge. Limited finances continued to be a major concern for all countries. Countries cited land issues, such as land tenure and rights, as another critical challenge. A total of 14 countries considered weak forest governance to be a significant challenge to the successful implementation of global forest goal 3. A lack of incentives for the public and private sectors to make investments in protected areas was also a concern for countries.

Figure IX
Challenges to the implementation of global forest goal 3



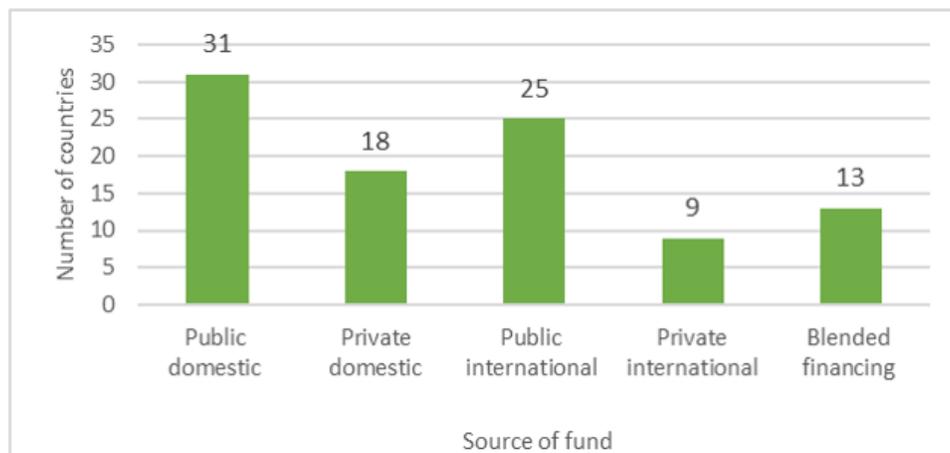
G. Global forest goal 4:⁵ mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation and partnerships

40. It is evident in the national reports that countries are making considerable efforts to mobilize additional financial resources from various sources, as well as promoting cooperation and partnerships at all levels of governance. Some of the noticeable actions taken by countries include establishing and reviewing legislation and policies on investment and financing; developing financial strategies and plans regarding forests; providing technical assistance; developing partnerships in science, technology and innovation; sharing information with the public through digital platforms; and strengthening forest governance.

41. Overall, 40 countries mobilized significant financial resources for sustainable forest management. Figure X shows the sources through which countries mobilized such resources (targets 4.1 and 4.2). Most countries indicated that they had mobilized more public funds from national and international sources than from private sources, which perhaps need stronger incentives to invest in sustainable forest management.

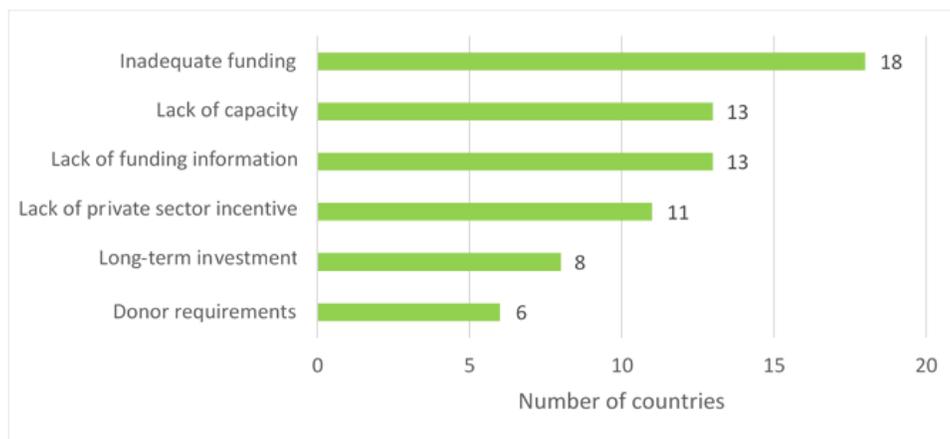
⁵ Goal 4 and its targets support and contribute to the achievement of, among others, targets 12.a, 15.7, 15.a, 15.b, 17.1–17.3, 17.6, 17.7 and 17.16–17.19 of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as Aichi Biodiversity Target 19, and are supported by paras. 6 (h), (i), (m), (r) and (s) and 7 (a)–(c) and (l)–(q) of the United Nations forest instrument.

Figure X
Sources of funding of mobilized financial resources



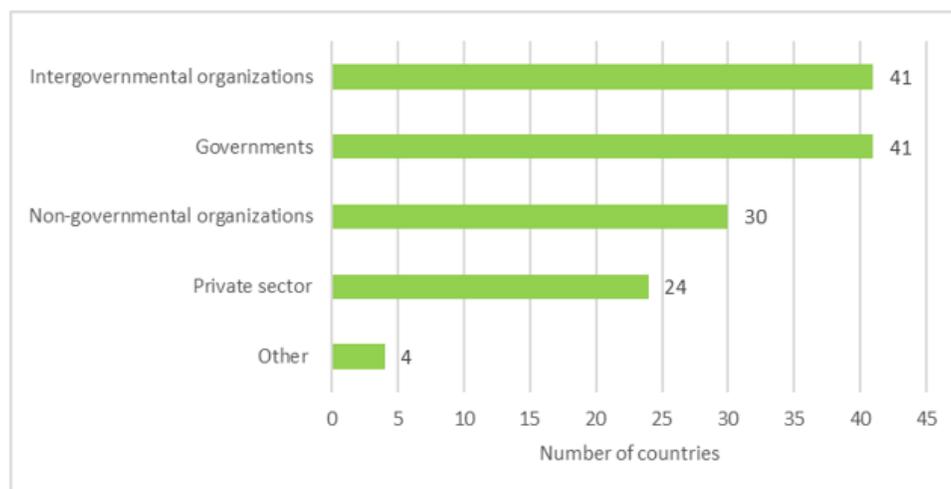
42. As shown in figure XI, challenges to the mobilization of funds for forests exist. Inadequate and decreasing funding from various sources was the greatest challenge, with 18 of 40 countries citing that issue. Countries also faced a lack of human and institutional capacity, as well as difficulty in gaining access to information on funding sources and the application process. The need for incentives to boost private sector funding remains an issue with regard to all of the goals. The long time frames of returns on investment in forestry were cited as a disincentive to investment. In addition, countries had difficulty in meeting donor funding requirements.

Figure XI
Challenges to the funding of sustainable forest management



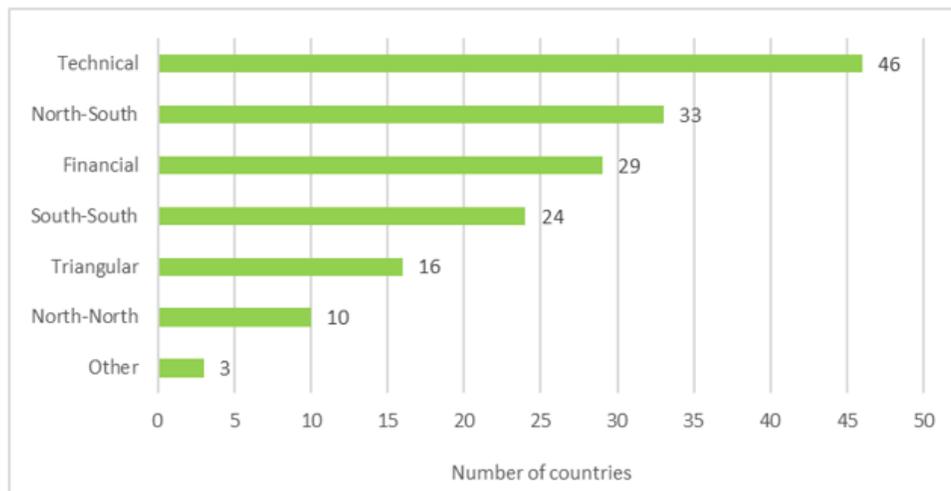
43. Countries are engaging in international cooperation to foster innovation and partnerships in technology and science. Figure XII shows the types of entities with which countries are engaging. In all, 41 of 50 countries are cooperating with international organizations, 41 are cooperating with Governments and 24 are cooperating with the private sector.

Figure XII
Entities engaged in international cooperation with countries



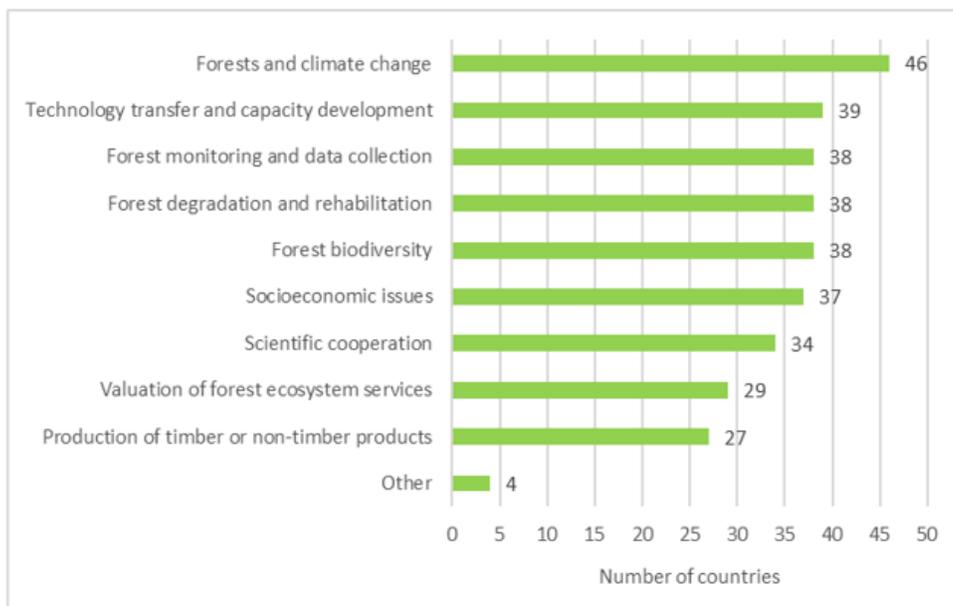
44. Countries are participating in international cooperation in various ways. As is shown in figure XIII, 46 countries are engaging in technical cooperation. With more countries engaging in North-South and financial cooperation, countries are making progress towards achieving target 4.3.

Figure XIII
Types of international cooperation



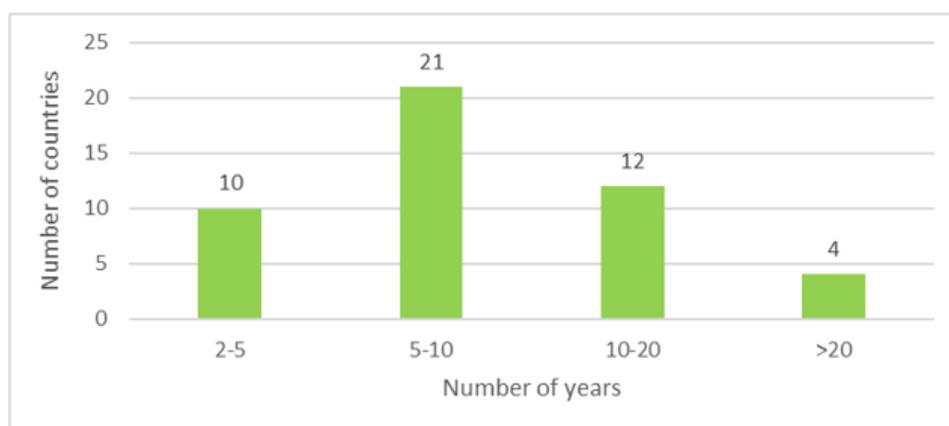
45. Countries are engaging in international cooperation in various areas, as shown in figure XIV. A majority of countries (46 of 50) collaborated to work on forests and climate change. Technology transfer and capacity development was another major area of engagement, with 39 countries collaborating on innovation in technology and science.

Figure XIV
Areas of international cooperation



46. Sustainable financial resources are critical for implementing a long-term sustainable forest management plan. Countries have developed and implemented financial strategies to achieve sustainable forest management and implement the United Nations forest instrument. Overall, 31 countries have formulated some form of a financial strategy to achieve such forest management. Figure XV shows the time frames of financial strategies established by countries. Many countries (21) developed financial strategies with a time frame of 5 to 10 years, and only 4 developed a time frame greater than 20 years.

Figure XV
Time frames of financial strategies established by countries



H. Global forest goal 5:⁶ promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the United Nations forest instrument and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

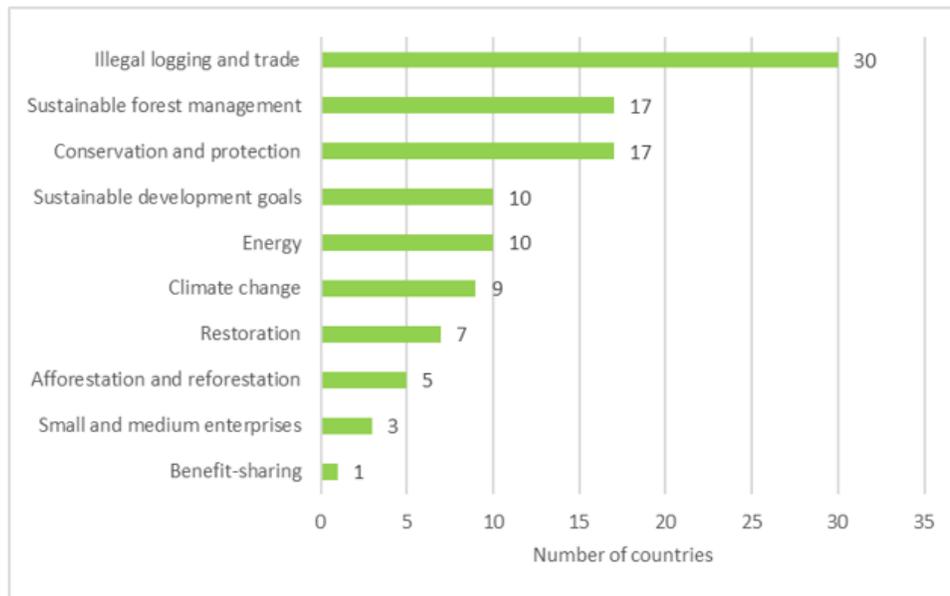
47. Countries reported various major actions on global forest goal 5, including establishing or reviewing legislation and policies; creating institutional bodies and expert groups; engaging stakeholders, such as NGOs, local and indigenous peoples and civil society organizations; conducting training and capacity-building; strengthening governance, such as by increasing coordination between national and regional levels and among various ministries, and improving information systems; conducting research and assessments; and participating in international cooperation, including bilateral, multilateral and technical cooperation.

48. Countries reported various governance-related activities and provided references to national legislation and international treaties, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Nearly all (44 of 50) Member States integrated forests into national sustainable development plans and strategies. In all, 26 Member States reported having integrated forests into poverty reduction strategies. A number of countries cited other national strategies and plans into which forests have been incorporated. Forests, a source of renewable energy, play a crucial role in slowing climate change and therefore are often incorporated into strategies and policies related to climate change and energy. Other frequently mentioned sectors included water and agriculture.

49. Figure XVI shows the thematic areas of major areas of action with regard to global forest goal 5. The majority of the countries, 30 of 50, reported actions aimed at combating illegal logging and promoting the trade of legal timber products. Several countries cited European Union regulations related to Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade, as well as European Union timber regulations to prevent illegal harvested timber from entering the European Union market. Timber-producing countries that export timber to the European Union market reported Voluntary Partnership Agreements. Other major actions were linked to sustainable forest management, the Sustainable Development Goals and energy, including wood energy.

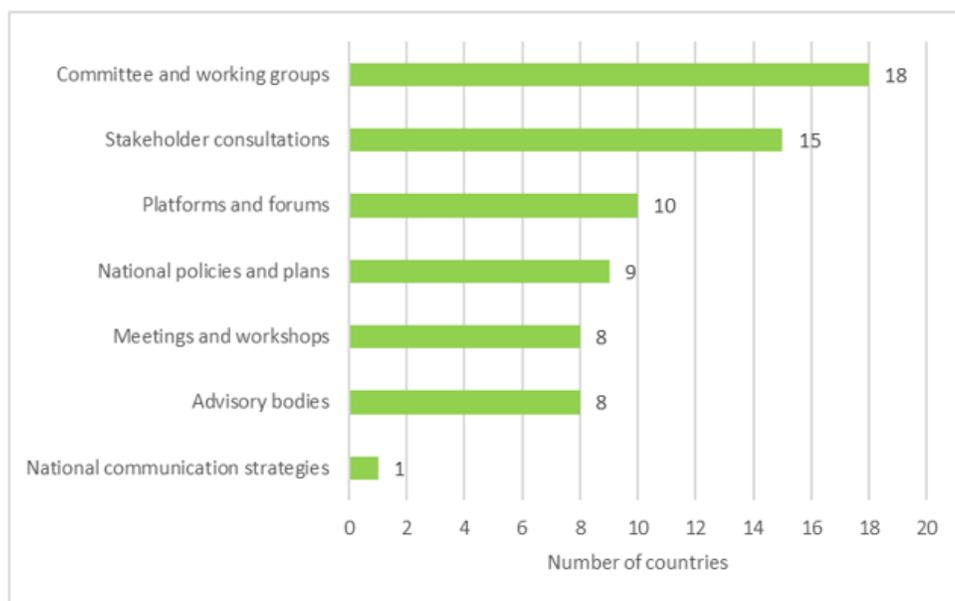
⁶ Global forest goal 5 and its targets support and contribute to the achievement of, among others, Sustainable Development Goal targets 1.4, 2.4, 5.a, 15.c, 15.9, 16.3, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10 and 17.14, as well as Aichi Biodiversity Targets 2 and 3.

Figure XVI
Thematic areas of action for global forest goal 5



50. Nearly all member States – 49 of 50 – have put in place mechanisms to ensure cross-sectoral coordination among government agencies, and 48 have put in place mechanisms to involve stakeholders in the formulation, planning and implementation of policies on forest management and sustainable forest management. Figure XVII shows the types of mechanisms put in place to involve stakeholders. A total of 18 Member States have set up working groups, networks and committees for monitoring, implementation, document review, advocacy and evaluation. In all, 15 have held public consultations, 10 have created platforms and forums for multi-stakeholder participation, 9 have established policies and plans that stipulated the involvement of stakeholders and 8 have organized workshops and meetings for stakeholders and created advisory bodies.

Figure XVII
Mechanisms implemented to involve stakeholders in sustainable forest management



I. Global forest goal 6:⁷ enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels, including within the United Nations system and across member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as across sectors and relevant stakeholders

51. Member States reported various actions taken at the national and international levels to enhance cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation and to promote forests and sustainable forest management. Many cited institutions, organizations and agencies involved in collaborative work on forests and provided examples of best practices and existing cross-sectoral mechanisms for forest-related issues. In addition, countries provided references to specific forest-related actions, legislation, policies, plans and/or programmes. Many provided weblinks related to specific actions and campaigns aimed at raising public awareness of sustainable forest management and the importance of forests.

52. In nearly all reports, it was mentioned that activities related to forests were planned and implemented by Governments, in close collaboration with and with the involvement of civil society, the private sector and local authorities. In several reports, it was mentioned that such involvement was a requirement that was being fulfilled in the context of REDD-plus.

53. A total of 42 of 50 countries reported using sets of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. In all, 35 reported using national or subnational sets thereof, while 21 used regional or international sets. National sets of criteria and indicators are often based on international criteria and indicator processes, such as the Montreal Process, Forest Europe and the International Tropical Timber

⁷ Goal 6 and its targets support and contribute to the achievement of, among others, target 17.14 of the Sustainable Development Goals and are supported by paras. 6 (b), (c), (g), (m) and (w) and 7 (r) and (s) of the United Nations forest instrument.

Organization, which, if and where needed, are tailored to better suit specific country situations and forests. Several countries reported having published, annually or every few years, reports on the state of their forests, which were based on criteria and indicators. Figure XVIII shows various uses of criteria and indicators.

Figure XVIII

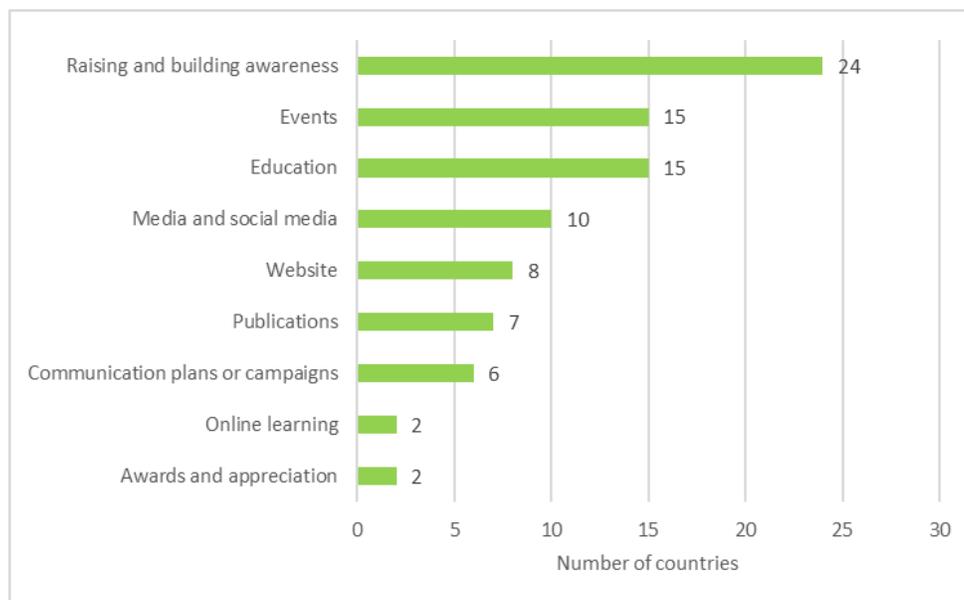
Uses of criteria and indicators in sustainable forest management



54. The reports provided an entire catalogue of actions related to the benefits of forests and campaigns raising awareness of those benefits and of sustainable forest management. In all, 44 Member States reported activities related to communicating and promoting greater understanding and awareness of sustainable forest management. Frequently, forest authorities were actively involved in designing and creating educational and environmental programmes for teachers, parents and community leaders. Several countries indicated having developed entire suites of communications products, including videos, special data products and continuous social media campaigns, showing the benefits of forests to society and the planet. Publishing forest-related bulletins and sharing videos and photo galleries of forests were currently a norm and were usually addressed to the general public. In addition, in the spirit of transparency and in order to improve public opinion on the forest sector, more forest agencies provided open access through their websites to their data, details related to forest operations and standards for plantations, explaining emissions-trading schemes for forestry and funding for forests.

55. Although much has been done to explain the crucial role of sustainable forest management, a few countries pointed out that there was a need for improvement because many beneficiaries still took forest services for granted. In a few cases, it was reported that the forest sector still struggled to win public opinion, in particular with regard to the forest industry. Figure XIX shows various types of actions related to communication and awareness-raising with regard to sustainable forest management.

Figure XIX
Actions taken to communicate the importance of sustainable forest management



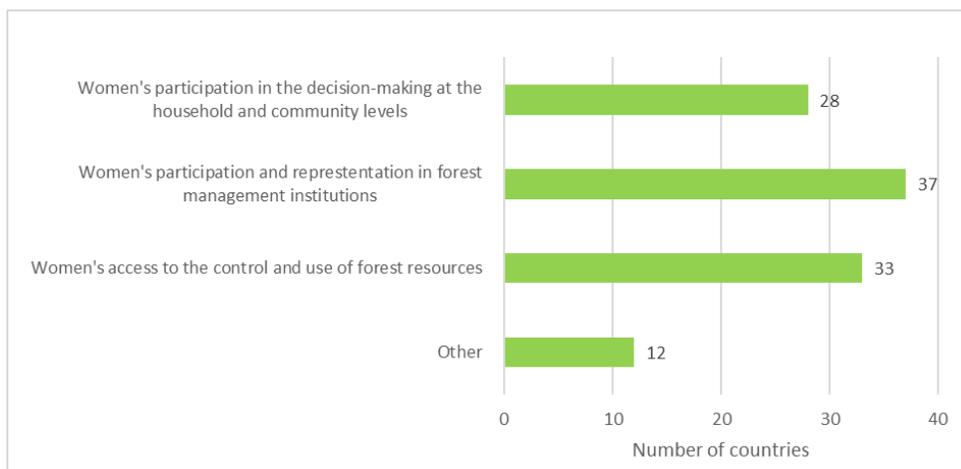
56. Countries reported various actions involving major groups and other stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plan. Through communication platforms and monthly meetings with various stakeholders from the private sector, including loggers, sawmillers and exporters, discussions were facilitated on issues regarding the management of forests. Often, the results of projects, activities, reports and activities are presented in meetings open to the public. Some countries reported close collaboration among forest agencies, local authorities and scientific and/or technological communities, including public, private and academic institutions, and the application of technological innovations to sustainable forest management and achieving global forest goals.

57. At the international level, countries engage in work programmes and initiatives with major groups. Such engagement is often in the context of international commitments, such as the strategic plan, and international programmes, such as REDD-plus and multilateral projects. Governments provide policy frameworks to facilitate the participation of major groups, including women, indigenous peoples and local communities, in policymaking and the planning and implementation of forestry activities related to the strategic plan.

J. Other questions

58. The voluntary national report format included questions on actions taken by countries in observance of the International Day of Forests and on promoting gender equality in the forest sector. The responses on the International Day are summarized in the note by the Secretariat on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. A brief summary of the responses on how the forest sector promotes gender equality is provided in figure XX.

Figure XX
Actions taken to promote gender equality in the forest sector



59. As shown in figure XX, 37 of 50 Member States reported actions resulting in the effective participation and representation of women in forest management institutions, 33 reported actions promoting the effective access of women to the control and use of forest resources and 28 reported having promoted the effective participation of women in decision-making at the household and community levels. Member States provided information on additional actions taken, such as the commitment of Governments to gender equality through support of the establishment of specialized agencies, women's councils, departments charged with promoting and increasing gender equality in the workplace and of leadership and decision-making by women. Lastly, according to the responses received, more women are currently employed in the forest sector than in the past, and women are more frequently appointed to higher-level positions in the forestry administration in reporting countries.

K. Voluntary national contributions

60. Between 2017 and 2019, 17 countries officially submitted voluntary national contributions for the achievement of the global forest goals and associated targets. Of those, 12 countries⁸ submitted national reports to the fifteenth session of the Forum, and all 12 reported progress made towards their contributions. In addition, 15 national reports contained information on the voluntary national contributions of countries that have not yet officially announced voluntary national contributions (see [E/CN.18/2020/2](#)).

61. All 12 countries provided information on the status of their progress and reported actions taken to fulfil their contributions, and all seemed to be on track towards fulfilling their voluntary commitments. Most of the voluntary national contributions were made towards global forest goal 1, followed by global forest goal 3 and global forest goal 4. With regard to global forest goal 1, most actions were linked to an increase in forest area. Countries provided specific figures on hectares and trees planted, and reported actions were linked to forest management, in particular the planning, planting, afforestation, reforestation and restoration of forests.

⁸ Australia, Canada, China, Ghana, Jamaica, Liberia, Madagascar, Morocco, New Zealand, Slovakia, Thailand and Ukraine.

62. The creation of new jobs in the forest sector, as well as the enhancement of the capacities of forest enterprises and investments in forest industries, were reported for the most part under contributions towards global forest goal 2, while the establishment and expansion of new protected forest areas, with specific figures and quantifiable targets, were reported by all but one country under global forest goal 3. With regard to global forest goal 4, countries provided information on the resources from various sources, mobilized for sustainable forest management.

L. United Nations forest instrument

63. For many countries, in particular developing countries, the United Nations forest instrument continues to provide a valuable framework for national forest-related actions that countries take into account when designing their national forests policies and legislation.

64. Most countries stated that the actions reported under each global forest goal and target contributed directly or indirectly to the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument.

65. Several countries stated that all measures – legislative, policy, institutional, technical and financial – taken by government improved and ensured sustainable forest management and thus contributed directly or indirectly to the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument and the strategic plan. Some made references to specific paragraphs of the instrument, in particular paragraph 6, in which national policies and measures are referred to.

IV. Progress towards the development of a global core set of forest-related indicators

66. An expert workshop in support of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests joint initiative on streamlining forest-related reporting, entitled “Strengthening the global core set of forest indicators to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030”, was held at FAO headquarters, in Rome, from 22 to 24 October 2019.⁹ The main objectives of the workshop were to review progress made on the global core set of forest-related indicators and to develop recommendations to make full use of the set, in particular by strengthening the methodology and the availability of data of selected tier 2 and tier 3 indicators. In five working group sessions, and on the basis of the core elements of the metadata sheets for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, participants considered concepts, definitions, methodology, data availability, providers and sources for the following indicators:

- (a) Indicator 10 (wood-based energy share of total final energy consumption);
- (b) Indicator 12 (employment related to the forest sector);
- (c) Indicator 13 (number of forest-dependent people in extreme poverty);
- (d) Indicator 14 (contribution of forests to food security);
- (e) Indicator 15 (financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management).

⁹ A complete summary of the workshop is available at www.cpfweb.org/49035-025d09a3673eb81df286cc335fe902c5f.pdf.

67. Participants in the workshop developed a set of recommendations to advance progress towards each of the indicators discussed. There was overall agreement that the indicators needed to be measurable and that the methods of measurement needed to be clear. More work is needed so that the tier classification can be upgraded for each of the tier 2 and tier 3 indicators. It was recommended that the Collaborative Partnership on Forests continue to carry out the process through its task force on the global core set.

68. The workshop also addressed ways to enhance the use of the entire core set. The key messages included the following:

(a) The global core set provides a good monitoring framework for global forest goals and targets and forest-related Sustainable Development Goals, and the global core set is operational and can be used. It is recommended to make use of the set, but one must be flexible in applying it. Depending on the region, the context countries or the international organizations, it can be decided which indicators are the most suitable for specific objectives and should therefore be used;

(b) There is no single standardized, complete and up-to-date source of information for all countries and all domains for the global core set. Nevertheless, agriculture, forestry and fishery matters have been included in most international recommendations for large-scale data collection operations, such as population and agricultural censuses and household surveys, on international classifications, as well as in specialized studies;

(c) Because the global core set is cross-sectoral, it builds on and promotes institutional coordination. Since the indicators are cross-sectoral in nature, they have the potential to leverage cross-sectoral planning and actions, including raising awareness among policymakers and government entities;

(d) Global core set indicators are a useful means to further enhance discussion, coordination and collaboration among agencies. They are being used increasingly at the national and international levels in the context of inter-agency work with regard to the Sustainable Development Goal indicators;

(e) Coordination on global core set indicators and data among international organizations sets a good example and can help to foster enhanced collaboration at the national level. Such coordination is particularly useful and relevant to bodies responsible for providing reports and data on a range of international instruments, including the Convention on Biological Diversity; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, as well as on the Sustainable Development Goals.

V. Next cycle for voluntary national reporting

69. In accordance with United Nations Forum on Forests resolution 13/1, the Forum at its fifteenth session will consider the timing of the next round of national reporting.

70. From 2009 to 2015, the Forum discussed progress towards the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument and its global objectives on forests at each biennial session. Consequently, the reporting cycle was also conducted on a biennial basis.

71. The frequency of Forum sessions has changed pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution [2015/33](#). From 2017 to 2030, the Forum holds its sessions on an annual basis.

72. In accordance with the strategic plan, the cycle for voluntary national reporting by Member States to the Forum shall take into account the review cycle of the Global Forest Resources Assessment and the Sustainable Development Goals being carried out under the aegis of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

73. In deciding on the next reporting cycle to the Forum, it is important to keep the following in mind:

(a) A full assessment of all goals and targets of the strategic plan depends on qualitative information from national reports and biophysical data mainly from the Global Forest Resources Assessment;

(b) A full in-depth assessment of progress made towards the global forest goals will be provided in the flagship publication, to be issued in 2021;

(c) The information submitted in national reports will be supplemented by biophysical data, mainly from the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020;

(d) The midterm review by the Forum of the international arrangement on forests will be carried out in 2024;

(e) The next Global Forest Resources Assessment is scheduled for 2025;

(f) Currently, no specific date is in place for the full review of the Sustainable Development Goals, which will be carried out under the aegis of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

VI. Update on the flagship publication

74. An informal advisory group has been established through the Bureau of the fifteenth session of the Forum to provide advice on the development of the flagship publication, with virtual tools used to convene meetings and facilitate inputs.

75. The informal advisory group had one virtual meeting, in February 2020, at which various issues related to the publication were discussed, including the scope of the publication (both geographical and content-related), its main objectives, a draft outline and possible data sources.

76. Given that the main focus of the publication will be on progress made towards the achievement of the global forest goals and targets, the publication's scope will be global, with a breakdown by region, and the content should be focused on global forest goals and targets.

77. The main objectives of the publication are as follows:

(a) To report on progress made towards achieving the global forest goals, addressing measures taken by Governments to achieve them and their outcomes halfway through the period covered by the United Nations strategic plan;

(b) To identify targets for which progress is on track to achieve the goals and those for which that is not the case;

(c) To identify the key challenges to the achievement of the global forest goals and targets;

(d) To identify and describe the contributions made by the forest sector to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

(e) To provide a number of success stories to illustrate best practices and innovative ideas for reaching the goals and targets.

78. The best available data will be used for the publication. In the great majority of the cases, the sources will be national reports, voluntary national contributions and biophysical data, mainly from the Global Forest Resources Assessment.

79. The secretariat is planning to finalize the publication by May 2021 for the sixteenth session of the Forum.

VII. Conclusions

80. Notwithstanding the short period of time that has elapsed since the adoption of the strategic plan, in 2017, 50 Member States have submitted comprehensive reports on their actions to advance the global forest goals and provided detailed descriptions thereof. The review of the reports reveals overlaps between the information under different goals and targets and among the actions listed under each. While some overlaps are inevitable owing to the interconnectedness of global forest goals and targets, they may warrant further improvement of the format for reporting for the next cycle.

81. Challenges still exist to the analysis of the reported national actions and examples as the basis of a comprehensive global and regional overview of the progress made towards achieving the global forest goals and targets. Nevertheless, the detailed information provided in the submitted national reports, combined with biophysical data from the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020, is valuable for the planned flagship publication.

VIII. Proposals

82. The United Nations Forum on Forests may wish to do the following:

(a) Welcome the submission of national reports by members of the Forum and recognize the value of the information provided therein;

(b) Request the secretariat, in consultation with Member States and stakeholders, to revise the format for national reporting on the basis of experience gained and submit it to the seventeenth session of the Forum;

(c) Defer the decision on the timing of the next reporting cycle to the seventeenth session of the Forum, taking into account the findings provided in the flagship publication;

(d) Invite the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to intensify its work on the global core set of forest-related indicators and report to the sixteenth session of the Forum on progress made towards the finalization of the indicators;

(e) Invite the active engagement of all Forum members and stakeholders in supporting the work of the informal advisory group on the flagship publication.