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Agenda items 3 (a), 3 (b) (i), (ii), 3 (d), 3 (e) and 6 of the provisional agenda*

Technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030:

Thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022 in support of the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

Contributions of members of the Forum to implementing the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

New announcements of voluntary national contributions

Updates on voluntary national contributions and their follow-up related to the thematic priorities

Interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review

by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2021, the work towards a post-2020 global biodiversity framework and other international forest-related developments

Implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including activities regarding the International Day of Forests in 2021

Adoption of the Forum's programme of work for the period 2022–2024

* E/CN.18/2021/1.



**Technical discussions on the implementation of the
United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and
adoption of the Forum’s programme of work for the
period 2022–2024**

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/14](#), the United Nations Forum on Forests at its sixteenth session will consider its thematic priorities. The present note provides background information to facilitate discussion of the Forum on its thematic priorities and highlights the results of relevant intersessional activities conducted since the fifteenth session of the Forum. The present note also serves as the basis for discussion at the sixteenth session of the Forum on agenda items 3 (a), 3 (b) and its sub-items (i) and (ii), 3 (d), 3 (e) and 6.

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/14](#), the United Nations Forum on Forests at its sixteenth session will hold technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 under agenda items 3 (a), 3 (b) and its sub-items (i) and (ii), 3 (d) and 3 (e).
2. Under agenda item 3 (a), the Forum will discuss its thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022 in support of the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. Under agenda item 3 (b), the Forum will consider the contributions of members of the Forum to implementing the strategic plan, including new announcements of voluntary national contributions (sub-item (i)) and updates on voluntary national contributions and their follow-up related to the thematic priorities (sub-item (ii)). Under agenda item 3 (d), the Forum will consider interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2021, the work towards the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and other international forest-related developments. Under agenda item 3 (e), the Forum will consider the implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the strategic plan, including activities regarding the International Day of Forests in 2021.
3. At its sixteenth session, the Forum will consider the adoption of its programme of work for the period 2022–2024 under agenda item 6.
4. The present note serves as the basis for discussion of the Forum under agenda items 3 (a), 3 (b) and its sub-items (i) and (ii), 3 (d), 3 (e) and 6. It provides an overview of the results of the relevant intersessional activities undertaken since the fifteenth session of the Forum and contains some proposals on follow-up actions for discussion by the Forum at its sixteenth session.

II. Background

5. At its fifteenth session, the Forum adopted the programme of work for its sixteenth session as contained in annex I to Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/14](#). In accordance with its programme of work, the Forum at its sixteenth session will hold a technical session that will include an interactive exchange of experiences and lessons learned on thematic priorities among members of the Forum, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional and subregional organizations and processes, and major groups and other relevant stakeholders. The interactive exchange will include consideration of the science-policy interface and cross-sectoral and emerging issues and will take into account youth, gender and regions perspectives.
6. In accordance with annex I to Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/14](#), the thematic priorities of the Forum for each biennium shall be based on the global forest goals and targets, taking into account the post-2020 programme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and relevant international forest-related developments. The Bureau of the Forum's sixteenth session was invited, in close consultation with members of the Forum, to decide on the thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022, consistent with the guidance contained in annex I to the resolution.
7. The contributions to the achievement of global forest goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 and their targets by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional and subregional organizations and processes, and major groups and other stakeholders, including the private sector and philanthropic

organizations, are detailed in the note by the Secretariat “Implementation of the United Nations strategic plan on forests 2017–2030: contributions of and enhanced cooperation with partners towards achieving the thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022” (E/CN.18/2021/3).

8. The Forum, through Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/14, invited members that have not had yet done so, to announce their voluntary national contributions in support of the global forest goals and targets at its sixteenth session and to communicate them to the Forum secretariat using the form in annex III to the resolution.

9. In accordance with the programme of work for the sixteenth session of the Forum, contained in annex I to Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/14, the Forum at its present session should consider the implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including activities regarding the International Day of Forests in 2021. The present note contains a progress report on this matter.

10. In accordance with paragraph 1 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/14, at its sixteenth session the Forum should consider the adoption of its programme of work for the period 2022–2024 by means of a resolution, taking into account the proposal contained in annex II to the resolution. This proposal is contained in annex I to the present note. In consideration of its programme of work for the period 2022–2024, the Forum is also expected to take into account the discussions of the high-level round table to be held during its sixteenth session.

III. Thematic priorities of the Forum for the biennium 2021–2022

A. Thematic priorities of the Forum at its sixteenth session

11. For the biennium 2021–2022, the Bureau of the Forum decided to focus on global forest goal 1 and global forest goal 2 as the substantive goals, along with global forest goals 4, 5 and 6 as cross-cutting goals. In this respect, the Bureau decided that the thematic priorities for the sixteenth and the seventeenth sessions of the Forum would be: (i) reversing the loss of forest cover (global forest goal 1); (ii) enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits (global forest goal 2); and (iii) mobilizing financial resources and strengthening scientific and technical cooperation; promoting governance frameworks to advance implementation; and enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence, for sustainable forest management (global forest goals 4, 5 and 6).

12. The interlinkages between the thematic priorities of the Forum for the biennium 2021–2022, the global forest goals, the sustainable development goals and international forest-related developments are shown in the table below.

Table

Interlinkages between the thematic priorities of the Forum for the biennium 2021–2022, the global forest goals, the sustainable development goals and international forest-related developments

<i>Thematic priorities of the Forum for the biennium 2021–2022</i>	<i>Global forest goals</i>	<i>Linkages/contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in depth at 2021 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development</i>	<i>Linkages and contributions to other Sustainable Development Goals</i>	<i>International forest-related developments</i>
(i) Reversing the loss of forest cover	1	10, ^a 12, ^b 13 ^c	6, 14, 15	2021 theme of the International Day of Forests
(ii) Enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits	2	1, ^d 2, ^e 8, ^f 10, 12	4, 5, 6, 9, 15	United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030
(iii) Mobilizing financial resources and strengthening scientific and technical cooperation; promoting governance frameworks to advance implementation; and enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence for sustainable forest management	4, 5, 6	1, 2, 10, 12, 16, ^g 17 ^h	5, 15	Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity Twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

^a Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.

^b Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

^c Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

^d Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

^e Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

^f Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

^g Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

^h Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

(a) Reversing the loss of forest cover (global forest goal 1)

13. Global forest goal 1 aims to reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increasing efforts to prevent forest degradation and contributing to the global effort of addressing climate change.

14. Under this goal there are four targets: (1.1) increase forest area by 3 per cent worldwide; (1.2) maintain and enhance the world's forest carbon stocks; (1.3) promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halting deforestation, restoration of degraded forests and substantial increase of afforestation and reforestation globally; and (1.4) significantly strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of all types of forests to natural disasters and the impact of climate change.

15. Global forest goal 1 and its targets mainly address the challenges arising from continuing deforestation and forest degradation in many regions and their exacerbating impacts on climate change. This goal and its associated targets offer opportunities to reverse the negative trend by expanding forest cover globally and sustainably managing forests in response to the rising global demand for and consumption of forest products and services, including for wood, food, fuel and fibre.

In particular, global forest goal target 1.1 aims to increase forest area by 3 per cent worldwide by 2030.

16. The indicative thematic areas for action under global forest goal 1 encompass some of the most pressing issues for sustainable development, including halting deforestation and forest degradation; reforestation and afforestation; forest landscape restoration and rehabilitation; contributions of forests to climate change mitigation and adaptation; halting loss of biodiversity; fire control and management;¹ prevention of land degradation and desertification; wildlife protection and management; and disaster risk reduction.²

17. Of a set of the Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in depth at the 2021 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, global forest goal 1 and its targets are most closely linked to and directly contribute to Sustainable Development Goals 10, 12 and 13.

18. Global forest goal 1 and its targets support and contribute to the achievement of, among others, Sustainable Development Goal targets 6.6, 12.2, 13.1, 13.3, 14.2, 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4 and 15.8.

19. The majority of the world's regions are on track to increase their forest cover by 3 per cent for the period between 2015 and 2030, in particular in Asia, Europe and Oceania. On the other hand, a few regions, including Africa and South America, continue to lose forest area, albeit at a slower rate than in the past. In addition, analysis of available data revealed that most of the world's regions are on track to maintain their forest carbon stocks. However, the carbon stock has been decreasing in a few regions where deforestation is significant such as Africa and South America.³

20. The main challenges in achieving global forest goal 1 are associated with growing competition for land use between agriculture and other sectors that provide important sources of revenue for governments, as well as a lack of adequate tools for land use planning and resolution of conflicts among sectors. For developing countries, a lack of resources, especially financial resources, remains as a major obstacle to achieving this goal. Weak institutions and the lack of a high-level policy framework also pose a major challenge. Several countries mentioned social and economic challenges, including pressures arising from population growth, lack of community forestry, rural poverty, political instability and lack of awareness of sustainable forest management. Disturbances and forest damage, many of which result from climate change, are also a major challenge.⁴

¹ A consultancy background paper is under preparation on the impacts of disasters, including wildfires on forests, and will be available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/index.html>.

² For more information on indicative thematic areas for action associated with the global forest goals and targets of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, see the appendix to Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/4.

³ These findings are based on the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020 and data from country reports submitted by the members of the Forum. For more information on progress made towards the global forest goals and the associated targets, please see the flagship publication on progress towards achieving the global forest goals and targets and the note by the Secretariat on “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” (E/CN.18/2021/5), prepared for the sixteenth session of the Forum.

⁴ Ibid.

(b) Enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits (global forest goal 2)

21. Global forest goal 2 aims to enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including for populations who are reliant on forest products and services for livelihood.

22. Goal 2 contains five targets: (2.1 eradication of extreme poverty for all forest-dependent people; (2.2) increase the access of small-scale forest enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets; (2.3) the contribution of forests and trees to food security is significantly increased; (2.4) the contribution of forest industry, other forest-based enterprises and forest ecosystem services to social, economic and environmental development, among other things, is significantly increased; and (2.5) the contribution of all types of forests to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation is enhanced, taking into account the mandates and ongoing work of relevant conventions and instruments.

23. Global forest goal 2 and its targets primarily address socioeconomic challenges related to forests, in particular the livelihoods of forest-dependent populations and are intended to support measures to enhance the socioeconomic benefits of forests and trees, as well as the contribution of forestry and other forest-based enterprises to sustainable economic growth. The goal includes a target to eradicate extreme poverty for all forest-dependent populations by 2030.

24. The indicative thematic areas for action under global forest goal 2 include wide-ranging socioeconomic measures related to forests, including community forest management; value-added forest product production and processing; competitiveness and diversification of forest products; sustainable production and consumption of forest products; traditional forest-related knowledge; and the role of women and girls in sustainable forest management.⁵

25. At the 2021 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, of a set of Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in depth, global forest goal 2 and its targets are most closely linked to and directly contribute to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 8, 10 and 12.

26. Global forest goal 2 and its targets support and contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 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.

27. In view of the challenges faced in data collection for this goal and the lack of methodologies and comparable data, it is difficult to assess progress made towards the achievement of global forest goal 2 and its targets.⁶ The only available sources of information on this goal are the actions taken by countries as reflected in their national reports to the Forum.

28. The actions reported by countries to attain global forest goal 2 include programmes, projects and other activities benefiting forest communities and/or the

⁵ For more information on indicative thematic areas for action associated with the global forest goals and targets of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, see the appendix to Economic and Social Council resolution [2017/4](#).

⁶ For more information on progress made towards the global forest goals and the associated targets, please see the flagship publication on progress towards achieving the global forest goals and targets and the note by the Secretariat on “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” ([E/CN.18/2021/5](#)), prepared for the sixteenth session of the Forum.

creation of jobs in small forest-based enterprises. Many Governments have developed programmes, schemes and plans to promote rural empowerment and poverty eradication, in which forests were a part of the portfolio. Reporting countries registered a significantly greater amount of progress, especially on issues such as employment and increased forest productivity. For many countries, sustainable forest management plays a critical role in poverty reduction, in particular in rural areas. Many countries provided various examples of how they have promoted and strengthened mechanisms and programmes for facilitating financing for small producers and enterprises. Several countries cited examples in their national reports that highlighted the contributions of forests, trees and agroforestry to food security. Countries also indicated, however, that these contributions, while being well known and described at local level, are neither covered by forest inventories nor by national statistics, thus coherent data at the national level is missing.⁷

29. Challenges related to forest productivity received the greatest number of responses in the national reports under global forest goal 2. Close to half of reporting countries face a wide range of constraints and challenges that need to be addressed to strengthen their forestry industries. The most commonly shared challenges were those related to engaging the private sector in forestry development, poor infrastructure, the undervaluation of non-timber forest products and the degradation of essential natural resources such as water and soil. Countries also reported that the progress in achieving global forest goal 2 targets was negatively affected by inadequate funding, capacity-building and technological support. In particular, several countries cited limited investments for increasing the socioeconomic and environmental benefits of forestry. Developing countries highlighted the difficulties and challenges in ensuring access to the marketplace for their forest products. Governance challenges also featured prominently in the national reports.⁸

(c) Mobilizing financial resources and strengthening scientific and technical cooperation; promoting governance frameworks to advance implementation; and enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence, for sustainable forest management (global forest goals 4, 5, 6)⁹

30. In relation to global forest goal 4, most reporting countries increased efforts to mobilize additional financial resources from various sources, as well as to promote cooperation and partnerships at all levels of governance. Countries mobilized financial resources for sustainable forest management, in particular from national and international public sources. Countries also reported their engagement in international cooperation to foster innovation and partnerships in technology and science. Given the magnitude of needs, countries are still facing challenges to mobilize sufficient funding for forests. The prevailing conditions that have emerged from the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have exacerbated the situation. Additional efforts are needed, at all levels, to mobilize resources from all sources. Similarly, cooperation on research and science in support of sustainable forest management should be promoted to assist countries, especially developing countries, in addressing the challenges in these areas.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The findings in this section are based on the country reports submitted by the members of the Forum at its fifteenth session. For more information on progress made towards the global forest goals and associated targets, please see the flagship publication on progress towards achieving the global forest goals and targets and the note by the Secretariat on “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” (E/CN.18/2021/5), prepared for the sixteenth session of the Forum.

31. In connection with global forest goal 5, forest issues have been integrated into broader development or poverty reduction plans and strategies, and the contribution of forests to national sustainable development strategies is being recognized in numerous countries. The authority of forest agencies has been strengthened, notably by increasing their law enforcement capacity. Countries reported that policies and legal frameworks are in place to promote sustainable forest management, and that a wide range of measures is in place to improve policy coherence and involve stakeholders and communities. Community forest management is promoted in many countries. Indigenous peoples are being engaged in sustainable forest management. National land use planning processes now usually integrate forest management issues, alongside other land uses.

32. With regard to global forest goal 6, currently there is no formal United Nations system-wide mechanism to enhance cooperation, coordination and coherence on forest-related issues. However, there are several formal and informal initiatives which are primarily aimed at improving forest-based actions. The most notable network for enhancing coordination and coherence on forest related issues is the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. Further studies are needed to explore additional areas for improving coordination and collaboration.

33. At the national level, countries reported on various actions taken to enhance cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation and to promote forests and sustainable forest management. Many countries 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. Nearly all reporting countries stated 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.

B. Sustainable Development Goals under review at the 2021 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

34. The General Assembly, in its resolution [74/298](#), decided that the thematic focus of the Economic and Social Council for its 2021 session and the 2021 high-level political forum on sustainable development to be convened under the auspices of the Council would be “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”. It was further decided that the high-level political forum for 2021, without prejudice to the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, would discuss, in depth, Goals 1, 2, 3,¹⁰ 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17. The interlinkages of the Sustainable Development Goals and the thematic priorities of the sixteenth session of the Forum are presented in section III.A of the present note.

35. At its seventy-fifth session, the General Assembly will review the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals that have a 2020 timeline as part of the review of General Assembly resolution [72/305](#). Those targets include those with references to

¹⁰ Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

forests such as target 6.6,¹¹ 15.1¹² and 15.2.¹³ The intergovernmental negotiations related to this review are underway and expected to be finalized by the end of March 2021.

C. International forest-related developments

(a) High-level events convened during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly

36. During the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, several high-level meetings were convened to address issues related to sustainable development, including forests. These high-level meetings included the Sustainable Development Goal Moment;¹⁴ the high-level meeting to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations;¹⁵ the high-level round table on climate action;¹⁶ and the United Nations summit on biodiversity.¹⁷

37. At these meetings, forests and their related issues were mainly addressed in the context of discussions and dialogues on promoting ecosystem-based solutions to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity; promoting nature-based solutions to combat climate change, and restoring a more balanced relationship with nature in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

38. During the United Nations summit on biodiversity, speakers recognized the inseparable link between the environment and human health and emphasized the need to redouble efforts to counter negative trends and protect ecosystems, including through the restoration of degraded forests, and substantially increasing afforestation, reforestation and conservation globally. Other speakers reported their national strategies, policies and actions related to forests to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt biodiversity loss, protect threatened species and prevent their extinction, including through moratoriums on licenses for forest exploitation; campaigns for forest restoration; restoration of degraded lands; and support for alternative cooking fuels.

(b) International Day of Forests in 2021

39. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests selected the theme for the International Day of Forests in 2021 to be “Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being”.¹⁸ The theme was selected taking into account the 2021 theme for the high-level political forum “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement

¹¹ Target 6.6. By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.

¹² Target 15.1. By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.

¹³ Target 15.2. By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.

¹⁴ Additional information is available at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sdg-moment/>.

¹⁵ Additional information is available at <https://www.un.org/un75>.

¹⁶ Additional information is available at <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/high-level-climate-change-roundtable>.

¹⁷ Additional information is available at <https://www.un.org/pga/75/united-nations-summit-on-biodiversity/>.

¹⁸ Additional information is available at <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CPFMeeting-summary-report-20-May-2020.pdf>.

of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development” and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030.

40. The theme of the International Day of Forests in 2021 is linked to the thematic priorities of the sixteenth session of the Forum as the theme mainly addresses the reversal of the loss of forest cover through restoration while also focusing on socioeconomic and environmental benefits and contributions of forests in support of recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as human well-being and ecological health.

(c) United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030

41. The General Assembly, through its resolution [73/284](#), proclaimed 2021–2030 to be the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Its primary objective is to support and scale up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration. The launch of the decade is scheduled for 5 June 2021, World Environment Day.

42. In resolution [73/284](#), the General Assembly also recalled the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the need to 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 to address climate change.

43. The strategy for the Decade¹⁹ sets out in its vision “a world where – for the health and well-being of all life on Earth and that of future generations– we have restored the relationship between humans and nature, by increasing the area of healthy ecosystems, and by putting a stop to their loss, fragmentation and degradation” and includes activities to be undertaken to contribute to the implementation of international agreements related to conservation and restoration of ecosystems.

44. The strategy for the Decade identifies forests as part of key ecosystems to be restored and highlights several existing forest restoration initiatives around the world to guide the upscaling of ecosystem restoration. The strategy also finds the United Nations strategic plan on forests 2017–2030 relevant to the Decade, including its global forest goal 1, target 1.1, to increase forest area by 3 per cent globally by 2030.

45. The Decade thus provides an opportunity to enhance global, regional, national and local commitments and actions to prevent, halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation, including through raising public awareness and mobilizing political will and resources, in support of the progress towards the achievement of the global forest goals and targets.

(d) Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

46. In accordance with decision 14/34 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Parties to the Convention will consider the post-2020 global biodiversity framework for adoption at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference to be held in 2021 in Kunming, China.²⁰

¹⁹ The strategy for the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is available at <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/strategy>.

²⁰ The fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was scheduled to be held in October 2020 and has been postponed to the second quarter of 2021 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional information is available at <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/COP-15>.

47. In August 2020, the co-chairs of the open-ended working group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework provided the updated zero draft of the framework.²¹ The updated draft was prepared taking into account the outcomes of the second meeting of the working group held in February 2020, as well as the written inputs submitted by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, organizations and stakeholders.

48. The annex to the updated draft contains the draft structure and content of the framework, including its vision, goals, mission, milestones, action targets, implementation support mechanisms, enabling conditions, responsibility and transparency, outreach, awareness and uptake.

49. While the draft framework contains no specific reference to forests, it does cover various aspects of forest and forestry issues under broad concepts and terms such as “intact and wilderness areas”, “nature”, “areas particularly important for biodiversity”, “terrestrial natural ecosystems”, “natural systems”, “managed ecosystems”, “wild species of flora”, “nature based solutions” and “green spaces”. Many elements of targets on tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming are directly relevant to forest issues.

50. The draft framework is built around the 2050 vision for biodiversity to be retained from the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020.²² The vision is a world of living in harmony with nature where “by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people”.

51. Under its 2050 vision, the draft framework has four long-term goals to be attained by 2050, including (i) the area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems increased by at least [X per cent] supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species while reducing the number of species that are threatened by [X per cent] and maintaining genetic diversity; (ii) nature’s contributions to people have been valued, maintained or enhanced through conservation and sustainable use supporting global development agenda for the benefit of all people; (iii) the benefits, from the utilization of genetic resources are shared fairly and equitably; and (iv) means of implementation are available to achieve all goals and targets in the framework.

52. The draft framework has eight milestones to assess in 2030 the progress towards the 2050 goals, including goal A.1 “The area, connectivity and integrity of natural systems increased by at least [5%]”.

53. The draft framework has 20 action-oriented targets for 2030 under three broad thematic areas, including (a) reducing threats to biodiversity; (b) meeting people’s needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing; and (c) tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming.

54. While most targets directly and indirectly feature forests and their ecosystems, forests are most prominent in targets 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 17.²³

55. The draft, including a monitoring framework with specific indicators at different levels, is scheduled to be further updated to take into account the outcomes of the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, both scheduled to be held in the second quarter of 2021, and will be discussed at thematic consultations, prior to the third meeting of the open-ended working group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

²¹ See CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1.

²² See UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/10/2.

²³ See CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1.

(e) Twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

56. The twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is scheduled to be held between 1 and 12 November 2021 in Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.²⁴

57. All Parties were requested to submit new or updated nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement by 2020 and every five years thereafter, regardless of their respective implementation time frames. As at 31 December 2020, 75 Parties had communicated their new or updated nationally determined contributions.

58. In order to enhance the ambition over time, the Paris Agreement provides that successive nationally determined contributions to the Agreement will represent a progression compared to the previous contributions and reflect its highest possible ambition.

59. Forest and other land-use climate actions are relevant for fluxes of greenhouse gases and the nationally determined contributions may include forests either as a sectoral target or as part of an economy-wide target. Numerous developed and developing countries have taken this approach. In particular, many developing countries have identified activities related to 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 (REDD-plus) as part of their nationally determined contributions.”

(f) Fifteenth World Forestry Congress

60. The fifteenth World Forestry Congress is scheduled to be held in 2021 in Seoul.²⁵ The Congress will provide an opportunity for the global forestry community to consider the state and future of world forestry, in particular in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, while striving to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

61. The Congress will focus on defining the role of forests in the global developmental agenda and other major agreements such as United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and its global forest goals, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The Congress will also help to identify key measures that must be put into place as the forest sector adjusts to the new reality and aims to help “build back better”.

IV. Voluntary national contributions

62. In accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, Member States may, on a voluntary basis, determine their contributions to achieving the global forest goals and targets, taking into account their national circumstances, policies, priorities, capacities, levels of development and forest conditions.

²⁴ The twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC was scheduled to be held in November 2020 and has been postponed to November 2021 owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information is available at: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/conferences/glasgow-climate-change-conference>.

²⁵ As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Forestry Congress, scheduled to be held from 24 to 28 May 2021, has been postponed. Further information is available at: <https://wfc2021korea.org/online/notice.html?act=view&aid=40>.

63. Members of the Forum may include in their voluntary national contributions, as appropriate, national actions and targets related to other international forest-related commitments and goals, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, contributions included in nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, land degradation neutrality, the Bonn Challenge and the National Forest Programme, as indicated in the form in annex III to Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/14.

64. Since the fifteenth session of the Forum, the Russian Federation has announced its voluntary national contribution, and Ghana has provided a progress report on the implementation of their already announced voluntary national contribution.

65. As of January 2021, 19 countries (Australia, Canada, China, Ecuador, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Liberia, Madagascar, Morocco, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Thailand, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) had officially announced their voluntary national contributions. All contributions communicated to the secretariat have been compiled in a publicly accessible and centralized repository on the Forum's website.²⁶

V. Progress report on the implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including activities regarding the International Day of Forests in 2021

66. In accordance with the communications and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, the secretariat of the Forum works to raise awareness of the importance of forest contributions to human well-being and to enhance cooperation and synergies with other major international processes and agreements including the 2030 Agenda, the Rio conventions, and other relevant processes.

67. The Forum secretariat continues to prepare statements, presentations, social media advisories and issue briefs to highlight the contributions of forests to the 2030 Agenda. Best practices and success stories on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the global forest goals are an integral part of the capacity development activities conducted by the secretariat, including in its work related to monitoring, assessment, reporting and forest financing. In that regard, the ongoing work on the Forum's flagship publication on progress towards achieving the global forest goals and targets and the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network clearinghouse are two major areas of work of the secretariat, which include communication activities that are being undertaken leading up to the sixteenth session of the Forum.

68. Since the fifteenth session of the Forum, the Forum secretariat has continued to work closely with the Strategic Planning and Communications Service of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on activities and products related to web development, outreach and social media. The secretariat continues to work in close collaboration with the Strategic Planning and Communications Service on articles for the Department's newsletter, news stories and social media outreach. The secretariat has also continued to work closely with the United Nations Department of Global

²⁶ The repository of voluntary national contributions is available at:
www.un.org/esa/forests/documents/un-strategic-plan-for-forests2030/vnecs/index.html.

Communications to showcase the role of forests in sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

69. Close cooperation with communication focal points at the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations regional communications networks remains a key channel to amplify reach and enhance synergies on communication messages and outreach including through the annual celebration of the International Day of Forests.

70. In 2020, the theme of the International Day of Forests was “Forests and Biodiversity”. That year’s theme was of particular relevance to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 15 in particular, during the Decade of Action and the 2020 “biodiversity super year”. A major component of the communication and outreach campaign for the International Day of Forests was through social media. Products included an advisory with suggested messaging for Facebook and Twitter, digital cards with forest facts in all six official languages of the United Nations, animated gifs, and photo cards for Instagram. In addition, posters were also prepared in all six official languages.

71. The social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs were the primary channel for distribution of social media content. The advisory and content on the Trello board were also shared with United Nations system social media focal points, Forum on Forests national focal points, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional entities, and major groups organizations. The campaign hashtag #IntlForestDay was widely used and was included in over 17,000 tweets by 11,000 contributors during the International Day, with 163 million timeline deliveries, and over 82 million accounts reached, according to estimates.

72. As a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the customary event held at Headquarters for the International Day of Forests, scheduled to be held on 20 March 2020, had to be cancelled. However, statements from senior officials on the occasion of the International Day were published on the Forum’s website. These statements included a statement from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres; the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mona Juul; the Chair of the Forum on Forests Bureau, Boris Greguška; the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Liu Zhenmin; the Acting Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema; and Officer-in-Charge, Forest on Forums secretariat, Alexander Trepelkov.

73. Raising awareness of the role of forests in supporting human well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic and the essential role of sustainable forest management in a green recovery was one of the key areas of outreach during the intersessional period. Two policy briefs were prepared by the Secretariat as part of a series by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The first brief, “Forests: at the heart of a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”²⁷ outlined how sustainably managed forests are a nature-based solution to lay the foundation for resilient economies and societies capable of withstanding future pandemics, climate change and other global challenges. Three key messages were highlighted through this brief: forests support human well-being especially in times of crisis; restoring forests restores jobs; and healthy forests reduce the risk of future pandemics. The second brief, “Financing sustainable forest management: a key component of sustainable COVID-19 recovery”²⁸ analyzes the

²⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Forests: at the heart of a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”, Policy Brief, No. 80 (June 2020).

²⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Financing sustainable forest management: a key component of sustainable COVID-19 recovery”, Policy Brief, No. 88 (November 2020).

adverse impacts of the pandemic on income generation from forests, as well as the implications for current and future funding for forests. The brief proposes measures to finance sustainable forest management, mobilize investment and other resources for forests, as an essential component for effective post-pandemic recovery plans. In addition to these issue briefs by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the secretariat participated in various events on the topic of forests and COVID-19, where some of these key messages were highlighted in statements and presentations delivered. Additional information on these briefs is contained in the note by the Secretariat on impacts of COVID-19 on forests and the forest sector, [E/CN.18/2021/7](#).

74. In 2021, the theme for the International Day of Forests is “Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being. The communication products planned for the International Day will follow a similar approach to previous celebrations, with a focus on social media-friendly products. Given the ongoing pandemic, the customary event at Headquarters in celebration of the International Day of Forests will be held in a virtual format on 19 March 2021.

VI. Adoption of the programme of work of the Forum for the period 2022–2024

75. The Forum secretariat organized an expert group meeting on the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2021–2024 at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 14 and 15 November 2019. During the meeting, experts agreed on the draft elements for the quadrennial programme of work for 2021–2024, as reflected in the summary by the co-chairs of the meeting²⁹ for consideration and adoption by the Forum at its fifteenth session.

76. In the process of consultation on the draft resolution of the fifteenth session of the Forum, members considered the outcome of the expert group meeting and its proposal for the programme of work of the Forum for 2021–2024. Following consultations among members, the Forum agreed on the programme of work for its sixteenth session in 2021, as contained in annex I to Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/14](#). Members also discussed and finalized a proposal for the programme of work of the Forum for the period 2022–2024. In accordance with paragraph 1 of the resolution, the proposal, which is contained in annex I to the resolution, was submitted for consideration and adoption by the sixteenth session. The proposal is contained in the annex to the present note.

77. It should be noted that since the adoption of the resolution of the fifteenth session of the Forum, many major forest-related conferences have not been held as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, the Forum may wish to consider and adopt the proposed programme of work for the period 2022–2024, as contained in the annex to this note.

VII. Conclusions

78. The United Nations strategic plan on forests 2017–2030 provides an overall framework for countries, the United Nations system, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and all other actors to take transformative actions on forests in order to achieve sustainable development and provide economic, social, environmental and

²⁹ Available at <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/EGM-Geneva-ChairSummary-4POW-21-24.pdf>.

cultural benefits for present and future generations. Its global forest goals and targets demonstrate the scale and ambition of this universal plan of action.

79. While the availability of data across all countries and all targets remains a challenge, the initial analysis of the activities carried out and reported by countries indicates that countries are taking action to advance the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan on forests 2017–2030, with some progress regarding global forest goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6.

80. Despite some progress and the breadth of actions and initiatives that the United Nations strategic plan on forests 2017–2030 has inspired, the shift to generate the transformation required to meet the global forest goals and their targets by 2030 is not yet advancing at the scale and speed required.

81. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could imperil the gains made towards the global forest goals and targets. Despite the challenges, the present crisis also offers an unprecedented opportunity to integrate forest-based actions in various response measures and recovery efforts, thereby reducing the risk of future outbreaks and accelerating the progress towards the achievement of the global forest goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6.

82. As the United Nations launches its Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 and Member States finalize the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, the United Nations system, its Member States, and all relevant partners must join forces to build the momentum and take actions to accelerate the progress towards the achievement of all global forest goals, including global forest goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 by 2030. In this respect, the high-level round table to be held during the sixteenth session of the Forum provides an excellent opportunity for senior officials to review major forest related developments and identify measures to accelerate achievement of the global forest goals, as well as the ways and means to promote synergy among various forest-related global processes.

VIII. Suggestions on the way forward

83. The following proposals are suggested for discussion during the sixteenth session of the Forum:

(a) Invite Members of the Forum to accelerate efforts towards achieving global forest goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6, including through mainstreaming and upscaling of forest-related actions in their national development programmes, as well as developing joint initiatives and partnerships on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan on forests 2017–2030;

(b) Encourage the integration of forest-based actions in the nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement and to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;

(c) Invite Members of the Forum that have not done so, to announce voluntary national contributions in support of the global forest goals and targets, and further encourage those members which have already announced voluntary national contributions, to inform the Forum on the progress made;

(d) Encourage members of the Forum, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and relevant partners to share their best practices and success stories, as well as their communication materials in support of the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan on forests 2017–2030, so that they can be showcased through the Forum on Forests' website.

84. The Forum may also wish to adopt its programme of work for the period 2022–2024, as contained in annex I to the present note.

Annex

Proposed programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for its seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth sessions¹

Table 1

Seventeenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, 2022 (policy session)

Priorities in support of implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

1. Thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022: selected global forest goals and associated targets in accordance with the sixteenth session of the Forum and consideration of relevant proposals contained in the Chair's summary from the sixteenth session
 2. Other policy session items and consideration of relevant proposals contained in the Chair's summary from the sixteenth session
 - (a) New announcements of voluntary national contributions
 - (b) Updates by stakeholders and partners on activities in support of the thematic priorities
 - (i) Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its workplan
 - (ii) Regional and subregional organizations and processes
 - (iii) Major groups and other relevant stakeholders, including the private sector and philanthropic community
 - (c) Interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2022 and international forest-related developments
 - (d) Implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including activities regarding the International Day of Forests 2022
 - (e) Means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network
 - (f) Monitoring, assessment and reporting: consideration of the proposed refinements to the format for the next round of voluntary national reporting on progress in implementing the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, the United Nations forest instrument and voluntary national contributions
 - (g) Preparations for the midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives, including the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030
 3. Forum trust fund
 4. Emerging issues
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¹ See Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/14](#), annex II.

Table 2

Eighteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, 2023 (technical session)*Priorities in support of implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030*

1. Thematic priorities for the biennium 2023–2024: selected global forest goals and associated targets

2. Other technical session items

(a) Contributions of members of the Forum to implementing the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: new announcements of voluntary national contributions; updates on voluntary national contributions and their follow-up related to the thematic priorities

(b) Contributions of and enhanced cooperation with partners to achieving the thematic priorities

(i) Contributions of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, its member organizations and the United Nations system to achieving the thematic priorities; progress on the workplan of the Partnership

(ii) Contributions of regional and subregional organizations and processes to achieving the thematic priorities

(iii) Contributions of major groups and other relevant stakeholders, including the private sector and philanthropic community, to achieving the thematic priorities; progress on major group workplans

(c) Interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2023 and international forest-related developments

(d) Implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including activities regarding the International Day of Forests 2023

(e) Means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network

(f) Monitoring, assessment and reporting: voluntary national reporting; global core set of forest-related indicators; preparations for the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2025

(g) Preparations for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests, including the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

3. Forum trust fund

4. Emerging issues

Table 3
Nineteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, 2024 (policy session)

Priorities in support of implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

1. Thematic priorities for the biennium 2023–2024: selected global forest goals and associated targets in accordance with the eighteenth session of the Forum and consideration of relevant proposals contained in the Chair's summary from the eighteenth session
 2. Other policy session items and consideration of relevant proposals contained in the Chair's summary from the eighteenth session
 - (a) New announcements of voluntary national contributions
 - (b) Interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2024 and international forest-related developments
 - (c) Midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests^a
 3. High-level segment
 4. Adoption of the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025–2028
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^a In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution [2015/33](#), the components of the international arrangement on forests are the Forum, the secretariat, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the Forum trust fund. Accordingly, the midterm review of the arrangement will encompass a review of the work of all the components, including the secretariat, the Facilitation Network, monitoring, assessment and reporting, the trust fund, the communication and outreach strategy and stakeholders' involvement.