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Technical discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: contributions of and enhanced cooperation with partners to achieving the thematic priorities:

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

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

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

Implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: contributions of and enhanced cooperation with partners towards achieving the thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022

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 the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including the contributions of and enhanced cooperation with partners towards achieving the thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022.

The present note provides background information and the results of intersessional activities conducted since the fifteenth session of the Forum, to serve as the basis for discussion at the sixteenth session of the Forum under agenda item 3 (c) and its sub-items (i), (ii) and (iii).

* [E/CN.18/2021/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/14, the United Nations Forum on Forests at its sixteenth session will consider the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. The Forum will hold technical discussions on the implementation of the strategic plan for forests under item 3, and under item 3 (c), the Forum will consider the contributions of and enhanced cooperation with partners towards achieving the thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022.

2. The present note has been prepared to serve as the basis for discussion of the Forum, under item 3 (c) and its sub-items (i), (ii) and (iii), regarding the implementation of the strategic plan for forests and the contributions of and enhanced cooperation with partners towards achieving the thematic priorities. The note provides an overview of the result of intersessional activities conducted since the fifteenth session of the Forum by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional and subregional partners, and major groups and other relevant stakeholders, in support of the implementation of the strategic plan, as well as their contributions to the thematic priorities of the sixteenth session of the Forum. The note includes an update on the participation of the Forum's secretariat in major international meetings and events. It also contains proposals on follow-up actions for discussion by the Forum at its sixteenth session.

II. Background

3. The United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 provides a reference framework for ambitious and transformational actions by all actors at all levels to achieve its global forest goals and targets. The actors include the Forum and its members and its secretariat, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental partners and stakeholders at the international level, regional and subregional organizations and processes, as well as major groups and other stakeholders.

4. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests plays an important role in supporting the Forum and its members in advancing the global forest goals and targets, including through cooperation and partnership among its members, implementing its joint workplan in alignment with the Forum's programmes of work and identifying collective actions by all or subsets of the Partnership's member organizations, as well as associated resource needs.

5. At its fifteenth session, the Forum welcomed the adoption by the Partnership of its strategic vision towards 2030 and invited the Partnership to develop its workplan for the period 2021–2024 in line with the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2021–2024 and to report to the Forum at its annual sessions on the progress achieved in implementing the workplan.

6. Also at its fifteenth session, the Forum emphasized the importance of involving relevant regional and subregional organizations and processes in the activities of the Forum, including at its sixteenth session, to share lessons learned and best practices.

7. At the same session, the Forum also emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral involvement in its work and requested the Forum secretariat to actively engage major groups and other relevant stakeholders, including at its sixteenth session. The Forum also took note of the workshop on "Cross-sectoral collaboration for inclusive forest landscapes", held in Nairobi in March 2020, organized by major groups and the Forum secretariat.

8. For the biennium 2021–2022, the Bureau of the Forum decided that the thematic priorities for the sixteenth and the seventeenth sessions of the Forum would be: (a) reversing the loss of forest cover (global forest goal 1); (b) enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits (global forest goal 2); and (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 and 6). Further information on the thematic priorities is provided in the note by the Secretariat on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: thematic priorities of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Forum (E/CN.18/2021/2).

III. Contribution of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

A. Implementation of the workplan of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests for the period 2017–2020, and preparation of the workplan for the period 2021–2024

9. In 2017, the Partnership formulated its work plan for 2017–2020 in accordance with paragraph 22 (e) of Council resolution 2015/33. Since then, the work plan has been updated on a periodic basis in alignment with the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum, taking into account relevant decisions of governing bodies and workplans of member organizations.¹

10. The Partnership's work plan encompasses its recurrent activities, its joint initiatives and activities to strengthen the Partnership. Through the workplan, the Partnership specifies its priority actions to be undertaken by all members or subsets of member organizations for a given year in support of the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the programme of work of the Forum.

11. Information on its joint initiatives in the workplan includes their objectives and relevance to the global forest goals, forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and other globally agreed forest-related goals, the lead agencies, the time frame for implementation and the partners involved, as well as the resource implications of the planned and ongoing activities.

12. Some planned activities in 2020 were disrupted owing to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including meetings and events which were to be held in conjunction with the fifteenth session of the Forum and other global events.

13. Upon the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of resolution 2020/14 regarding the fifteenth session of the Forum, the Partnership established a working group to consider the structure and template of its new workplan for 2021–2024, with the participation of six member organizations. The working group held meetings in October and November 2020 in a virtual format and developed a draft structure and template for further consideration by all member organizations.²

¹ The workplan of the Partnership for the period 2017–2020 is available at www.un.org/esa/forests/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/cpf-workplan-2017-2020/index.html.

² Summary reports of the meetings of the working group are available at www.un.org/esa/forests/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/cpf-meetings/index.html.

14. The Partnership will report to the Forum at its sixteenth session on progress made in implementing its workplan for 2017–2020 and the development of its new workplan for 2021–2024.

15. Information on the progress achieved in implementing the current workplan since the fifteenth session of the Forum is provided below.

B. Recurrent activities of the Partnership

16. The Partnership held four meetings since April 2020 and discussed its activities in support of the implementation of the strategic plan for forests and the achievement of its global forest goals and targets. These meetings were held in a virtual format on 29 April, 20 May, 16 July and 24 September.

17. At its meeting on 29 April 2020, the Partnership decided to prepare a joint statement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2020, the Partnership released its joint statement, entitled “Towards sustainability: forest solutions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic” on the margins of the twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Forestry of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).³

18. Through that statement, the Partnership expressed its support for the integration of the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of all types of forests and trees outside forests into COVID-19 recovery measures and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the global forest goals and other international forest-related commitments and goals.

19. In the statement, the Partnership emphasized: (a) the importance of healthy, resilient forests for ecosystem services and decreasing the risk of virus spillover from wildlife to humans; (b) the need to integrate actions such as the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of all types of forests into recovery strategies, including resource mobilization; (c) the importance of a “One Health” approach to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and in preventing future pandemics; (d) that now is the time to shift to more sustainable and environmentally friendly ways of living; (e) the importance of implementing the globally agreed forest-related goals and targets for halting deforestation, forest degradation and biodiversity loss; and (f) the need to turn the historic challenge into an opportunity by shifting to greener, more inclusive economies and societies.

C. Joint initiatives of the Partnership

20. Since the conclusion of the fifteenth session of the Forum, the Partnership has continued to work on advancing the joint initiatives described below.

Communicators’ Network

21. The Communicators’ Network of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests contributes directly to global forest goal 6 and indirectly to all other global forest goals.

22. One of the Network’s main tasks is to develop and recommend the annual theme for the International Day of Forests celebrations and coordinating its related activities. The Network also provides support to activities relating to the Wangari

³ The joint statement of the Partnership is available at www.cpfweb.org/49939-01432517605fa82d4a063efc442c48fe9.pdf.

Maathai Award and the implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the strategic plan for forests.

23. In the light of the upcoming United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030, to be launched on 5 June 2021, and bearing in mind the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the theme “Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being” was recommended for the International Day of Forests in 2021. The theme offers an opportunity to highlight the importance of forest ecosystem restoration and the role of forests in human well-being. Members of the Forum were informed of the theme through a letter from the Chair of the fifteenth session of the Forum. FAO and the Forum secretariat are offering various outreach products for use in the traditional joint communication that is sent to Member States.

24. With regard to the celebration of the International Day of Forests in 2020, events were held by the Forum secretariat and FAO. FAO prepared a video spot, which was aired for one month on major global television channels, and created a dedicated website for the International Day of Forests, 2020. Information on the activities planned by the Forum secretariat for the International Day of Forests in 2021 is provided in the above-mentioned note by the Secretariat (E/CN.18/2021/2).

25. A proposed theme for the International Day of Forests in 2022 will be submitted by the Partnership for the Forum’s information at its sixteenth session.

26. The Network actively shares information on members’ meetings and other activities, as well as cross-posting communication materials of the Partnership’s members through their channels. The Network actively disseminated the Partnership’s above-mentioned joint statement.

27. The Network continued to support the implementation of the communication and outreach strategy of the strategic plan, including through the FAO regional forest communicators’ networks.

Forest landscape restoration

28. The joint initiative on forest landscape restoration seeks to enhance coordination and collaboration on forest landscape restoration. The initiative supports the effective implementation of the strategic plan for forests and its six global forest goals and associated targets, in particular goal 6.

29. The joint initiative on forest landscape restoration was launched in June 2018, following its approval as a joint initiative by member organizations of the Partnership in April 2017. The initiative is led by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and is supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).⁴

30. The joint initiative seeks to enhance synergies on forest landscape restoration across policy frameworks and to better assist countries and stakeholders to scale up and strengthen the implementation of forest landscape restoration at the national and subnational levels through improved coordination among member organizations of the Partnership. These objectives are achieved through activities under three components: (a) the mainstreaming of forest landscape restoration into national, regional and international policy frameworks and facilitating the creation of a coherent in-country enabling environment for forest landscape restoration; (b) increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of resource mobilization for forest landscape restoration; and (c) identifying, prioritizing and implementing opportunities for generating enhanced

⁴ Project documents are available at www.thegef.org/project/fostering-partnerships-buildcoherence-and-support-forest-landscape-restoration.

synergies among forest landscape restoration programmes of the member organizations of the Partnership.

31. As part of the joint initiative, 10 member organizations of the Partnership are implementing 21 activities, some of which have been completed,⁵ and others are scheduled to be completed by the second quarter of 2021. Global Landscapes Forum events will be held in 2021 to present synthesized project results and recommendations, as well as other relevant work of the initiative. Some planned activities were postponed from 2020 to 2021 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

32. Key activities that were completed in 2020 and are ongoing include the following:

(a) FAO, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) provided support to the preparation of a study on the economics of ecosystem restoration.⁶ Questionnaires for data collection on the costs of restoration were disseminated in the third quarter of 2020 in seven countries across all regions. Work on the questionnaires regarding the benefits of ecosystem restoration also started in the third quarter of 2020. Several international events for dissemination are scheduled in 2021;

(b) FAO developed and disseminated a 10-module guide, entitled “Turning restoration into a sustainable business: a guide to developing bankable business plans” to assist associations and small producers to develop business plans. Pilot activities are conducted with local community organizations in Kenya and Zambia. Promotional activities to scale up the application of the guide are taking place across 10 countries as part of the Restoration Initiative;⁷

(c) The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) launched *Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics* in November 2020;⁸

(d) IUCN prepared a study on “Optimizing landscape-scale restoration through filling of knowledge gap(s) on restoration and protected areas”, with promotional and dissemination activities scheduled to be conducted in 2021 and at key international events in 2021, including at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(e) FAO, the Forum secretariat and IUCN, jointly with the Royal Forest Department of Thailand, organized a private sector forest landscape restoration round table on the theme “Restoring landscapes together”, held in Bangkok, with the participation of the private sector, on 18 February 2020.⁹

33. The results and recommendations of the implementation of the joint initiative on forest landscape restoration will be captured in a final consolidated report, to be published in the second half of 2021.

⁵ Details of the activities of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in 2019 were provided to the Forum in 2019, see [E/CN.18/2020/3](#).

⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “The economics of ecosystem restoration: first results of the piloting phase on costs, framework on data collection on benefits and outreach and communication”, webinar, 17 September 2020. Available at www.dropbox.com/s/xikyo28cjsyst04/zoom_0.mp4?dl=0.

⁷ For further information on the Restoration Initiative, see www.iucn.org/restoration-initiative.

⁸ The guide is available at www.itto.int/direct/topics/topics_pdf_download/topics_id=6511&no=1&disp=inline?mc_cid=e55087ff45&mc_cid=d83f56185a.

⁹ Outcomes and recommendations of the round table are available at www.iucn.org/news/asia/202004/private-sector-role-sustainable-management-and-restoration-thailands-forests.

Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network

34. The Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network was established in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33 and is led and coordinated by the Forum secretariat. The Network works in close cooperation with Member States and members of the Partnership to implement its priorities, as outlined in the strategic plan for forests. Detailed information on this matter is provided in the note by the Secretariat on the means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network ([E/CN.18/2021/4](#)).

Global Forest Expert Panel

35. The Global Forest Expert Panel initiative is coordinated by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO). The initiative periodically assembles international scientific expert panels on forest-related emerging issues and topics of high concern. These expert panels assess and synthesize available scientific information in an interdisciplinary, comprehensive and transparent manner, and produce reports on specific topics to support more informed global decision-making. Since its launch in April 2007, the initiative has completed seven thematic assessments, on: (a) the adaptation of forests and people to climate change; (b) the international forest regime; (c) biodiversity, forest management and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD-plus); (d) forests and food security; (e) illegal logging and the related timber trade; (f) forests and water; and (g) forests and poverty.

36. The Expert Panel initiative contributes towards achieving all the global forest goals, notably goal 6 and its target 6.2 by enhancing cooperation, coherence and synergies. The initiative is of particular relevance for achieving target 4.5 of goal 4 to improve the collection, availability and accessibility of forest-related information through, for example, multidisciplinary scientific assessments. The panels' reports also address the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and support the achievement of goal 5 and its target 5.4. The outcomes of the Expert Panel assessments improve the understanding of synergies and trade-offs between the different global forest goals and related targets, and how the strategic plan for forests and different forest-related policies and programmes can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, the Expert Panel assessment on forests, food Security and nutrition (2015)¹⁰ provided scientific input to the global debate on forests and food security (Goals 2 and 15) during the twelfth session of the Forum; the Expert Panel assessment on forests and water (2018)¹¹ explored the interlinkages between Goal 6 on water and Goal 15 on forests and contributed to the thirteenth session of the Forum.

37. In 2020, the Expert Panel initiative finalized its assessment on forests and poverty. It provides policymakers, stakeholders and donors with a stronger scientific basis for decisions of relevance to poverty alleviation and forests, and contributes to achieving global forest goal 2, and especially target 2.1. The assessment addresses the nexus between Sustainable Development Goal 1 on ending poverty and Goal 15 on life on land, as well as relevant links to Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth, and Goal 10 on reduced inequalities. It is also a response to the proposal,

¹⁰ Bhaskar Vira, Christoph Wildburger and Stephanie Mansourian, eds., *Forests, Trees and Landscapes for Food Security and Nutrition: A Global Assessment Report* (Vienna, International Union of Forest Research Organizations, 2015).

¹¹ Irena F. Creed and Meine van Noordwijk, eds., *Forest and Water on a Changing Planet: Vulnerability, Adaptation and Governance Opportunities: A Global Assessment Report* (Vienna, International Union of Forest Research Organizations, 2018).

made at the twelfth session of the Forum, to undertake independent, credible assessments of the contribution of forests to poverty alleviation with a view to assisting in the design of appropriate policy measures for different situations.

38. The expert panel on forests and poverty, consisting of 21 internationally recognized scientists, convened its second meeting in January 2020 in Nairobi, and discussed chapter manuscripts of its report and peer-reviewed the final draft of the report. Panel members, supported by 22 contributing authors, finalized the assessment report in the second quarter of 2020, following the third meeting of the panel held virtually in April 2020.

39. The assessment report on forests and poverty¹² and its accompanying policy brief were launched virtually on 15 October 2020, close to the commemorations for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, the International Day of Rural Women and World Food Day. The global launch event was followed by over 300 participants, and the publications received considerable media attention worldwide. Further outreach and promotional activities are planned at upcoming events in 2021, including during the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. A regional policy brief for Africa is also being developed, on the basis of the global assessment.

Global Forest Information Service

40. The Global Forest Information Service initiative, led and coordinated by IUFRO, was launched in 2002 to enhance access to all forest-related information, ensuring that it is accessible to all stakeholders including policymakers, forest managers, non-governmental organizations, community groups and the public at large.

41. The gateway serves as a mechanism to support the implementation of the strategic plan for forests, in particular by contributing to the mobilization of the best available scientific and traditional forest-related knowledge, as well as to the enhancement of cooperation and synergies on forest-related communications and outreach to increase the impact of the messaging from the United Nations system, the Partnership and its member organizations and other partners. The initiative contributes to achieving all global forest goals and is of particular relevance for goal 4 and related target 4.5. The gateway can also support the implementation of paragraphs 59, 69, 70 and 71 of the strategic plan for forests.

42. The Global Forest Information Service has continued to maintain the system in terms of layout, functionality and security, including the global database of forest-related university programmes, an initiative by the Service and the Joint Task Force on Forest Education of IUFRO and the International Forestry Students' Association. The database currently includes over 1,275 programmes from more than 315 institutions. In addition to the university programmes, approximately 150 online resources were added to the education database. The collected data are used in developing the online platform for forest education as part of the joint project on global forest education by IUFRO, FAO and ITTO.

43. The external review of the Global Forest Information Service planned for early 2020 was postponed to 2021 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The review will aim to assess the relevance of the Service within the global context of forest information

¹² Daniel C. Miller, Stephanie Mansourian and Christoph Wildburger, eds., *Forests, Trees and the Eradication of Poverty: Potential and Limitations: A Global Assessment Report* (Vienna, International Union of Forest Research Organizations, 2020).

dissemination, to identify suitable niches for future work and to obtain guidance on effective institutional and financing arrangements.

Green finance for sustainable landscapes

44. A joint initiative on green finance for sustainable landscapes has been developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), CIFOR, GEF and the United Nations Development Programme. A project document prepared by UNEP and CIFOR was approved for funding by the Global Environment Facility secretariat with GEF grant funding of \$1 million and partner contributions by UNEP and CIFOR of \$5.8 million. The implementation of the initiative started in January 2021.

45. The overall objective of the 3-year initiative is to boost commitments from banks and investors to increase capital flows towards restoration and deforestation-free agriculture. The initiative will involve: (a) catalysing sustainable private finance for agribusiness and forestry companies; (b) standardizing the framing, measuring and reporting on “deforestation-free” sustainable commodity production and other forms of sustainable land use; and (c) developing the capacity of community-based forestry and agribusiness producer groups to improve their access to business knowledge products and private investment. The initiative contributes to global forest goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6.

Streamlining global forest-related reporting

46. Detailed information on the streamlining of global forest-related reporting is contained in the note by the Secretariat on the monitoring, assessment and reporting of progress towards implementing the strategic plan for forests and the United Nations forest instrument, including voluntary national contributions ([E/CN.18/2021/5](#)).

Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World

47. The “Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World” initiative was adopted as a joint initiative in May 2018, aimed at strengthening sustainable wood value chains by enhancing their social, economic and environmental benefits from production to consumption. In 2020, the initiative began to develop a resource mobilization strategy and a campaign on the positive contributions of wood products to climate change through the substitution effect. The plan is being designed to contribute to achieving all the global forest goals and is of particular relevance for goals 1, 2 and 4. Discussions took place on the margins of the meeting of the Partnership in January 2020, and further actions were delayed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

48. The initiative provided an immediate response in the context of the pandemic by providing information on the disruptions to wood value chains and on action required to build back better. FAO conducted a global survey targeting the initiative’s community (all stakeholders included in the initiative’s database, around 650 experts). The results of the survey were discussed during the COVID-19 forestry webinar week held in June 2020, and a policy brief was published.

49. National governments have taken up the initiative. Kenya is preparing a national dialogue on the initiative to be held in 2021. The dialogue aims to foster investments in the forest sector, strengthen the inclusiveness and sustainability of forest value chains, improve access to finance for forest and farm producer organizations and small and medium-sized enterprises and promote the bioeconomy. An initial national dialogue was held in July 2020 in Kenya, building on the discussions on the extension of social protection coverage to wood value chains and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Outcomes from the dialogue and the social protection work in Kenya will contribute directly to the implementation of global forest goals 4 and 2, including target 2.1.

50. The initiative has conducted normative finance-related activities, directly supporting the attainment of global forest goals 4 and 2 and target 2.2. A learning guide to improve smallholder and producer associations' capacities to develop business plans, as part of restoration efforts, was launched in 2020. The publication follows the recommendations from a workshop on catalysing private finance to forestry, held in 2019, according to which the lack of good quality business planning in forestry is a key obstacle to accessing private finance. That work has already delivered training and monitoring to forest producer associations in Kenya and Uganda. An e-learning course based on the guide is planned for 2021.

Wangari Maathai Forest Champion Award

51. Launched by the Partnership in 2012 and presented on a mostly biennial basis, the Wangari Maathai Forest Champion Award seeks to honour the legacy of the Kenyan environmentalist and first female African Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Wangari Maathai. The award recognizes outstanding contributions by individuals to the preservation, restoration and sustainable management of forests. It also seeks to raise awareness of the key role that forests play in supporting local communities, rural livelihoods, women and the environment.

52. In addition to generating global recognition, the award includes a \$20,000 cash prize and covers the travel of the awardee to the award ceremony, sponsored by several member organizations of the Partnership.

53. The award is based on open voluntary nominations, which are reviewed and evaluated by an international jury composed of eminent personalities and convened solely for the purpose of selecting the winner of the award on a single occasion, with appropriate geographical and gender balance.

54. On the basis of the jury's recommendation, the Wangari Maathai Award for 2021 will be presented to one nominee for extraordinary work towards improving forests and the lives of people who depend on them. The award ceremony will take place at the XV World Forestry Congress to be held in Seoul.

Planned joint initiative on forest education

55. A joint initiative on forest education is being developed by FAO, ITTO, IUFRO and several other members of the Partnership in conjunction with the project entitled "Creation of a global forest education platform and launch of a joint initiative under the aegis of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests".¹³ The project is funded by the Government of Germany and is being implemented collaboratively by FAO, ITTO and IUFRO from 2020 to 2021.

56. The aim of the project and the proposed initiative is to catalyse, accelerate and enhance broad efforts in forest education and to counteract the considerable deficiencies in forestry education in many parts of the world. The intended outcome is for target education and training groups, other stakeholders and the general public to be enabled and incentivized to develop improved skills, capacities and understanding of forests and forest ecosystem services. The ultimate aim is to better support sustainable forest management so as to meet the objectives of each country and to contribute at the global level to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the global forest goals, the Paris Agreement, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and other relevant forest-related agreements.

¹³ Further information on the project and the development of the joint Collaborative Partnership on Forests initiative on forest education is available at www.fao.org/forestry/forest-education/en/.

57. The project has been laying the groundwork for the proposed initiative. Through a collaborative process involving global and regional partners and with inputs from thousands of forest education stakeholders, the project has conducted a global survey and six regional consultations to identify needs and the catalytic actions required to improve forest education. IUFRO is leading the development of a prototype of an online platform for forest education, aimed at students and teachers at all levels of education and technical training to facilitate the search for teaching materials related to forest education. It will also serve as a platform to share knowledge and host discussions on education-related topics. The online platform will make use of an advanced semantic search function to retrieve the most relevant information to the user. Another element of the project is the development, under the leadership of ITTO, of an online course on legal and sustainable supply chains for tropical wood and tropical forest products, as a pilot activity for online learning.

58. A vision and strategy for the joint initiative of the Partnership on forest education is scheduled to be prepared for presentation and discussion at the International Conference on Forest Education, to be held in 2021 in conjunction with the World Forestry Congress.

IV. Contributions of regional and subregional partners

59. With respect to the thematic priorities of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Forum, regional and subregional partners were asked by the Secretariat to provide specific inputs. Those contributions are posted in their entirety on the Forum's website.¹⁴

60. The African Forest Forum adapted the regional questionnaire format of the United Nations Forum on Forests to report on its contribution to the thematic priorities of the biennium. Activities related to the achievement of global forest goal 2 include raising the awareness of African forestry stakeholders, through interactive forums, regarding the importance of developing effective public-private partnerships that enhance social inclusion, gender-equitable practices and forest-compatible livelihoods, as well as strengthening their capacity for the co-conception, co-designing, planning and implementation of measures to increase adaptation and resilience to the adverse effects of climate change on forests and tree resources and on the people who depend upon them. Regarding goal 6, the African Forest Forum reported on several capacity-building activities conducted in Africa to promote a common understanding of the concept of sustainable forest management, including on forest certification, leadership, good forest governance and the transparent trade in forest products.

61. The Permanent Secretariat of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization provided a document containing five annexes, each corresponding to an activity related to the thematic priorities. Among the reported activities contributing to the achievement of global forest goal 4 is the establishment of the Amazon Regional Observatory, designed to be the permanent forum that brings together institutions and authorities linked to the study of the Amazon, as well as a reference centre for regional information on biodiversity, natural resources and sociodiversity of the Amazon region. With respect to goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6, a regional project for the management, monitoring and control of species of wild fauna and flora threatened by trade will contribute to the conservation of the Amazon's biodiversity and, in particular, of the species included in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of

¹⁴ See www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/index.html.

Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) by, inter alia, strengthening sustainable management initiatives and traceability mechanisms for Amazonian species.

62. The Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation shared information about three activities related to the thematic priorities: a sustainable forest management training centre project (global forest goals 1 and 6); the establishment of a breeding centre for high-value tree species, in Cambodia (goal 2); and the demonstration of vegetation restoration and management and utilization of forest resources in greater Central Asia (goal 1). In its presentation, the Asia-Pacific Network provides details of those activities as they relate to the relevant goals and pertinent targets.

63. The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) listed the pertinent global forest goals and under each of them provided information as to how bamboo and INBAR are contributing to their achievement. For instance, as regards goal 2, in the next two years INBAR will assist in the creation of more than 700 new micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, generating more than 11,000 new jobs and creating the conditions to upscale climate-smart bamboo value chains. As regards goal 4, in 2021 INBAR will launch a Green Bamboo Fund, with the aim of mobilizing \$10 million in its first replenishment, and the resources will be invested in pipeline projects aimed at implementing the global forest goals and the Sustainable Development Goals in general.

64. The Joint Forestry and Timber Section of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and FAO provided a detailed spreadsheet describing their activities and showing their interlinkages with the global forest goals, the Sustainable Development Goals in general and those to be reviewed during the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2021, as well as international forest-related developments. A joint ECE-FAO study on national reporting on sustainable forest management in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which provides an overview of reporting on forests and sustainable forest management in five countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), as part of the project on accountability systems for sustainable forest management in the Caucasus and Central Asia, contributed to the achievement of global forest goals, 4, 5 and 6, as well as Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 5, 10, 12, 15, 16 and 17. A ministerial round table on forest landscape restoration and the Bonn Challenge to restore 30 million ha of degraded and deforested land in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia by 2030 (referred to as “ECCA30”), expected to be held in May 2021, will provide an opportunity for countries of Eastern and South-East Europe to announce pledges to the Bonn Challenge and serve as a contribution to the achievement of global forest goal 1 and Goals 6, 10, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

V. Contributions of major groups and relevant stakeholders

65. Between the conclusion of the fifteenth session of the Forum and the commencement of the sixteenth session, the focal points of major groups held virtual consultations in preparation for the sixteenth session and continued to implement their individual workplans in support of the implementation of the strategic plan for forests. Details of this work can be viewed in the joint contribution of the major groups on progress in the implementation of the strategic plan for forests, in particular the thematic priorities of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Forum.¹⁵ The document elaborates on each major group’s progress towards implementing their individual workplans, guided by the six global forest goals. It illustrates how major

¹⁵ Ibid.

groups are substantively contributing to the implementation of the strategic plan for forests and can help increase effectiveness and boost the engagement of broader society. Major groups appealed to donor organizations, development partners and the United Nations system to support their efforts to develop their own capacities and mobilize resources for the realization of their ambitions and plans.

66. In the light of the emphasis placed by the Forum, during its fifteenth session, on the need to actively engage major groups and stakeholders in the work of the Forum, the Forum secretariat made additional efforts in that regard. As a result, it succeeded in re-engaging the business and industry major group. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development reaffirmed its willingness to serve as the focal point for that major group. In addition, the Forum secretariat and its counterpart at the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries of FAO began to collaborate closely on matters of mutual interest. A representative of the Advisory Committee also participated in the webinar “Forests: at the heart of a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic” convened by the Forum secretariat in September 2020. Although the secretariat has not yet been able to secure input from philanthropic partners, it continues its efforts to engage them in the Forum’s work.

67. Private sector partners were asked by the secretariat to provide specific input concerning the priorities of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Forum, which are available in their entirety on the Forum’s website.¹⁶ The secretariat will continue its efforts to encourage and enhance the participation of philanthropic organizations in the work of the Forum.

68. The input from the Brazilian Tree Industry addresses the COVID-19 pandemic and emphasizes the importance of the products of the planted tree industry in tackling the challenges posed by the pandemic. Such products are present in hospitals, in the form of medication package inserts, prescription pads and forms. Soluble cellulose pulp is a raw material used in the production of personal protective equipment, while charcoal is used as a biomass-derived reducing agent in the production of steel for surgical instruments. As concerns global forest goal 1, the planted forest sector plays a central role in building and maintaining carbon stocks, both in commercial plantations and in preserved areas of native vegetation associated with planted forests. Positive externalities generated by planted forests include carbon removal and storage and emissions prevention, along with biodiversity and soil conservation, which are connected to the production of various essential products. Regarding goal 4, economic development linked to forest-based industry is intertwined with the entire productive chain involving commercial planted forests. The industry spans wood pulp and paper, woodchips and biomass, which have a wide variety of uses in the health industry, the food industry, fabric production and the fashion industry and the production of charcoal.

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

69. Since the fifteenth session of the Forum, the Forum secretariat has been actively involved in a number of major international events. It should be noted that, owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of those activities were carried out virtually.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Forestry webinar week of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

70. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs participated in the “Heads of forestry dialogue on COVID-19 impacts – main issues, response needs and opportunities to build back better”, held in a virtual format on 22 June, during the COVID-19 forestry webinar week on the theme “Building back better: COVID-19 pandemic recovery contributions from the forest sector”.¹⁷ The webinar was organized by FAO to assess the impact of pandemics on people and forests; identify and discuss possible responses; and propose follow-up steps, including policy dialogue and the mobilizing of resources and action that better enables the forest sector to help rebuild sustainable and resilient societies.

71. At the webinar, the Under-Secretary-General highlighted the opportunity to align pandemic recovery efforts with efforts to achieve greater sustainability and a greener, more inclusive economy, including by accelerating action to tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, finding a balance between economic growth, social progress and environmental sustainability, improving governance to deliver on the promise of a greener future and strengthening the capacity of countries to mobilize resources and unlock private finance.

Thematic session on “Protecting the planet and building resilience” of the 2020 high-level political forum on sustainable development

72. The Forum secretariat, as part of the team from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs that co-convened the session, supported the preparation and organization of a thematic session entitled “Protecting the planet and building resilience”, held on 8 July in a virtual format, as part of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.¹⁸

73. The preparations for the session included a series of expert consultations held from 1 May to 19 June with the participation of experts from the relevant fields, including experts from member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

74. The background note for the thematic session was prepared by the co-conveners, with input from the participating experts, and highlighted successes and challenges with regard to the progress made towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17. It addressed topics such as interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs between those Goals and other Goals, and contained recommendations for action with regard to mechanisms and partnerships that could accelerate progress and guiding questions for the session.

75. The discussion held during the session highlighted opportunities, innovation and solutions to safeguard the planet by managing risk and building resilience, including through forest-related actions. During the session, the Chair of the sixteenth session of the Forum underscored the role of sustainably managed forests in protecting the planet and building resilience, as well as the importance of aligning COVID-19 recovery measures with sustainable development efforts.

76. Key elements highlighted in the discussions included the inherent interdependence between human development and a healthy planet; the achievement of poverty eradication and socioeconomic development depending on addressing drivers

¹⁷ Further information is available at www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofo/covid-19-forestry-webinar-week/en/.

¹⁸ Further information is available at www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=20000&nr=6855&menu=2993.

of unsustainable natural resource management practices, such as climate change and deforestation; the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of ecosystems and their landscapes and seascapes as a proven and cost-effective opportunity to bring about a better, fairer and greener recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and get back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; the importance of good governance for peaceful, just, and inclusive societies; the importance of whole-of-society approaches; the role of the private sector in supporting investments and financing aimed at environmental dimensions; the implementation of existing commitments, such as the strategic plan for forests; and the importance of supporting a coherent approach to the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.¹⁹

Webinar organized by the Forum secretariat

77. On 15 June 2020, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs issued a policy brief entitled “Forests: at the heart of a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”. The brief outlines how sustainably managed forests are a nature-based solution for laying a foundation for resilient economies and societies capable of withstanding future pandemics, climate change and other global challenges. To elaborate further on the matter, the Forum secretariat organized a webinar on the same topic, held on 28 September 2020.

78. The programme of the webinar included presentations by distinguished panellists, with different backgrounds and affiliations, who shared their views as to how the implementation of the strategic plan for forests could help to build a greener and fairer post-pandemic future. The event showcased the interlinkages between achieving the global forest goals and the Sustainable Development Goals during the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the significance of forests in relation to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and climate change agenda. It was clear from the presentations that, if the aspiration for a green COVID-19 recovery is to materialize, sustainable and healthy forest ecosystems and resilient forest-dependent communities must be a major pillar of that recovery.

Twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Forestry and seventh World Forest Week

79. The Forum secretariat participated in an event entitled “The strategic way of integrating forestry into recovery support measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: build back better with forests”, held in a virtual format on 12 October 2020, during the seventh World Forest Week and in conjunction with the twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Forestry of FAO.²⁰

80. The discussion during the event focused on how forest-related measures and initiatives can be integrated into recovery strategies for responding to the pandemic, and the related challenges and opportunities. The Forum secretariat provided an overview of its intersessional activities related to the initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on forests, the forest sector, forest-dependent people and international cooperation and finance, as well as the outcome of its webinar entitled “Forests: at the heart of a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”, held on 28 September in conjunction with the high-level week of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly.

¹⁹ The summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council at its 2020 session is available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/269252020_HLPPF_Presidents_summary.pdf.

²⁰ Further information is available at www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofo/world-forest-week.

Activities in conjunction with regional and subregional entities

81. In order to have a broad overview of the impact of the pandemic on forests and forest-dependent people, and to assess the potential of forests to diminish the adverse impact of COVID-19, the Forum decided, during its fifteenth session, to request the Forum secretariat, in consultation with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and with input from members of the Forum, to compile an initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on (a) sustainable forest management, (b) the forest sector, forest-dependent people, indigenous peoples and local communities and (c) forest financing and international cooperation, and to present this assessment to the Forum at its sixteenth session (see [E/CN.18/2021/7](#)). Forum stakeholders, including regional and subregional entities, were invited to provide their input for the assessment, and their views will be considered in the elaboration of the report. These partners were also invited to participate in the expert group meeting convened on this matter in January 2021.

82. Since the fifteenth session of the Forum, the Forum secretariat has actively cooperated with regional partners in co-sponsoring events. The Forum secretariat co-sponsored and participated in a webinar entitled “COVID-19 and forestry sector: challenges, opportunities and strategies for better resilience in Africa”, organized by the African Union Commission in July 2020. In addition, the Forum secretariat was invited to join the expert working group on the implementation of the African Union Sustainable Forest Management Framework, which aims to ensure the effective and coordinated implementation of the African Union Sustainable Forest Management Framework, including by serving as the regional mechanism for tracking and monitoring the implementation of the Framework, enhancing the visibility and relevance of the forestry sector and promoting political commitment at the national and regional levels. Lastly, the African Union Commission provided the Forum secretariat with the opportunity to observe a meeting of ministers in Africa responsible for the environment and natural resources on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, held in November 2020.

Webinar organized by the Joint Forestry and Timber Section of the Economic Commission for Europe and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

83. The Forum secretariat participated in the webinar “SDG 15 Day: focus on forests in the ‘super year’ for nature and beyond” held on 2 November 2020 in a virtual format.²¹ The event was held during the forest week organized by the Joint Forestry and Timber Section of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and FAO to discuss the progress made on achieving forest-related targets of Sustainable Development Goal 15 in the ECE region, with a particular focus on 2020 as the “super year” of nature.

84. During the thematic discussion on forests and biodiversity held during the webinar, the Forum secretariat highlighted key action areas in the ongoing pandemic response and recovery efforts. These action areas included: (a) addressing the root causes of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, (b) promoting sustainable consumption and production practices, green investment and nature-based solutions in national sustainable development strategies, plans and programmes, (c) fostering the implementation of existing forest- and biodiversity-related global goals and targets to advance nature-based solutions, (d) including forests more specifically and visibly in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and (e) promoting global

²¹ Further information is available at www.unece.org/forests/events/sdg-15-day-focus-forests-super-year-nature-and-beyond.

partnership, solidarity and multilateralism to help countries and societies address inequalities within and among countries.

85. During the thematic discussion on financing held during the webinar, the Forum secretariat underscored the importance of ensuring investment and the mobilization of resources for forests as a key component of effective recovery plans, particularly by (a) including national public financing for forests in stimulus packages and recovery plans, (b) maintaining international financial support for vulnerable countries to assist them in their recovery efforts, (c) supporting forest communities and enterprises and local institutions through the adoption of fiscal policies and tax incentives, and (d) adopting and integrating national forest financing strategies in the recovery plans and relevant national development frameworks.

86. Key elements highlighted during the discussions included scalable solutions to address climate change through afforestation and ecosystem restoration, and proposals on how to step up joint delivery in the light of financial and other challenges associated with the pandemic recovery were put forward.

Seventy-eighth session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

87. The Forum secretariat participated in the seventy-eighth session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry of ECE, held from 4 to 6 November 2020 in a virtual format.²² The theme of the session was “Forests in a decade of action”, and discussions focused on building back better through forest landscape restoration, urban forestry and accelerated implementation of other nature-based solutions for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

88. The Forum secretariat provided updates on the work of the Forum and its secretariat, with a focus on the overview of the status of implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/14, including the intersessional activities undertaken by the secretariat.

VII. Conclusions

89. The present note serves to reaffirm and highlight the important role of partners and stakeholders in supporting the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and advancing the achievement of the global forest goals and targets. Several steps have been taken by the Partnership, regional and subregional partners and major groups to advance the implementation of the strategic plan. Nevertheless, there is still room for them to increase their engagement in and support for the work of the Forum. The integration of the strategic plan and the global forest goals in the operational programmes of the Partnership’s member organizations and the provision of focused input by the Partnership on the thematic priorities of the Forum are important steps for maximizing complementarities, synergies and coherence among policies and programmes of the Partnership’s member organizations. Regional and subregional partners and major groups have also shown huge interest in contributing to the work of the Forum in recent years. These efforts should be recognized, and steps need to be taken to support the further expansion of such efforts.

²² Further information is available at www.unece.org/forests/coffi2020.html.

VIII. Suggestions for follow-up actions

90. The following points are suggested for inclusion in the Chair's proposals for submission to the seventeenth session of the Forum:

(a) Take note of the efforts of the member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in developing a new workplan for 2021–2024 in support of the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the work of the Forum, and invite those organizations to provide focused input on the thematic priorities during each session of the Forum;

(b) Invite the governing bodies of the member organizations of the Partnership to integrate the global forest goals into their respective programmes and to scale up support for the implementation of the workplan of the Partnership and the strengthening of its secretariat;

(c) Acknowledge the efforts of regional and subregional partners, major groups and other relevant stakeholders to contribute to the thematic priorities of the Forum for the biennium 2021–2022;

(d) Encourage members of the Forum that have not yet done so to consider setting up multi-stakeholder platforms for promoting the implementation of the strategic plan for forests and the achievement of the global forest goals.
