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Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests**Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests****Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

In accordance with the programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for its seventeenth session (Economic and Social Council resolution [2021/6](#), annex), the Forum, at its seventeenth session, will consider the item on the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests. The present note provides information on the contributions to and expenditures of the trust fund during 2021. The generous contributions of donor countries to the trust fund are gratefully acknowledged. Without them, the implementation of many of the mandated activities of the Forum would not have been possible.

* [E/CN.18/2022/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2015/33 on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, the Economic and Social Council urged donor Governments and organizations, including financial institutions, and others in a position to do so, to provide voluntary contributions to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests. In accordance with the programme of work of the Forum for its seventeenth session (Economic and Social Council resolution 2021/6, annex), the Forum will consider the item on its trust fund.

2. The present note provides an overview of the amounts contributed, the sources of these contributions, and the expenditures of the trust fund for 2021. It is submitted for information purposes. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 17 January 2022. Activities were carried out pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 71/285, on the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, and 62/98, on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, and resolutions pertaining to the Forum, including Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, as well as the annex to Council resolution 2021/6.

II. Contributions to the trust fund in 2021

3. In 2021, two donor countries contributed to the trust fund in support of the mandates, sessions and intersessional activities of the Forum, as well as the work of the Forum and its secretariat (see table 1). The contributions amounted to \$320,201, inclusive of programme support costs. The implementation of core activities of the Forum would not have been possible without these generous contributions, which are gratefully acknowledged.

Table 1
Contributions to the trust fund, 2021
(United States dollars)

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Total</i>
Republic of Korea	20 201
United States of America	300 000
Subtotal, contributions	320 201
Opening balance, 1 January 2021	1 902 678
Refund to donors ^a	(34 681)
Total	2 188 198

^a In 2021, unexpended funds were refunded to Finland.

III. Expenditure of the trust fund in 2021

4. In 2021, staffing and consultancy costs funded from extrabudgetary resources accounted for around 88 per cent of expenditures, while operating expenses accounted for around 11 per cent. It is important to note that, owing to travel restrictions related to the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, many of the Forum-related meetings, capacity development workshops and key international events scheduled for 2021 were held in a virtual format. Further information on the expenditure of the trust fund is presented in table 2 and the related figure.

Table 2
Expenditure of the trust fund, 2021

(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Staffing and consultancy costs ^a	277 397
Travel related to capacity development ^b	(18 916)
Travel of representatives and experts ^c	(6 860)
Travel of staff	0
Contractual services	2 540
Operating expenses ^d	35 326
Subtotal	289 487
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	37 627
Total	327 114

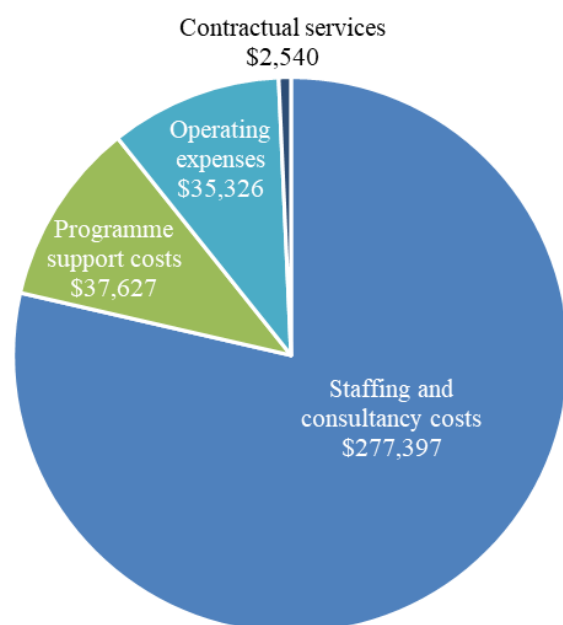
^a Includes staff posts funded from extrabudgetary resources, other staff-related expenses and consultants' fees.

^b Credit is owing to cancellation of travel.

^c Credit is owing to cancellation of travel.

^d Includes the rental of premises, information technology, conference-servicing costs and bank fees.

Expenditures of the trust fund, 2021



5. During 2021, extrabudgetary funds were used to supplement funds from the regular budget (programme 7, Economic and social affairs, subprogramme 8, Sustainable forest management). These contributions funded a significant part of the work of the Forum secretariat in 2021, including the following:

(a) **Secretariat staff and consultants and technical experts to support Forum activities.** In order to implement mandated activities in 2021, two posts at the P-3 level were funded from extrabudgetary resources. In 2022, it is expected that two

posts at the P-3 level and one at the G-5 level will be funded from extrabudgetary resources (see table 3). In 2021, extrabudgetary resources were also used to engage consultants and technical experts to support work related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, the second assessment of the impact of the pandemic on forests and the forest sector, monitoring frameworks, *The Global Forests Goals Report 2021* and other mandated activities;

(b) **Travel related to capacity development.** Owing to the operational challenges and travel restrictions caused by the pandemic, it was not feasible for capacity development workshops to be held in person, and many planned meetings were held in a virtual format. Furthermore, owing to refunds on cancelled travel, there were no net expenditures in this category in 2021;

(c) **Travel of representatives and experts.** Owing to the operational challenges and travel restrictions caused by the pandemic, Forum-related meetings could not be held in person and were conducted in a virtual format. Furthermore, owing to refunds on cancelled travel, there were no net expenditures in this category in 2021;

(d) **Travel of staff.** Owing to the operational challenges and travel restrictions caused by the pandemic, many of the key international forest-related events, such as meetings and conferences related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional coordination, major groups and capacity development, were either held in a virtual or hybrid format or postponed until 2022. Accordingly, there were no expenditures in this category in 2021;

(e) **Contractual services, conference servicing and operating expenses.** During 2021, extrabudgetary funds were used to cover costs relating to individual contractors, the rental of premises, information technology, bank fees and conference-servicing costs for virtual meetings.

IV. Achievements and results

6. The following achievements and results are attributable to contributions made to the trust fund:

(a) Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, in April 2021 the sixteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests was held virtually, at which the Forum successfully adopted the resolution on its programme of work for the period 2022–2024;

(b) Resources from the trust fund were used to support intersessional activities including virtual expert group meetings held in preparation for the seventeenth session of the Forum. These included the expert group meeting on preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests, held in November 2021; the expert group meeting on reporting on progress towards the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan on forests 2017–2030, held in December 2021; and the expert group meeting on strengthening the engagement of the Forum with regional partners, major groups and other stakeholders, also held in December 2021;

(c) Fund resources were used to supplement funds from the regular budget and the regular programme of technical cooperation for the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. The successful launch of the first phase of the clearing house of the Network, through the development of its website and three databases, was carried out with funding for human resources from the trust fund. Further details of the activities of the Network are contained in the note by the

Secretariat on the means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Network ([E/CN.18/2022/3](#));

(d) Resources from the fund were essential in supporting work related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including by covering human resources costs for the development of a global core set of forest-related indicators and the launch of *The Global Forests Goal Report 2021*, the first flagship publication of the Forum on the progress made towards the global forest goals and targets of the strategic plan. Further details of key activities are contained in the note by the Secretariat on monitoring, assessment and reporting with regard to 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.18/2022/4](#));

(e) Resources from the trust fund were used to support the development of the workplan of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests for the period 2021–2024 and the joint statement of the Partnership on the challenges and opportunities in turning the tide on deforestation, both of which were presented to the Forum at its sixteenth session. Further details of the activities of the Partnership are contained in the note by the Secretariat entitled “Policy discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: activities in support of the thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022” ([E/CN.18/2022/2](#));

(f) The trust fund continues to be a critical source of supplementary funding for meeting the staffing needs of the secretariat of the Forum, which is still the smallest division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In 2021, the fund covered the staffing costs of two staff members at the P-3 level (see para. 5 (a)).

V. Priorities and challenges

7. Since the Forum was established, its mandates and outputs have grown, but the allocations from the regular budget have not increased at the same pace. The human and budgetary resources needed by the secretariat to support the Forum and its member States have been highlighted and well recognized in resolutions, including Economic and Social Council resolution [2015/33](#). Voluntary contributions to the trust fund play an essential role in supplementing funds from the regular budget, and without these contributions, the secretariat would face challenges in fully delivering on its core functions.

8. Securing sufficient human and financial resources to scale up the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network continues to be a major limiting factor in the work of the Network. The clearing house of the Network was developed in a cost-effective manner that leveraged information technology services from within the United Nations, but the expenditures incurred were entirely dependent on the availability of voluntary contributions.

9. Travel was severely curtailed in 2021 owing to the pandemic, as a result of which no such costs were incurred in 2021. However, once in-person meetings resume, securing dedicated contributions for the travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition will once again become a pressing challenge. Funding for such travel is entirely dependent on dedicated contributions to the trust fund. To date, there has been a trend of declining contributions, and should this continue, it will be extremely difficult for the secretariat to facilitate the balanced representation of developed and developing countries at future Forum-related meetings.

10. Sustained and adequate human and financial resources continue to be critical in enabling the secretariat to support the implementation of the United Nations strategic

plan for forests and the achievement of the six global forest goals and the 26 associated targets. The resources are vital to ongoing activities related to all areas of the work of the Forum and its secretariat, including activities in preparation for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests; capacity development; forest financing; monitoring, assessment and reporting; the enhancement of cooperation and coordination; the promotion of regional collaboration, communication and outreach; and the strengthening of stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector.

Table 3

Estimated expenditures from the trust fund for 2022

(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2022</i>
Staffing costs ^a	475 000
Consultants, experts and contractual services ^b	200 000
Travel of representatives and experts ^c	80 000
Travel of staff	30 000
Subtotal	785 000
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	102 050
Total	887 050
Closing balance, 31 December 2021	1 861 543
Expected contributions, 2022	500 000
Total expected funds, 2022	2 361 543

Note: Estimated expenditures refer to funds required to implement the current programme of work of the secretariat of the Forum; they do not include funding for any additional activities that may be decided upon by the Forum at its seventeenth session.

^a Estimate based on the cost of funding two P-3 posts and one G-5 post from extrabudgetary resources in 2022.

^b Includes costs of engaging consultants to support preparations for the eighteenth session of the Forum, in 2023, and the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network.

^c Includes travel costs of representatives of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to participate in Forum-related meetings in the second half of 2022, including intersessional activities on the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests.