

**Communication by the Bureau of the 15th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests  
Input to the 2020 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup>**

**1. Key policies and measures to ensure “accelerated action and transformative pathways” for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development**

**a. Critical gaps in implementing the 2030 Agenda within the area of responsibility of the intergovernmental body (bearing in mind interrelations with other goals and targets)**

Healthy forests are vital to achieving sustainable development. There is a growing body of evidence from recent studies on how ecosystem services and functions inherent to forests offer solutions to the transformation required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sustainably managed forests (SDG15) play critical roles in climate (SDG13), hydrologic (SDG6) and energy (SDG7) cycles, regulating the rising temperatures and diminishing rainfalls. As part of larger landscapes and biomes, forests provide a broad range of wood and non-wood forest products essential for human livelihood (SDG1 and 2), quality of life (SDG3 and 11) and economic prosperity (SDG8 and 10), offering unique opportunities to promote sustainable natural resource use (SDG4, 9, 14 and 15) through their production and consumption cycles (SDG12).

Despite the crucial contribution of forests and sustainable forest management to sustainable development, deforestation and forest degradation continue in many regions, often in response to the demand for wood, food, fuel and fibre, threatening the progress towards the achievement of the SDGs. With the world’s population projected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050 and 10.9 billion in 2100, the global demand for and consumption of forest products and services is projected to accelerate and put further pressure on forests.

Currently, over 7 million hectares of natural forests continue to be converted annually to other land uses owing chiefly to large-scale commercial agriculture and other economic activities. While the rate of deforestation has slowed down in many regions over the past decade, estimates indicate that tree cover loss has steadily been rising in the tropics since 2000 due to human and natural causes, including fires and storms, posing imminent challenges that require urgent cross-sectoral action at all levels to sustainably manage forests, including through their conservation, restoration and expansion.

**b. Priority measures to: i. accelerate action, and ii. ensure transformative pathways to realize the decade of action for achieving the 2030 Agenda**

Policy nexuses such as forests and ecosystem services and livelihoods, forests and sustainable economic growth, and forests and rights, justice, equality and inclusion can guide priority setting to ensure synergies and address trade-offs among the SDGs. Integrated approaches such as forest landscape management

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<sup>1</sup> This input was prepared by the UNFF15 Bureau in response to the letter of the ECOSOC President dated 5 February 2020 inviting the UNFF to provide its substantive input to the 2020 session of HLPF to be convened under the auspices of ECOSOC. This input will be accompanied by the UNFF15 ministerial declaration and omnibus resolution to be adopted at UNFF15 (4-8 May 2020) and submitted to ECOSOC and its President as the UNFF’s input to the 2020 session of HLPF.

and sustainable value chains of forest products can facilitate collaboration across sectors and stakeholders, and enhance human and social capital to realize transformative changes. The effective implementation of such cross-sectoral measures requires innovative, inclusive and collaborative governance systems across sectors, science-based decision-making and political leadership.

Forests interact with wide-ranging sectors and issues, including agriculture, water, energy, tourism and health, among others. Agricultural expansion is often the main driver of deforestation in many regions, while at the same time forests are important for food security and nutrition, especially for people living in remote areas. In order to end hunger and poverty in all its forms everywhere, national governments should ensure policy coherence across ministries and integrate strategies that deal with forests, agriculture, food, land use, and rural and national development while promoting sustainable consumption and production in close partnership with the private sector, industries and the civil society, among other stakeholders.

Forests also regulate the provision of water and water-related ecosystem services within a larger climate-forest-water-people system, offering sustainable solutions to address pressure from increasing and changing demands from growing population and economic development. Approximately 75 per cent of the world's accessible freshwater derive from forested watersheds, hence forest-based solutions offer a great potential for the sustainable management of water resources.

## **2. Contribution of the intergovernmental body to accelerated action and transformative pathways and realizing the decade of action and delivery for achieving the 2030 Agenda within its area of responsibility (including its cooperation with ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies)**

The UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) with its universal membership and comprehensive mandate on forests continues to play a pivotal role in addressing issues relating to forests in a holistic and integrated manner and in contributing to the work of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and other intergovernmental bodies to achieve globally-agreed goals and targets related to forests.

The UNFF is the responsible intergovernmental body for follow-up and review of the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030 (UNSPF). Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2017<sup>2</sup>, the UNSPF 2030 and its Global Forest Goals (GFGs) and targets represent an ambitious and transformational plan of actions for countries, the UN system, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests<sup>3</sup> (CPF) and all other actors to address the challenges facing the world's forests and maximizing the contribution of forests and sustainable forest management to the SDGs.

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<sup>2</sup> A/RES/71/285

<sup>3</sup> The CPF comprises 15 international organizations: Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Secretariat, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Secretariat, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and the World Bank.

The forthcoming fifteenth session of the UNFF (UNFF15, 4-8 May 2020, UNHQ, New York) and its high-level segment (7 May 2020) offers a sound opportunity to discuss the emerging issues and challenges of significant concerns to forests, and to collectively identify means to address these challenges. The UNFF15 also provides a platform to elevate the role of forests in the global policy-setting agenda, including by highlighting their roles in addressing current global challenges, and the interlinkages of forests and other issues in the agenda of major international fora and conferences.

At UNFF15, the UNFF will also set the agenda and priorities for each of its session in the next four years through consideration of the UNFF's Quadrennial Programme of Work (4POW) for the period 2021-2024. The UNFF 4POW is the main policy and operational tool for the UNFF to advance implementation of the UNSPF 2030 and accelerate the achievement of the GFGs and their associated targets in harmonization with other major global policy frameworks and initiatives, particularly the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, as well as the ongoing work of the UN Secretary-General Executive Committee on turning the tide on deforestation.

In advancing the implementation of the UNSPF 2030 and achievement of the GFG and targets, it is imperative to untap the potential of the voluntary national contributions (VNCs) to serve as the countries' unique path to accelerate the progress on the GFGs, while contributing to other globally-agreed forest-related commitments, including the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and its successor in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, among others.

In support of the implementation of the UNSPF 2030, the CPF developed and endorsed its Strategic Vision towards 2030<sup>4</sup> in January 2020. The CPF Strategic Vision towards 2030 reflects the values and aspirations of its member organizations to collectively advance sustainable forest management worldwide and to support relevant actions by Members States, as well as other stakeholders. The strategic vision also provides the foundation for a coherent account of what the CPF aims to accomplish up to 2030 in a form of the vision statement and strategic priorities. In addition to the CPF Strategic Vision towards 2030, a number of CPF member organizations have integrated the GFGs and targets in their respective programme of work.

### **3. Selected recommendations for accelerating progress and moving on transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action, for possible use in drafting the HLPPF declaration.**

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development may wish to:

- Emphasize the critical role of forests, trees and sustainable forest management in achieving SDGs and in solutions to global challenges, including poverty eradication, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity and pollution, lack of food security and nutrition, land degradation and drought, dust and sandstorms and the increased risk of natural disasters, among others;

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/strategic-vision-2030/index.html>;  
<http://www.cpfweb.org/49203-0ea19b4268f759d6d2b1b639e15b29a8.pdf>

- Call for accelerated implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 as an integrated global framework for transformational actions at all levels to accelerate achievement of the SDGs and other forest-related internationally agreed goals and targets.

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