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Joint Committee/Commission matters**Global Forest Policy Matters****Food and Agriculture Organization****European Forestry Commission****Thirty-ninth session**

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Global Forest Policy Matters**Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

This document summarizes the latest global and regional policy developments related to forests. It describes decisions resulting from international and intergovernmental processes and identifies areas where these decisions may have an impact on the forest sector in the COFFI and EFC region. It also notes the potential role of the Committee and the Commission in facilitating the implementation of the decisions/achievement of the goals of these policy developments.

Delegates will be invited to take note of the information provided and to consider it when deciding on the future work of the Committee and the Commission.



I. Introduction

1. International policy fora witnessed many important developments after Silva2015, the joint meeting of COFFI and EFC, held in Engelberg, Switzerland in October 2015. These developments directly and indirectly address forests and the forestry sector and have important impacts on global and regional forest policy processes. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related targets, which came into effect on 1 January 2016. The twenty-first Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) was convened in December 2015 in Paris, France, followed by COP22 in Marrakech, Morocco in November 2016. The UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work (4POW) of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) for the period 2017-2020, in April 2017, just before the UNFF12 session in New York, USA.

II. Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

2. In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development containing 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related targets. The Agenda covers the period 2016-2030. The Agenda includes one SDG (SDG15)¹ directly linked with forests and others (SDG2, SDG6, SDG7, SDG9, SDG12 and SDG13) that are very relevant to forests and forest products².

3. The Agenda foresees three levels of a follow-up and review system for SDGs: global, regional and national. The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), launched in 2013, will have a central role in overseeing the follow-up and review of the SDG implementation processes at the global level. At the regional level, ECE is the convener of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

4. The Agenda recognizes the importance of building on existing follow-up and review mechanisms at the regional level, for instance those developed by the UN Regional Commissions. The progress towards the achievement of goals and targets at the global level will be reviewed using a set of global indicators. These will be based on data produced by national statistical systems, and information collected at the regional level. UN organizations were invited to contribute to the development of the global indicators framework, coordinated by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), created by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in 2015. The Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section contributed to this process through the United

¹ SDG15: Protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manage forests; combat desertification; halt and reverse land degradation; and halt biodiversity loss.

² SDG2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture;

SDG6: Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;

SDG7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;

SDG9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;

SDG12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; and

SDG13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), which among other activities has been serving as secretariat to IAEG-SDGs.

5. The global indicators framework, developed by the IAEG-SDGs, was agreed by the UN Statistical Commission at its session in March 2016. The framework was then opened to member States for refinement. In July 2016, ECOSOC welcomed the IAEG-SDGs global indicators framework. ECOSOC did not adopt a resolution related to the SDG indicators. Therefore, the UN General Assembly has not yet taken any action in this area.

6. Each SDG indicator has been assigned to a “custodian agency” in the UN system. Custodian agencies are responsible for preparing a plan of work for indicators assigned to them (methodology support, data collection calendar, communication channels with the national correspondents, establishing partnerships with other international agencies, capacity building, etc.). For forestry, FAO has been assigned as custodian agency for SDGs 15.1, 15.2 and 15.4.

7. As regards the availability of the data, the UNSD has developed an SDG Indicators Global Database. The data submitted from countries to this database can be sent directly to the custodian agencies or through regional coordination mechanisms. Priority will be given to official data. Data from other sources will need to be approved by the national official statistical data collection systems before being taken into account at the international level.

8. The IAEG-SDGs continued work on refining the methodology for tier III indicators and establishing the rules regarding sending statistical data relevant to each indicator from the countries to the custodian agencies. The results of this work were presented to the meeting of the UN Statistical Commission on 7 to 10 March 2017.

9. In parallel with these developments, the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section organised an informative session for member States on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular on the regional dimension, during the Seventy-fourth session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry, held in Geneva on 18 to 20 October 2016.

10. On this occasion, delegates were presented with information on the role of ECE in the implementation and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, the session was informed of the findings of the regional survey on the 2030 Agenda conducted in 2015 among ECE member States. Most countries in the region have already developed national strategies for the implementation of SDGs and are adapting the review and follow-up mechanisms to existing systems. Many of them still face the challenge of implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a more coordinated manner among various stakeholders; how to measure progress in achieving the goals also remains difficult.

11. At the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development organised by ECE in May 2016, countries discussed how they might wish to set up the regional process of reviews, and concluded that they should build on existing mechanisms. This process is still developing and ECE Sectoral Committees will have a role in it.

12. During its forty-eighth session in March 2017, the UN Statistical Commission recommended a draft resolution to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which:

(a) Adopts the global indicator framework for the SDGs and targets of the 2030 Agenda, developed by the IAEG-SDGs, as agreed upon by the UN Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session. This framework is a voluntary and country-led instrument that includes the initial set of indicators to be refined annually and reviewed comprehensively

by the Commission at its fifty-first session in 2020 and its fifty-sixth session in 2025, and will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels, which will be developed by Member States;

(b) Requests the UN Statistical Commission, through the IAEG-SDGs, to further refine and improve the global indicator framework in order to address coverage, alignment with targets, definition of terms and development of metadata and to facilitate its implementation, including through the periodic review of new methodologies and data as they become available;

(c) Urges international organizations to base the global review on data produced by national statistical systems, that communication and coordination among international organizations be enhanced in order to avoid duplicate reports, to ensure consistency of data and reduce response burdens on countries, and international organizations to provide the methodologies used to harmonize country data for international comparability and to produce estimates through transparent mechanisms;

(d) Urges countries, the United Nations funds and programmes, the specialized agencies, the Secretariat, including the regional commissions, international organizations and bilateral and regional funding agencies to intensify their support for strengthening data collection and statistical capacity-building, including capacity-building that strengthens coordination among national statistical offices, as appropriate and within their mandates, in a coordinated manner that recognizes national priorities and reflects national ownership of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

13. ECE and FAO will continue to monitor the SDG process, including within the scope of the Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW), and update member States on the developments of the political agenda related to SDGs.

III. The United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF)

14. The UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017-2030 and quadrennial programme of work (4POW) of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) for the period 2017-2020, in April 2017. The UNSPF has been negotiated and adopted through intersessional meetings over the 2015-2017 period. The UNSPF and its 4POW 2017-2020 provided the basis for discussions during the UNFF12, on 1 to 5 May 2017.

15. The UNSPF serves as a reference framework for the forest-related work of the United Nations system and for the fostering of enhanced coherence, collaboration and synergies among United Nations bodies and partners towards its vision and mission. It also serves as a framework to enhance the coherence, and guide and focus the work of the international arrangement on forests and its components.

16. The UNSPF includes a vision, mission, trends, challenges and opportunities, 6 Global Forest Goals and 26 associated targets, as well as implementation and review frameworks and provisions for communication and outreach. The Goals and Targets are fully in line with Global Objectives on Forests, the forest-relevant Sustainable Development Goals, the provisions of the Paris Agreement adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant global commitments.

17. The UNSPF recognizes the critical roles of regional bodies, notably the United Nations regional commissions and the FAO regional forestry commissions, and other

regional and subregional bodies and processes, in providing a crucial bridge between international policies and national actions. Hence, these bodies are recognized as important partners in efforts to implement the strategic plan and achieve its global forest goals and targets (UNSPF, paragraph 43).

18. The UNFF works with regional and subregional bodies and processes to identify ways to contribute to the global forest goals and targets, including by encouraging them to exchange information, enhance cooperation, raise awareness, strengthen stakeholder engagement and build capacity to scale up best practices within and across regions (UNSPF, paragraph 44).

19. Regional and subregional bodies and processes, including those within the United Nations system, as well as the criteria and indicator processes, are encouraged to build and strengthen synergies between the strategic plan and their policies and programmes, including in the context of their contributions to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (UNSPF, paragraph 45).

20. The UNSPF provides a reference for international cooperation and means of implementation, including finance and capacity-building related to forests, supported by effective institutions, sound policies, legal frameworks, good governance and partnerships at all levels.

IV. Outcome of UNFF12

21. The twelfth session of UNFF took place in New York on 1 to 5 May 2017. This was the first review session established by ECOSOC resolution E/2015/33 focusing on implementation, and as such, applying new working modalities. Accordingly, the session consisted of several consecutive panels discussing key components of the UNSPF and the 2030 Agenda, including forests and poverty eradication (SDG1); forests and food security (SDG2); gender equality and empowerment of women (SDG5). The conclusions of these discussions are presented for the consideration in the review process by the High-level Political Forum as a Chair's Summary.

22. Many Member States welcomed the adoption of the UNSPF and the 4POW by the UNGA, and provided an overview of national actions contributing to the implementation of the UNSPF and the SDGs. They noted the need to avoid additional reporting burdens and duplication. A number of delegates called for maximizing the use of existing reporting mechanisms, including the FAO's Forest Resources Assessment (FRA), enhanced use of Montreal Process criteria and indicators for SFM, and building upon existing criteria and indicators.

23. Some member States also mentioned that the UNSPF is a global framework for action at all levels and urged for more integrated, synergistic implementation of the SDGs; highlighted the importance of capacity building and technology transfer, reducing reporting burdens; and improving coherence and coordination between forest-related institutions; and called for political and financial commitment at all levels. Several members States stressed that the proposed reporting format is very complicated and demanding and asked the secretariat to simplify it.

24. On SDG1, the UNSPF proposes to strengthen stakeholder dialogue, address data gaps related to the socio-economic functions of forests and to undertake assessments of the contribution of forests to poverty reduction to help develop appropriate measures.

25. As regards SDG2, the plan proposals include raising awareness of the key role of forests and trees in food security and nutrition; scaling up integrated and sustainable natural resource management for food production, based on traditional knowledge; promoting landscape approaches to community-based agroforestry practices; and promoting further development of deforestation-free commodity chains.

26. As regards SDG5, the plan suggestions include improving gender considerations in data provision; sharing of best practices on gender equality and women's empowerment; developing gender-friendly financing instruments and encouraging girls to consider careers in forestry.

27. The UNFF adopted an omnibus resolution, including the need for further revision of: (i) the monitoring, assessment and reporting format; (ii) the need for enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement on forest related issues; and (iii) the means of implementation.

28. The outcomes of the UNFF12 session will build into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2018, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will review SDGs that are directly linked to forests. The UNFF inputs to HLPF2018 will include: the Chair's summary of UNFF12, a report on actions to accelerate progress in achieving SDG15 and forest-related targets, and a background study on the contribution of forests to other SDGs. In the same context, CPF will organise an international conference on halting deforestation and increasing forest area.

V. Twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties (COP22) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

29. The twenty-first Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC took place in Paris in December 2015 with the aim of achieving a legally binding and universal agreement on climate to keep global warming below two degrees Celsius. Forests have a central role in achieving this ambitious goal. The outcome of the negotiations – the so-called “Paris Package” – consists of a legally binding and universal agreement on climate to take effect in 2020 and a decision on arrangements prior to the agreement's entry into force.

30. The agreement adopted a comprehensive approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation and requested action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases, including forests, and to implement and support, including through results based payments, REDD+ and alternative policy approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests, while reaffirming the importance of incentivizing, as appropriate, non-carbon benefits associated with such approaches.

31. The twenty-second Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC took place in Marrakech, Morocco from 7 to 18 November 2016.

32. One main outcome, the Marrakech Action Proclamation of COP22, calls for Parties to build on the momentum of the Paris agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote adaptation efforts to support the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It called for the strengthening of efforts to eradicate poverty, ensure food security and take swift action to deal with climate change in agriculture. It also encouraged the

increase in flow and access to climate finance, and opportunity for development of capacity and technology.

33. COP22 negotiations were focused on matters relating to the broader issues of the entry into force and the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Forests were not discussed under a formal agenda item; however, forests featured in events outside official negotiations and maintained international forest momentum. COP22 reinforced the message that without harnessing the great potential of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, the Paris Agreement imperative to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels..." will be challenging.

VI. Points for consideration

34. The Commission and the Committee may wish to encourage countries to:

(a) Actively engage in the work of UNFF and the implementation of the UNSPF and the SDGs at regional and national levels as they relate to forests by strengthening the socio-economic contributions of forests; and to monitor progress, using the UN Forest Instrument and national forest programmes as frameworks for implementation;

(b) Continue efforts to integrate climate change into their national forest programmes and to reflect forests adequately in their climate change strategies and plans.

35. The Commission and the Committee may wish to note the joint work done by ECE and FAO and request ECE and FAO, within their existing mandates, to:

(a) Continue to support country implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as they relate to forests, and the UNSPF in cooperation with the CPF members;

(b) Update member States and other stakeholders on the forest-related global and regional policy developments, building also on the possible input from the ECE/FAO ToS on Forest Policy, to contribute to the achievement of SDGs and the UNSPF implementation and review process.

(c) Continue to address forest and climate change issues through its monitoring and outlook work, and in the context of SDG achievement through the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.