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# COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

## Twenty-seventh Session

Rome, 22–26 July 2024

**Strengthening FAO's contribution to the international arrangement on forests, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030**

### Executive summary

This document presents FAO's contributions to, and progress made on implementing the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030 (UNSPF) and the progress towards achieving the Global Forest Goals (GFGs). It further highlights FAO's work within the international arrangement on forests, as member and Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and provides a brief report on the CPF joint initiatives. The document also highlights options for FAO to scale up efforts and accelerate progress.

### Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- a. take note on the progress and accomplishments of FAO's work in support of the GFGs, the UNSPF and appreciate FAO's leadership role in the CPF and the joint initiatives under FAO's lead;
- b. invite FAO to further integrate the UNSPF and the GFGs in its programmes of work on forestry under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31, and regularly report on progress at the Committee's sessions;
- c. invite FAO to continue leading the CPF and the development of its workplan, focusing on supporting the implementation of the UNSPF and the achievement of its GFGs, as well as other multilaterally agreed forest-related goals and objectives;
- d. invite FAO to continue to contribute with expertise, data and knowledge products to the policy and technical discussions of the United Nations Forum on Forests; and
- e. invite Members, as members of the governing bodies of CPF member organizations, to send consistent messages to those governing bodies and support the work of the CPF.

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## I. Introduction

1. The implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030 (UNSPF) to achieve its six Global Forest Goals (GFGs) is a key priority for FAO and its Members. Consideration of progress made in this regard is a recurrent item on the agenda of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) and the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs). Through these bodies, Members have been providing regular guidance for FAO, requesting its continued contribution to policy dialogues and to action on the ground.
2. In the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (IAF), United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Member States noted with concern the continued global trends in deforestation and the mutually reinforcing adverse impacts of climate change, desertification and land degradation, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste, that have strongly hindered sustainable development gains.<sup>1</sup> To address these challenges, countries committed to take urgent and accelerated action to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation, and prevent land degradation by 2030 while achieving sustainable development.<sup>2</sup>
3. These commitments offer a unique opportunity for FAO Members to provide renewed and focused guidance for FAO to strengthen its efforts in supporting Members to implement the UNSPF and achieve the GFGs.
4. FAO has two main avenues for supporting the implementation of the UNSPF: through its programme of work, and through its contribution to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). The CPF is a unique voluntary partnership of 16 global UN and non-UN organizations and processes,<sup>3</sup> with a substantive mandate on forests. FAO serves as the permanent Chair of the partnership with the UNFF Secretariat acting as its secretariat.

## II. FAO's contribution to the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030

5. FAO worked systematically to align its work with the UNSPF since its inception. During the development of the biennial programmes of work, the UNSPF and the GFGs were considered an important driving force for action, alongside the SDGs and the Organization's Strategic Framework 2022-31.
6. At its last session, COFO welcomed the progress and accomplishments of FAO's work in support of the UNSPF and the GFGs<sup>4</sup> and encouraged FAO to contribute with expertise, statistical data and knowledge to the policy discussions of the UNFF.<sup>5</sup> COFO endorsed the priority areas of work in forestry for the 2022–23 biennium and beyond and welcomed that it continues to make contributions to the UNSPF.<sup>6</sup>
7. FAO's support to the implementation of the UNSPF is manifold: all activities in FAO's programme of work provide contributions directly to the GFGs and their associated targets. For example, FAO contributes to the global policy dialogues on forests by providing information and knowledge products that support the work of UNFF as well as other processes, as and when needed. A flagship contribution is the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and its satellite products, which are the primary source of data on the state and development of forest resources and serve as a basis for policy development. In addition, FRA provides a substantive contribution to monitoring progress towards the GFGs, directly supporting UNFF in its review function, including through the contributions to *the Global Forest Goals Report 2021*<sup>7</sup> with quantitative data on the status and

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<sup>1</sup> Draft declaration of the High-Level Segment of UNFF 19, paragraph 1. <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/UNFF19-High-Level-declaration-10May2024-330pm-adv-unedited.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Draft declaration of the High-Level Segment of UNFF 19, paragraph 2. <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/UNFF19-High-Level-declaration-10May2024-330pm-adv-unedited.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fao.org/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/members/en>

<sup>4</sup> COFO/2022/REP, paragraph 30 a).

<sup>5</sup> COFO/2022/REP, paragraph 30 c).

<sup>6</sup> COFO/2022/REP, paragraph 27 b).

<sup>7</sup> UN DESA. 2021. *The Global Forest Goals Report 2021*. <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/outreach/global-forests-goal-report-2021/index.html>

development of global forest resources. Similar contributions are foreseen to the next editions of the report, thus their alignment with the FRA cycle would be beneficial in terms of availability of the newest data.

8. FAO's biennial publication, *The State of the World's Forests* (SOFO), provides a thorough analysis of global developments, thereby supporting forest policy dialogues, including at the UNFF. Through the forthcoming Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources,<sup>8</sup> FAO makes additional substantive contributions to discussing biodiversity-related policy and technical measures within FAO, UNFF, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and potentially other fora. To share forest biodiversity-related information more broadly, FAO, together with the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) will launch a global information system: SilvaGRIS. Further information on these products is presented in document COFO/2024/6.3.

9. Global and regional interactions are key for many policy processes, and FAO, through the RFCs acting on the regional level and COFO globally and supported by the FAO Decentralized Offices and FAO headquarters. Since UNFF has been implementing various measures to facilitate its collaboration with regional organizations and processes the RFCs are important partners in this. Through this channel, FAO regularly provides input for the six regions with a global synthesis, enabling a multidimensional approach to the issues discussed by UNFF.

10. The 26th Session of COFO invited FAO to continue supporting the participation of RFCs in regional dialogues related to UNFF, as appropriate and within FAO's mandate.<sup>9</sup> To facilitate this, the RFCs have, as a standing agenda item, an update on the past session of UNFF, together with information on relevant intersessional activities, enabling them to provide solid guidance to Commissions' Members and FAO.

11. FAO's technical work provides a major contribution to the implementation of the UNSPF. Examples include the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which FAO co-leads with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). National- or regional-level actions include forest and landscape restoration, development of wood value chains, national forest monitoring, forest financing, communication, and awareness-raising. Further details of related activities can be found in documents COFO/2024/5.1, COFO/2024/5.2 and COFO/2024/INF/5.

12. To strengthen its contribution to the implementation of the UNSPF, FAO outlines in its Forestry Roadmap – From Vision to Action 2024–2031<sup>10</sup> a course of action derived from the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31 and the UNSPF within the overarching framework of the SDGs. In the roadmap, FAO encompasses forest-related contributions to the UNSPF, the GFGs, the CPF, other commitments under the Rio Conventions and other global fora.

### III. FAO's contribution to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

13. The CPF has been established to support the work of UNFF and to enhance cooperation and collaboration among participants.<sup>11</sup> FAO has been leading the CPF since its inception, thereby making an important contribution to global forest policy processes within the IAF. Following COFO and FAO Council recommendations, during the last biennium, FAO provided strengthened leadership for the CPF, heightened CPF's advocacy for forests, and facilitated the active participation of CPF member organizations in the midterm review of the effectiveness of the IAF.

14. FAO, in its capacity as the Chair of the CPF, convened the high-level event on Forests for our Future<sup>12</sup> on 18 September 2023 during the 2023 SDG Summit in New York, to discuss global forest challenges and devise accelerated actions to achieve the CPF Strategic Vision towards 2030.<sup>13</sup> At the

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fao.org/forest-genetic-resources/assessments/second-report/en/>

<sup>9</sup> COFO/2022/REP, paragraph 30 d).

<sup>10</sup> COFO/2024/5.1

<sup>11</sup> Resolution 2000/35: Report on the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests. United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2000. Also available at: [https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2000\\_35\\_E.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2000_35_E.pdf). Paragraph 3 (b).

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.fao.org/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/meetings/forests-for-our-future/en>

<sup>13</sup> CPF Strategic Vision towards 2030: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f02f3a50-0401-4690-ba1b-255e445a3615/content>

event, the CPF launched the Joint Call to Action for Forests towards 2030,<sup>14</sup> (Joint Call) offering heightened commitment and concerted efforts to enhance forest-based solutions.

15. The CPF continued to play an active role at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conferences of the Parties (COP 27 and COP 28) and organized high-level events, including on “Turning the Tide on Deforestation”,<sup>15</sup> “Beyond carbon – Realizing untapped potential of forests to combat climate change”<sup>16</sup> and “Forests for Our Common Future Halting and Reversing Deforestation by 2030”.<sup>17</sup>

16. FAO, together with the UNFF Secretariat, organized a briefing for UNFF Member States at UNFF 18, covering the CPF workplan and collecting feedback on the midterm review of the CPF. The CPF-related findings, together with the outcomes of the Organization-Led Initiative on the Assessment of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests,<sup>18</sup> hosted by FAO in Rome on 22–23 February 2023, were discussed at the CPF Strategic Retreat,<sup>19</sup> and findings brought to the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG)<sup>20</sup> meeting held on 10–13 October 2023 in Vienna, Austria.

17. The CPF’s support to UNFF and its Member States is outlined in the CPF workplan,<sup>21</sup> which is fully aligned with the UNFF Quadrennial Programme of Work (4PoW). With FAO’s leadership, the CPF is currently working on its workplan for 2025–2028 and will finalize it with due consideration of the decisions of UNFF 19 on the forum’s 4PoW.

18. The backbone of the CPF support to UNFF and its Member States are the joint initiatives. Of the 11 CPF joint initiatives currently active in this reporting period, FAO is leading or co-leading seven. There are four further joint initiatives in the pipeline, two of which are led by FAO.<sup>22</sup>

19. The FAO-led or co-led initiatives produced remarkable results and contributed to the implementation of the UNSPF as follows:

- a. **Streamlining Forest-related Reporting:** Partners continued to improve the coverage, quality and transparency of forest-related data and information. The current focus is to improve the methodology for reporting on primary forests, revise certain terms and definitions, provide support to FRA 2025, and advance the global core set of forest-related indicators, which will be reviewed by UNFF in 2025. In addition, FAO and UNFF hosted a global workshop on reporting on progress towards the GFGs and Targets of the UNSPF in March 2023.<sup>23</sup>
- b. **Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World (SW4SW):** Partners work to strengthen sustainable wood value chains to enhance their social, economic, and environmental benefits in a bioeconomy. FAO, through collaboration with IUFRO, is conducting a global stocktaking of sustainable wood policies and policy platforms within the Wood for Globe project.<sup>24</sup> As part of this collaboration, a global policy dialogue on sustainable wood use policies took place on 25 March 2024.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>14</sup> CPF Joint Call to Action for Forests towards 2030:

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/170a3a50-7118-4f32-aae4-06dd7a74a731/content>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.fao.org/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/meetings/cop27-high-level-dialogue-of-the-collaborative-partnership-on-forests-on-turning-the-tide-on-deforestation>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.fao.org/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/meetings/beyond-carbon--realizing-untapped-potential-of-forests-to-combat-climate-change/en>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.fao.org/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/meetings/forests-for-our-common-future--halting-and-reversing-deforestation-by-2030/en>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.fao.org/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/meetings/organization-led-initiative/en>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CPF-Meeting-Summary-report-22-23June2023.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/events/aheg-iaf-mtr/index.html>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CPF-Work-Plan-2021-2024-summary-update-May-2024.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> See footnote 24.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/events/mar-workshop-march-2023/index.html>

<sup>24</sup> <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/fcccb366-010d-45c7-bb01-254ea47f7851>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.fao.org/forestry/all-events/events-detail/global-policy-dialogue--advancing-sustainable-wood-policy-and-science-for-carbon-neutral-and-resilient-economies/en>

- c. **Turning the Tide on Deforestation:** Several recent activities aimed at contributing to high-level dialogues within the UNFCCC, including events at COP 27 and COP 28. Other efforts continue to support forest assessments to build transparency while helping countries' monitoring and decision-making. In March 2024, FAO and UNEP briefed the Secretary-General's Executive Committee on the progress of the initiative.
- d. **Strengthening the Conservation of Primary Forests Through Enhanced Partnerships and Coordination of Support:** This new joint initiative aims to highlight the importance and role of primary forests in the global forest policy agenda and support UNFF Member States in this regard. FAO will focus on technical support, capacity development and the development of tools and techniques for primary forest mapping, monitoring, and reporting.
- e. **Communicators' Network:** The network continued to enhance advocacy and coordinated outreach on the multiple benefits of forests and trees and provided substantive support to the celebration of the International Day of Forests. The network also supports the implementation of the Communication and Outreach Strategy of the UNSPF.
- f. **Wangari Maathai Award:** The CPF periodically selects and seeks to recognize an individual who has made extraordinary efforts to improve the world's forests and the lives of the people who depend on them. After a careful selection process, the 2024 awardee will be announced and awarded at COFO 27.
- g. **Forest finance facilitation:** FAO provides technical support on capacity building to mobilize finance for forests and facilitate access to and more effective use of funding for forests.
- h. **Forest education:** Understanding the role of knowledge and skills needed for sustainable forest management, FAO continues to support this work by advancing small-scale forestry and agroforestry through the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) platform<sup>26</sup> and the FAO elearning Academy.<sup>27</sup>
- i. **Forests for Food Security and Nutrition:** This is a new joint initiative proposed by FAO, which aims to conduct a review of the current status, including data and information on the links between forests, food security and nutrition, and identify challenges and opportunities for cross-sectoral policies and programmes that enhance the links between forestry, agriculture, food security and nutrition, through a global dialogue. It further aims to develop actions to enhance the contribution of forests to food security and nutrition, particularly at the country level.

#### IV. Way forward

20. Supporting the implementation of the UNSPF and the achievement of GFGs remains a priority for FAO. Further integration of the UNSPF, GFGs and the CPF in the implementation of the FAO Forestry Roadmap under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and the Medium-Term Plan 2024–2025 and its successor, can enhance complementarity and maximize efficiency, effectiveness, and impacts.

21. More systematic and streamlined monitoring and assessment of progress of actions in support of the implementation of the GFGs could provide valuable input to further accelerate actions towards the forest-related 2030 Agenda goals and targets. To this end, future SOFO reports could be structured around the GFGs, so that SOFO, together with FRA data could provide a solid basis for both FAO's and UNFF's deliberations on the way forward towards 2030.

22. The CPF and its member organizations should be encouraged to enhance their contribution to the 2030 Agenda and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) by providing inputs to the HLPF in relation to the cluster of SDGs to be reviewed in the respective years. Furthermore, the CPF should work to better highlight the interlinkages between forests and the SDGs

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.fao.org/farmer-field-schools/ffs-overview/forestry/en/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://elearning.fao.org/>

concerned, including through “topline” key messages to the HLPF highlighting the benefits of, challenges to, and opportunities for forests.<sup>28</sup>

23. The success of the CPF depends, to a large extent, on close and enhanced coordination and synergy among programmes of individual member organizations. The CPF has already taken important steps in this regard through developing its Strategic Vision towards 2030,<sup>29</sup> and most recently, by launching the CPF Joint Call to Action for Forests towards 2030 (CPF Joint Call). In addition to expressing strengthened commitment of member organizations to achieving the partnership’s objectives, the CPF Joint Call charts the way forward for partnership members to scale up actions in four focal areas: i) implementation and action; ii) data, science and innovation; iii) finance for forests; and iv) communication and awareness-raising. The CPF should embark on implementing the CPF Joint Call through its multi-year workplan.

24. As the Chair of the CPF, FAO shall strive to enhance its leadership role in ensuring the success of the CPF in facilitating implementation of the UNSPF and attainment of the GFGs and related SDGs through integrated, coordinated, and enhanced joint programming of priority actions.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/UNFF19-Omnibus-Resolution-10May2024-5pm-adv-unedited.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> CPF Strategic Vision towards 2030: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f02f3a50-0401-4690-ba1b-255e445a3615/content>