

UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS INPUT TO THE 2017 HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

1. This input to the 2017 High-Level Political Forum is the Chair's summary of discussions held during the twelfth session of the UNFF (UNFF12), on 1 – 5 May 2017, where four Panel sessions were organised to consider: the contribution of forests to SDG 1; the contribution of forests to SDG 2; forests and SDG 5; and means of implementation for sustainable forest management (SDG 17). It uses the template suggested by ECOSOC for the 2017 HLPF to highlight key issues identified during Panel discussions.

(a) Assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global level

Impact of deforestation and forest degradation on many of the world's poorest people

2. An estimated 1.6 billion people (or 17% of the world's population) depend directly on forests for subsistence, livelihood, employment and income generation. For many, food is an essential aspect of this dependence and there are strong links between achieving SDG 2 on food security and delivery of SDG 1 on ending poverty. Forests and trees provide food, fuel for cooking and heating, water, medicine, shelter and clothing and they function as safety nets in crises or emergencies, for example, when crops fail owing to prolonged drought or when there are seasonal shortages. Deforestation and forest degradation can make poor households and poor countries worse off by cutting access to forest goods and services, and can lead to further problems such as landslides and flooding, decrease in water supply and productivity of agricultural land as well as an increase in the frequency of disasters. Forests prevent soil erosion that could adversely affect hydropower systems and provide natural water filtration services. There is an urgent need to tackle deforestation and forest degradation, not least because of their impact on poor forest-dependent people. Multi-sectoral approaches are needed to address deforestation and forest degradation as many of the drivers are outside the forest sector. An estimated 80% of forest loss is due to the conversion to agriculture, mostly in the tropics, and the main driver of deforestation in many parts of the world is the commercial development of palm oil, soya, timber plantations, and beef farming on forest land. Further measures aimed at eliminating deforestation associated with consumer goods supply chains would have a significant impact on reducing deforestation. The Forum welcomes the initiative of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to organize an international conference on halting deforestation and increasing forest area.

(b) Identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges

Understanding the contribution of forests to poverty alleviation

3. Forest resources play an important role in alleviating poverty and enhancing prosperity, however, important supporting documentation and analysis could be improved to strengthen policy linkage and illustrate impacts. To further detail and document the extent of

forests contribution to poverty reduction, food security and economic development, actions have to be taken to significantly improve data collection and availability, including on the nature of these interactions and address problems of definition. While many case studies highlight the contributions of forests in particular locations, they rarely indicate how such relief can lift people out of poverty permanently. It is important to recognise the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, impacts on natural resources and the cross-sectoral relationships, including complementarities between forests and agriculture. There is therefore a need for further independent assessment of the contribution of forests to poverty alleviation aimed at assisting in the design of policy measures that are appropriate to different situations. There is also a need to improve monitoring to address gaps in data and to develop indicators relating to socio-economic aspects of forests.

(c) Valuable lessons learned on eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity

Sustainable forest management benefitting local communities

4. There are many good examples of effective sustainable forest management programmes aimed at local communities and indigenous peoples. These have included interventions in the promotion of village, community and farm forestry, strengthened producer organizations and empowered women's organizations, with a focus on increasing productivity, and improving access to markets and to credit. One example is the Dedicated Grant Mechanism for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, which supports the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in international effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and promote sustainable forest management and forest carbon stocks (REDD+). A multi-sectoral approach brings benefits for rural livelihoods through better integration with agriculture and by learning lessons from the agricultural sector; these include, for example, the need to widen availability of micro-credit and to strengthen producer associations. However, it can be a challenge to secure private sector investment in community-based management of natural forests, as this is less likely to provide investors with financial adequate returns commensurate with risk. Philanthropic funders who want to benefit forest communities can also face difficulties in identifying suitable projects where there are concerns about the integrity of social and environmental impacts, or serious risks, such as insecure land tenure and conflict and/or environmental injustice.

(d) Emerging issues likely to affect the realization of poverty eradication and achieving prosperity

Gender equality mainstreaming and empowerment of girls and women

5. In many countries, the nexus between poverty, gender and sustainable forest management is a critical issue. Women are often the primary collectors of wood for fuel, forest foods, and herbs for medicines. Many women have highly specialized knowledge of trees and forests, including traditional practices that are inherently sustainable, and the dietary and medicinal values of forest products. Women also make specific contributions to forest value chains which are important for their incomes and, in turn, for the well-being and food

security of their households. However, compared with men, rural women are frequently disadvantaged - for a variety of interrelated cultural, social, economic and institutional reasons - in their access to and control over forest resources and in the economic opportunities available to them. Women's knowledge of forests and trees is often discounted in forest decisions, and their role in forest-related value chains tends to be poorly supported by policy-makers and extension services. Policies and practices which can empower rural women and girls include facilitating women's participation in forest user groups, improving their access to modern sources of energy, and enhancing their access to processing techniques and markets – recognizing that the lack of gender-disaggregated data, as well as cultural biases, often hampers the development of positive policy interventions to address the issue. Small-scale women's enterprises based on forest products can be important sources of household income, but it can be difficult for women to secure the finance necessary to scale up their business if they are unable to offer collateral because of insecure tenure. There is a crucial need to secure equal rights for women with regard to land tenure, access to resources and financial services, education, information and technology, markets, skills development and value chains. Reducing gender inequalities and mainstreaming gender in the forest sector requires measures to address structural gender disparities and inequalities, and to promote women's full participation and leadership in decision-making processes.

Tackling malnutrition

6. Foods from forests –, including leaves, seeds, nuts, fruits, mushrooms, honey, insects and wild animals – provide dietary diversity, including vital micro-nutrients, for millions of rural people. The Global Forest Expert Panel report on *Forests, Trees and Landscapes for Food Security and Nutrition* (2015) presented evidence showing how forests and tree-based systems can complement agricultural production and provide more nutritionally-balanced diets. While increasing dependence on grain has led to diets that lack nutritional diversity, the availability of forest food products derived from edible leaves, fruits, fungi, animals and insects tackle this “hidden hunger” by providing a valuable source of micro-nutrients.

(e) Areas where political guidance by the High-Level Political Forum is required

Securing greater policy convergence

7. There is a need to develop and promote integrated approaches to land management in order to overcome traditional debates that forests and agriculture must compete, and recognize instead the complementary role of forests, agriculture and other sectors in multi-functional landscapes. Sustainably managed forests also provide ecosystem services that are essential for staple crop production, including protecting soil and water, maintaining soil fertility, regulating micro-climates, and providing habitat for pollinators. They also prevent land degradation and desertification. In addition, considerable financial savings can result where, for example, forests prevent erosion that would adversely affect hydropower schemes, provide natural water filtrations services, or prevent flooding. However, integrated approaches can be difficult to achieve because of institutional silos, and some countries still provide government subsidies for unsustainable practices leading to deforestation and forest degradation. Securing greater policy convergence and coherence, with more effective

communication between sectors, including the use of tools, such as spatial planning, is essential to promote an integrated approach to land use.

Governance and tenure rights

8. Obstacles to investment in sustainable forest management include governance problems, such as corruption and lack of transparency. While the FAO *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of Food Security* provide an excellent basis for establishing appropriate tenure arrangements, problems remain; for example, many countries do not have mechanisms for formalizing customary rights. The livelihoods of many forest-dependent poor people would be improved if they had secure and equitable access to and control over natural resources, supported by effective and accountable institutions. This could be further enhanced with effective education of forest owners and users on sustainable management forests and resources. There is a need to promote good governance and improve tenure and access rights to land and forest resources. Insecure, uncertain or unstable tenure hampers efforts to improve prospects for rural people and disadvantaged groups.

(f) policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in poverty eradication

Deforestation and forest degradation

9. There is an urgent need to tackle deforestation and forest degradation, as well as increase forest area, particularly in view of its impacts on poor forest-dependent people. Multi-sectoral approaches are essential to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation as many of these drivers lie outside the forest sector. A strong accelerator for development of effective cross-sectoral approaches is spatial planning of land and forest use and scenario planning/modeling. In particular, a holistic approach can bring benefits for rural livelihoods through better integration with agriculture and by learning lessons from the agricultural sector relating to productivity improvements, availability of micro-credit and producer associations, among others.

10. The UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) provides a reference framework for forest-related work of member states, partners and stakeholders within and beyond the UN system, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and its member organizations. The implementation of the UNSPF should be promoted to foster enhanced coherence among member states, organizations and initiatives and make the progress towards the achievement of its Global Forest Goals and targets.

Partnerships for sustainable forest management at all levels

11. As forests serve multiple stakeholders, the prospects for enhanced global partnership and community engagement in sustainable forest management could be realized only through multi-sectoral dialogue and cross-sector governance and policy frameworks that consider forests and other sectors in tandem while ensuring equitable access of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to forests and their resources. In this regard, it is imperative to strengthen dialogue with government institutions responsible for management of forests in

member states, relevant partners and stakeholders, including the private sector and small-scale enterprises as well as indigenous peoples, children and youth, and local communities, to address critical constraints for sustainable forest management, such as insecure tenure, uncertainty over customary rights, competing land uses, subsidies that promote unsustainable approaches to forest management, conflict, and governance problems such as corruption and lack of transparency.

Means of implementation for sustainable forest management

12. Effective implementation of sustainable forest management is critically dependent upon adequate resources, including financing, scientific and technical capacity building, and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies. The forest financing landscape is changing and there are many potential financing opportunities, including existing sources, philanthropic sources and innovative mechanisms. Expertise is however needed to help clients identify the mix of financial instruments that meets their particular needs, taking into account the wide variation in the objectives and rules of different instruments. The Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) was established by ECOSOC resolution 2015/33 to facilitate access by countries to resources to implement the United Nations Strategic Plan on Forests. A good start has been made to operationalize the GFFFN but there is now a need to scale up its work through voluntary funding. Additionally, it is important to note that national forest financing strategies are crucial in providing guidance to policy-makers and stakeholders on how to finance SFM while fulfilling a given country's national forest management objectives and international commitments.

Agro-forestry

13. Agroforestry encompasses a wide array of production systems in which tree and shrub species are integrated with crops and/or animals on the same land unit. Many agroforestry practices are based on traditional knowledge of local and indigenous communities. Agricultural and forest scientists increasingly recognize the value of these integrated systems and are exploring ways to combine traditional and formal scientific knowledge to enhance their productivity and other benefits. More widespread adoption of appropriate agroforestry practices can help accelerate progress in poverty alleviation and improving food security. This could be further promoted through, for example, developing pilot schemes demonstrating the benefits of a landscape approach, spatial planning and best practices in community-based sustainable agroforestry practices.

Forest-related monitoring, assessment and reporting

14. There continues to remain the need to undertake assessments of the contribution of forests to poverty alleviation with a view to assisting in the design of appropriate policy measures for different situations. It is essential to strengthen monitoring to address gaps in data relating to socio-economic aspects of forests, including disaggregated data, especially gender. [The ongoing work related to the development of format for voluntary national reporting to the UNFF and a global set of forest indicators should take into account and contribute to addressing these gaps with a view to assisting countries in improving

monitoring, assessing and reporting on the progress towards achievement of sustainable forest management, including those related to contributions of forests to poverty eradication.]

Reference Documents

FAO. State of the World's Forests, 2014. (available at www.fao.org/forestry/sofo/en/).

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Vira, B. et al. (ed) Forests, Trees and Landscapes for Food Security and Nutrition - A Global Assessment Report, IUFRO, 2015. (available at <http://www.iufro.org/science/gfep/forests-and-food-security-panel/report/>)