

## UNFF14 Chair Summary: PART II

### THE INPUT BY THE 14<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS (UNFF14) TO THE 2019 SESSION OF THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*This input to the 2019 High-Level Political Forum is based on the technical discussions of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its thematic priorities at its 14<sup>th</sup> session on 6 and 7 May 2019. It complements the input provided earlier by the UNFF14 Bureau on 15 March 2019. This input is based on the UNFF14 Chair's summary and is not a consensus negotiated outcome of the Forum.*

#### **I. Identification of progress, gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges in achieving the SDGs and in relation to the theme within the area under the purview of UNFF**

##### Urgent need to scale up implementation of forest-based solutions to climate change

Forests can and should make a very significant contribution in the fight against climate change. Successful implementation of a full range of policy options for forests could reduce greenhouse gas by an estimated 15 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e a year by 2050, potentially closing the current 'emissions gap'. This will require effective action to halt deforestation and forest degradation, to promote sustainable forest management and to increase the forest area. In addition, harvested wood products can contribute to climate change mitigation through carbon storage and by replacing products manufactured from more greenhouse-gas-intensive materials such as concrete or brick, metals or plastics.

Some progress has been made, for example through development of the REDD+ process, aimed at encouraging countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. However, deforestation is continuing, mainly as a result of pressures from agriculture, and intensified efforts must be made to address deforestation from agricultural production such as palm oil, soy and beef.

The recent IPCC Special Report on *Global Warming of 1.5 degrees*<sup>1</sup> highlighted the key role of forests as a proven method for removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Furthermore, the Ministerial Katowice Declaration on Forests for the Climate<sup>2</sup> stresses the crucial role of forests and forest products in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

To achieve the necessary change there is a pressing need to:

- integrate climate mitigation and adaptation policies more fully with forest and land use policies, at all levels

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

<sup>2</sup> See:

[https://cop24.gov.pl/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Ministerial\\_Katowice\\_Declaration\\_on\\_Forests\\_for\\_Climate\\_OFFICIAL\\_ENG.pdf](https://cop24.gov.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/Ministerial_Katowice_Declaration_on_Forests_for_Climate_OFFICIAL_ENG.pdf)

- mobilize adequate levels of finance from all sources- at present, only minimal funds for climate change mitigation is available for reducing deforestation and even less is available for adaptation;
- promote more effective forest governance and law enforcement;
- improve scientific understanding of the interactions between forest ecosystems, including soils, with climate change.

## **II. Valuable successful experiences and lessons learned on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality**

### Secure tenure is essential to empower people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality

Many of the world's poorest people live in or near forests and their livelihoods are improved where they have secure and equitable access to, and control over, forest resources. Secure forest tenure and rights to use forest resources are a prerequisite for the sustainable management of forests and the sustainable harvesting of forest products, including non-wood forest products such as food and medicinal plants.

Women play a key role in many countries where their knowledge and experience with forests and their sustainable management and use is vital. One way to empower women is to make forest tenure more gender equitable. Reforms should be undertaken where necessary, as for example when customary tenure arrangements prevent women from owning land. The *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests*<sup>3</sup> are a tool to promote the responsible governance of tenure.

### Extending forest education

Partly as a result of urbanization, increasing numbers of people are unaware of the vital functions of forests, including their environmental, economic and social benefits. Forest education, especially for youth and younger generations, have a valuable role to play in developing wider public understanding of the importance of forests. There is also a need to provide appropriate access to forest-related education for people who are responsible for the management of forests, or for decision-making and professions relevant to forests and forest products.

Forest education should be underpinned by relevant scientific knowledge, as well as traditional forest related knowledge.

There are already many good examples of forest-related education and there is a need to replicate and scale-up best practice. In order to stimulate action, the CPF is considering an initiative on forest education aimed at facilitating international discussion, exchanging ideas and identifying key research needs.

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<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.fao.org/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>

### **III. Emerging issues likely to affect inclusiveness and equality at various levels**

#### Increasing the visibility of forests' contributions to inclusiveness and equality

The contribution of forests to many of the SDGs, including those relating to SDG 8 and SDG 10, are systematically under-estimated and not recognized sufficiently. For instance, more attention should be paid to the informal forest sector. In many countries, the informal forest sector can be several times larger than the formal forest sector, but this is seldom reflected in official statistics. As data on forest employment is often used to characterize the economic contribution of a sector, lack of information about the informal forest sector can lead to serious under-estimation of the economic value of forests. Furthermore, people working in the informal sector, such as vulnerable groups and women, are less likely to have decent working conditions and more likely to face unsafe working practices and uncertainty regarding working hours and other conditions of service.

It is also important to improve understanding of the full value of the ecosystem services that forests provide. At present, these ecosystem services are often under-valued because they do not have a market price. As a consequence, the costs of forest resource depletion caused by deforestation and forest degradation are not properly taken into account when decisions are made about land use changes, such as the conversion of forest land to agriculture.

### **IV. An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global, regional and national levels**

#### Enhancing benefits for local communities from forests

Forests play an especially important role in the economy of many poorer countries and rural communities[, especially the poorer ones. Support for small-scale landholders and indigenous peoples can enhance the contribution of forests to social inclusion and equality. In addition to timber and woodfuel, non-wood forest products, such as food, fodder and medicinal plants, are important to the livelihoods of many rural dwellers. Value-added activities can help improve local livelihoods, but local communities may not be well integrated into value chains.

In many countries small-scale landholders are farmers as well as forest managers. Sustainable and inclusive growth can often be enhanced through appropriate policy interventions. These may include extension services, financial services, infrastructure and access to markets, for example through initiatives such as Forest and Farm Producer Organizations. Devolving forest management rights to local communities and smallholders can help secure inclusive and sustainable economic activity.

### **V. Areas where political guidance by the High-Level Political Forum is required**

Promote the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) as a framework for forest-related action to advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Political guidance by the HLPF would help underpin efforts to ensure that the world's forests are managed sustainably, for the benefit of current and future generations, by encouraging policy-makers at all levels to recognize the potential contribution of forests, the importance of cross- sectoral coordination, and the role of the UNSPF as a framework for forest-related contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This can be taken forward by promoting the UNSPF and its six Global Forest Goals more widely as the internationally agreed framework for forest-related action.

**VI. Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in empowering people, ensuring inclusiveness and equality, and achieving SDGs**

Promote comprehensive and inclusive partnerships for sustainable forest management

Transparent forest institutions and inclusive approaches which promote equitable participation of all stakeholders, including marginalized groups, women and youth, are needed to accelerate progress in empowering people and contributing towards achieving SDGs.

Recognize that adequate means of implementation and effective governance are essential for progress

Sustainable forest management has a major role to play in achieving many of the SDGs. However, progress is critically dependent upon adequate resources, including finance. Implementation of sustainable forest management is also critically dependent upon good governance at all levels. These pre-requisites for sustainable forest management are reflected in Global Forest Goals 4 and 5, which must be realized in order to accelerate progress towards empowering people and achieving the SDGs through forest-related measures.