

United Nations Forum on Forests
Draft Minutes of the Second Meeting of UNFF19 Bureau
21 July 2023, 8:30am-10:00am NY time
Virtual

Participation

Bureau Members: Ambassador Zéphyrin Maniratanga (Burundi), Mr. Javad Momeni (Iran), Ms. Leticia Zamora Zumbado (Costa Rica) and Mr. Jaroslav Kubista (Czechia)

Absent: Mr. Ismail Belen (Türkyie)

UNFF Secretariat: Ms. Juliette Biao, Mr. Hossein Moeini-Meybodi, Ms. Mita Sen, Mr. Ryo Nakamura and Ms. Nadine Souto

UNFF Secretary: Mr. Ziad Mahmassani and Ms. Jori Joergensen

Key Actions/Decisions

1. To conduct informal consultations with members of the Forum on the draft declaration of the UNFF19 High Level Segment (HLS), with the objective of finalizing the informal agreement on the draft declaration by the end of March 2024.
2. To invite Members of the Forum, and UNFF partners and stakeholders to submit their suggested building blocks of the draft declaration to the Bureau by 29 September 2023, to assist the Bureau to prepare the zero-draft of the declaration for discussion during the informal consultations.
3. To designate two Vice-Chairs of the UNFF19 Bureau to conduct informal consultations on the draft UNFF19 HLS declaration, with due regard to gender and geographic balance.
4. To invite Members of the Forum, and UNFF partners and stakeholders to share their suggestions on what they consider important for inclusion in the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025-2028 by the deadline of 29 September 2023. Based on the input received, the Bureau with the support of the UNFF Secretariat will prepare a zero-draft quadrennial programme of work for discussion during the informal consultations.
5. To delegate the Co-Chairs of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) on the Preparations for the IAF midterm review, to conduct the consultations on the zero-draft outcome on the IAF midterm review following the conclusion of the meeting of the AHEG, in a transparent, inclusive, and participatory manner.

Provisional Agenda

- 1- Preparations for UNFF19
 - a. Update by the Chair and UNFFS Director on their meetings with senior government, and relevant stakeholder representatives regarding the UNFF19 High Level Segment (HLS)
 - b. Preparation of the zero draft UNFF19 HLS Declaration, and its finalization; required steps and timelines
 - c. Issues to be included in the UNFF19 omnibus resolution, required steps and timelines
- 2- UNFF intersessional activities on the preparations for the IAF midterm review
 - a. Update on the preparations for the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group (AHEG) on the preparations for the IAF midterm review, its program, and outcome
 - b. Preparations of the zero-draft outcome on the IAF midterm review after AHEG
- 3- Update by the UNFF19 Vice-Chair (Islamic Republic of Iran) on his participation in the ECOSOC Management Segment meeting (8 June 2023) on behalf of UNFF19 Chair
- 4- Update on the discussions and outcome of the CPF Retreat
- 5- Other matters

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda

Ambassador Maniratanga, Chair of the UNFF19 Bureau, opened the meeting, and welcomed the Bureau members, the UNFF Secretariat and the UNFF Secretary to the second meeting of UNFF19 Bureau. He introduced the provisional agenda for the meeting, which was adopted by the Bureau.

2. Preparations for UNFF19

a. Update by the Chair and UNFFS Director on their meetings with senior government, and relevant stakeholder representatives regarding UNFF19 High Level Segment (HLS)

The Chair and UNFF Secretariat Director briefed the Bureau on meetings held with DESA Under-Secretary General Li Junhua and the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Lachezara Stoeva (Bulgaria), regarding UNFF19 and to request their support in encouraging high-level participation from member states. The Bureau also agreed that a meeting should be arranged with the incoming President of ECOSOC to follow-up on this matter. In addition to the letter from the President of ECOSOC, the official invitation by the Secretary General to UNFF19, which is in the form of a Note Verbale, will be sent in advance of the session and would encourage high level participation in the Forum.

The UNFFS Director also informed the Bureau of bilateral meetings held with senior officials from France, Cameroon, and Germany in conjunction with the International Conference of Ministers on Transboundary Transhumance, organized from 10 to 12 July in Yaoundé by the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). She emphasized the strategic value of engaging regional and sub-regional bodies such as the African Forest Forum and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization as a point of entry for contacts with member states regarding UNFF19. She also informed that letters have been sent to the Chair of the G77 and China and the Head of the Delegation of the European Union, with the intention of setting up a meeting in September to encourage participation of the senior officials of their membership in the UNFF19 HLS.

b. Preparation of the zero draft UNFF19 HLS Declaration, and its finalization; required steps and timelines

In reference to the discussions during the first meeting of the Bureau, including the need for agreeing on the HLS declaration in advance of UNFF19, the UNFF Secretariat proposed a series of steps for preparing the UNFF19 zero draft HLS Declaration. To ensure a transparent and inclusive consultation process, it was suggested that the Chair could send a letter to members of the Forum to request their input on the topics which they would consider important for inclusion in the zero-draft declaration. Based on the received inputs, the Bureau would then develop a preliminary zero-draft and conduct informal consultations on this draft, with the view to finalizing it by the end of March 2024. The informal consultations would be held in New York in a hybrid format. It was also proposed that the informal consultations be led jointly by two members of the Bureau, with consideration for North-South and gender balance. As for the timeline, it was suggested that the Bureau set a deadline at the end of September for submission of inputs from member states.

The Bureau agreed with the proposed course of actions. In response to the invitation by the Chair, Ms. Leticia Zamora accepted to be one of the co-chairs to conduct the informal consultations on the draft HLS declaration. The Chair is consulting with the Bureau on who will take the role of the second co-chair for these informal consultations.

c. Issues to be included in the UNFF19 omnibus resolution, required steps and timelines

The UNFF Secretariat recalled that the UNFF19 would have two negotiated outcomes: the HLS declaration and an omnibus resolution. Currently, there are three main categories of issues for inclusion in the UNFF19 omnibus resolution, namely, the International Arrangement on Forests midterm review (IAF-MTR), the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025-2028, and decisions on routine and operational issues related to the work of the Forum, such as monitoring and reporting (MAR), and the activities of the Global Forest Finance Facilitation Network (GFFFN).

To facilitate the discussions during UNFF19, it was proposed that the Chair could request inputs from Member States and UNFF partners and stakeholders on issues which they consider important to be included in the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025-2028. The Bureau agreed to include this request in the same letter to be sent to members regarding the HLS declaration.

3. UNFF intersessional activities on the preparations for the IAF midterm review

a. Update on the preparations for the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group (AHEG) on the preparations for the IAF midterm review, its program, and outcome

The UNFF Secretariat briefed the Bureau on the process for the development of the concept note and draft agenda for AHEG, both of which were shared with the Bureau members prior to the meeting. In preparing the concept note, the Secretariat had considered views from member states, including a request to allocate more time for consultation on the outcome of AHEG. As a result, only the first day would be devoted to the presentation by the consultants on the assessment reports on actions that had not yet been discussed in any previous meeting, namely, UNFF and its members, UNFF Secretariat, UNFF Trust Fund, and the Communication and Outreach Strategy of the UNSPF. The remaining three days of the AHEG would be dedicated to consultation on the co-chairs draft, which would be the outcome of AHEG. The Secretariat recalled that the ECOSOC resolution 2022/17 does not mandate the AHEG to have a negotiated outcome and had requested the Bureau to conduct informal consultations on the zero-draft outcome on the IAF-MTR following the conclusion of AHEG.

Mr. Kubista asked if there would be enough time to adequately discuss all remaining assessment reports during the first day of presentations. He also inquired if it would be possible to arrange for delegations who cannot join the meeting in-person to view the meeting through an online platform. The Secretariat noted that the four remaining assessment reports were already available on the UNFF website and that copies of the presentations by the consultants will be shared well in advance to facilitate informed discussions during the first day of the AHEG. The Secretariat also confirmed that a web link would be made available to the registered participants to be able to view the proceedings. It was also noted that as per the past practice, member states would have time after the AHEG to provide their written inputs to the Co-Chairs summary. It was also noted that the AHEG would not be the end of discussions on the IAF-MTR, as informal consultations would be conducted after this meeting, leading to UNFF19.

b. Preparations of the zero-draft outcome on the IAF midterm review after AHEG

To ensure continuity and efficiency of the consultation process, the Bureau agreed to delegate the Co-Chairs of the AHEG to conduct the informal consultations on the zero-draft outcome on the IAF midterm review in a transparent, inclusive, and participatory manner, as referred to in paragraph 30 (c) of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, following the conclusion of the AHEG.

4. Update by the UNFF19 Vice-Chair (Iran) on his participation in the ECOSOC Management Segment on behalf of UNFF19 Chair

Mr. Javad Momeni briefed the Bureau on his participation in the roundtable discussion on “Transformation is possible: Actions from the ECOSOC System” during the ECOSOC Management Segment meeting on 8 June. The discussion was aimed to collect key messages from ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies to feed into the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development convened under the auspices of the Council. Mr. Momeni participated on behalf of the UNFF18 Chair. His intervention underlined the importance of healthy forests in achieving sustainable development, and the need to unite behind the goal of reversing forest loss and degradation. He also outlined the key outcomes of UNFF18, including discussions on the contributions of forests toward improved livelihoods, food security, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity protection, among others. He reflected on the actions needed to accelerate the achievement of the Global Forest Goals of the UNSPF, such as addressing the drivers of deforestation via a comprehensive approach that engages governments, the UN system and other partners. He added that the HLPF and the SDG Summit both present an opportunity to send a call to action to strengthen implementation of global commitments on forests.

5. Update on the discussions and outcome of the CPF Retreat

The UNFF Secretariat informed the Bureau of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) Retreat held from 22 to 23 June in Nairobi. The Retreat was co-chaired by Mr. Wu Zhimin, FAO Forestry Director, as the CPF Chair, and the UNFFS Director, as the CPF Vice-Chair. All 16 members of the CPF were represented, either in person or virtually. Among the issues discussed was the implementation of the outcome of the CPF Organization-Led Initiative, particularly about how the CPF can support member states in implementing the UNSPF and the GFG. Important action points in this respect include the improvement of CPF workplans to better align with the UNFF programme of work, and the GFGs, and the enhancement of communication and outreach among CPF members and with member states, for instance through the development of issue briefs and events on priority areas and emerging challenges. The CPF also discussed preparations for a high-level event to be held in September 2023 during the SDG Summit, with the objective of highlighting the importance of forests and supporting the summit outcome. The concept note and other details, including the date and venue of the side event, are currently being finalized.

6. Other matters

The UNFFS Director informed the Bureau about the Launch of the Model Forest Act Initiative (MoFAI) and the First Meeting of the MoFAI Drafting Committee on 17-19 June 2023 in New York, which she attended. The three-year project, which is promoted by IUCN-World Commission on Environmental Law (IUCN-WCEL), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Global Judicial Institute on the Environment (GJIE), aims to produce a set of model provisions to serve as guiding text for national forest law reform. Ms. Biao highlighted the strategic importance of this issue for the UNFF and emphasized that SFM cannot be achieved in the absence of good forest governance. In this regard, she requested the Bureau to consider including a presentation on the MoFAI at UNFF19 to inform Member States of this new initiative.

The meeting finished at 10:00 am