

**Preparations for the Midterm Review of the International Arrangement on Forests  
UNFF Expert Group Meeting on the  
Actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests  
22-23 February 2023, FAO HQ, Rome, Italy**

**Co-Chairs' Summary**

**I. Background**

1. In its resolution 2015/33, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) strengthened and extended the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) to 2030. The Council further requested the Forum to undertake a midterm, and final review of the effectiveness of the IAF in achieving its objectives in 2024, and 2030. The seventeenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF17), which took place in May 2022, considered and decided the actions to be taken in preparation for the IAF midterm review in 2024 (ECOSOC Resolution 2022/17<sup>1</sup>). These actions are contained in ten sections in the annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, which include, inter alia, Section C on: Actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

2. In accordance with paragraph C.6 of annex of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17, the results of this assessment should be presented at the CPF Organization-led Initiative (OLI) for discussion, with a view to making proposals regarding the Partnership to the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the Preparations for the Midterm Review of the IAF, referred to in paragraph 30 of the above-mentioned resolution. In response, the UNFFS and FAO, recruited several consultants to conduct an assessment on actions contained in Section C. The UNFFS and FAO, in collaboration with other CPF member organization also jointly organized the CPF - OLI from 22 to 23 February 2023, in a hybrid format, at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy.

3. The objective of the OLI is to provide an opportunity for experts from Members of the Forum, CPF member organizations, regional and subregional partners, and major groups to review and discuss the result of the work of the consultants, namely their assessment report on Section C, and provide any input, as relevant, within the mandate of ECOSOC resolution 2022/17.

**II. Opening of the meeting**

4. The meeting was opened by a video message by Ms. Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General of FAO. In her message, she highlighted that as we strive to deliver on global goals – from longstanding sustainable development and climate targets to the newly minted Global Biodiversity Framework – partnerships will be crucial. As chair of the CPF in 2022, she emphasized that this partnership has acted with consistency, competency and the spirit of trust between partners that are working together to deliver on forest solutions that can be game changers in tackling climate change, food insecurity and biodiversity loss. One example is the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, led by CPF members, UNEP and FAO. She added that to be truly transformative, partnerships must be agile. They must respond to a changing world, emerging science and the evolving needs of Member countries and communities. The mid-term review of the International Arrangement on Forests and the CPF is an opportunity to reflect on how to move with the times. She mentioned that FAO has nominated 2023 as the year of excellence and hoped the deliberations at this meeting will contribute to excellence, by exploring new ways to unlock transformational change, together.

5. In his opening remarks, Mr. Zhimin Wu, CPF Chair, highlighted that we are at an important point in time for the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 - and we are at an important time for the CPF that is undergoing a review - as part of the Mid-term Review of the International Arrangement on Forests. He highlighted that we need to be critical, but we also need to acknowledge what was achieved so far. This two-day meeting provides opportunity to discuss progress made by the CPF in carrying out its functions towards the objectives of the IAF, its effectiveness, impact and added value, as outlines in the ECOSOC Resolution 2022/17, and

---

<sup>1</sup><https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/438/29/PDF/N2243829.pdf?OpenElement>

he encouraged participants to share ideas during this meeting on how the Partnership could provide greater support to the work of the Forum and countries in strengthening their implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests.

6. In her opening remarks, Ms. Juliette Biao, Director of the UNFF Secretariat welcomed the participants to the meeting. Ms. Biao outlined background and objective of the meeting and provided views of the UNFF Secretariat on issues under consideration by the OLI. In particular, she highlighted the importance for the OLI to identify additional opportunities to enhance contribution of the CPF to provide greater support to the work of the UNFF and its member countries in strengthening the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF), taking into account the outcomes of the three Rio Conventions as well as other relevant global initiatives. She further stressed the importance to consider how the Joint Initiatives and work plans of the CPF contribute to the objectives of the International Arrangement on Forests, and more specifically, to the achievement of the Global Forest Goals (GFGs). Furthermore, she underscored the importance to encourage and support CPF members to integrate and align the GFGs into their strategic plans and operational programmes, as well as promote their visibility and usage.

7. Following Ms. Biao's remarks, experts elected Mr. Zhimin Wu, CPF Chair and Director of the FAO Forestry Division, and Ms. Eliska Trnkova, Policy Officer, Department of Forest Policy and Economy, Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, as the Co-Chairs of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM). In their opening remarks, the Co-Chairs provided detailed information about the background and programme for the meeting. They informed that discussions on the assessment report will be held according to the programme of work for the meeting. In this respect, following the joint presentation of the assessment report by the consultants, experts would be invited to share their views on the findings and suggestions contained in the assessment report, and/or seek clarification from consultants. The experts also were invited to share their own suggestions and proposals related to the topic of the assessment report. The Co-Chairs informed that following the conclusion of the discussions of the EGM, a draft Co-Chairs' summary of key suggested actions related to the CPF would be shared with participants for further discussions during the last day of the meeting.

### **III. CPF's preparations and input to the midterm review of the IAF and consultants' assessment report**

8. Mr. Zhimin Wu, Chair of the CPF, delivered the joint statement of the CPF<sup>2</sup>. In the statement, Mr. Wu reiterated the commitment of the CPF to supporting the UNFF Members to achieve the Global Forest Goals and the SDGs at large, while contributing to forest-related goals of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). He called for stronger efforts to leverage the collective strengths of the CPF to support the Member States in responding to growing pressures on the world's forest resources and making forests a solution to the global challenges. In particular, he stressed the need for Member States, as members of the different governing bodies, to give clear mandates and guidance to supporting the work of the CPF, and for the CPF to improve donor coordination and facilitation where members of the CPF organizations are encouraged to play an active role in providing and raising resources to contribute to sufficient and stable funding for prioritized and focused actions. Furthermore, he highlighted the need for the CPF to continue to focus on issues of global relevance within their respective mandates and collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders at all levels, and better facilitate engagement mechanisms and opportunities for exchange with major groups and mainstream their engagement into the work of the CPF.

9. The Co-Chair invited Mr. Alhassan Attah and Mr. Thom Sprenger to present their assessment report. In their presentation, the consultants explained that their report presents the outcomes of the assessment of the effectiveness, impact, and added value of CPF activities and their contribution to fostering the implementation of the UNSPF (2017-2030) and achieving the Global Forest Goals. In carrying out its functions, the CPF had made progress towards the objectives of the IAF, including through provision of scientific and technical advice to the Forum, and the CPF joint initiatives which were the areas with the most significant progress. There is broad acknowledgement of the work of CPF by member states, particularly for information, data and assessments provided by CPF to facilitate discussions at the Forum. CPF has, through its collaborative efforts, contributed to an increased

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/cc4405en/cc4405en.pdf>

understanding of the multi-sectoral nature of forests and a better relationship between forests and water, climate, biodiversity, energy, food security, poverty alleviation, and health.

10. The development of the CPF Strategic Vision 2030, Policy Document, and Workplans, have contributed to structuring the CPFs ways of working but have not yet led to a clear and agreed focus of its work. However, in respect of the suitability of establishing criteria for membership of the partnership, the assessment indicates that the CPF Policy Document specifies the criteria for membership sufficiently, and that it would be helpful to clarify the application process for new members. Despite the good progress, challenges remain, affecting CPF's effectiveness. These include limited resources provided by its member organizations and from external sources. There is a perceived lack of focus of CPF's work and the UNFF guidance is not necessarily aligned to the mandates of CPF member organizations or their priorities.

11. In their report, the consultants made the following key recommendations:

- a. Supporting the CPF in clarifying its focus and alignment and broadening its resource base and high-level commitment.
- b. Using regular head of agencies meetings to review progress, addressing challenges, aligning expectations and identify member's contributions to the partnership and its planned activities.
- c. Facilitating secondments from the CPF to the UNFFS to support the work of CPF.
- d. CPF should consider developing a transparent and unambiguous application process for new membership and a establish a process for reviewing its membership.
- e. Invest time in undertaking regular reviews of completed JIs and other joint activities and share learning.
- f. CPF members should define a practical way forward regarding the alignment of its strategies and programmes of work with the UNSPF and the GFG, with the support of the Forum, and provide increased support to the CPF secretariat to support its work including its work on major groups and GFFFN.

12. Following the presentation by Mr. Alhassan Attah and Mr. Thom Sprenger, experts engaged in interactive discussions. A summary of key points of the discussions on the presentation by the consultants are presented below.

- a. Participants expressed appreciation to the consultants for their reports, and to the FAO and UNFF Secretariat for organizing the OLI.
- b. The work of the CPF and its members contributes to the implementation of the UNSPF, achieving IAF objectives, and the achievement of its GFGs, enhancing coherence, and collaboration on sustainable forest management, providing technical and science-based support to the work of UNFF, promoting the visibility of forests in various fora, reducing burden and streamlining national reporting[, and providing capacity development support to countries on forestry issues Some participants noted capacity building and direct funding to Member States is outside of the CPF's mandate..
- c. There have been actions taken by some countries in support of the CPF work, such as support to the CPF joint initiatives and projects, organization of CPF meetings with donor countries, conducting a study on the potential of a multilateral MoU among CPF members to strengthen the work of the CPF, co-funding CPF APO position in FAO, and contributing to the UNFF Trust Fund.
- d. CPF should continue to enhance coherence and upscale progress and impact on the ground towards SFM, considering the outcomes of other [forest-related for a, and /MEAs that have forest-related elements.

e. Several participants recommended that CPF should strengthen its interaction with Member States, at the Forum's sessions, in sharing information on the CPF work and in planning its activities, including joint initiatives, to maximize the results and impacts of those activities, and its members should enhance technical and high-level engagement in the work of the CPF.

f. It is critical to bring focus in the work of the CPF, including by, *inter alia*, developing workplans and programmes of the CPF members in line with the GFGs and CPF activities where feasible, bearing in mind the mandate of each organization and noting that the 2015 IAF resolution had called for this. It was noted this is happening in a few CPF member organizations, for example ITTO and FAO. It is also important to explore means to quantitatively measure the impact of the CPF work and assess how it contributes to the GFGs.

g. The role of some CPF member organizations in supporting countries at the regional and national level, and developing their capacity, including in areas related to the reduction of greenhouse gases (GHGs) through forest-based actions, was emphasized. It was also noted that CPF should focus on enhancing coherence and coordination at the global level as not all CPF members have their presence at regional or national levels.

h. Regarding the findings in the assessment report of the consultants on the "informal and voluntary nature" of the CPF, and whether to maintain this informal nature, or to consider other means, including formalizing the work of the CPF, several views were expressed. Consultants clarified that there were pros and cons for maintaining the informal nature of the CPF. The most important issue was for a member to see the benefits of being part of the CPF. The power of informal networks is for all to see a value for working together. So, what was important was to strike a balance between the "gives" and "takes" of CPF member organizations from the work of the CPF.

i. Other views were expressed by some participants on what to do regarding the informal /formal nature of the CPF, including, to: i) continue with the current voluntary nature of the Partnership, ii) formalize the CPF through signing a multilateral MoU, or/and, iii) adopt a coherent decision in different governing bodies of CPF member organizations to support more CPF-related work by individual members, or/and iv) look into ways to strengthen CPF via ECOSOC or the UN General Assembly resolution.

j. Referring to the low level of response to the questionnaire, which had resulted in not having a broad-based view of the UNFF members in the consultants' report on the CPF, including its findings and recommendations, it was suggested to find other means to solicit more views from members of the Forum on this matter. It was also suggested that the consultants should have been including other information, e.g., the number of UNFF requests to the CPF and the actions taken by the CPF, to allow more realistic assessment of the work of the CPF.

k. There were divergent views on the impacts of lack/limitation of resources for the work of the CPF, as some participants considered the lack of resources posing challenges and limitations to the CPF's ability to support the work of UNFF and its members, while some others called for prioritization of work of the CPF, and some others did not consider "resources" as a major issue for the work of the CPF.

l. It was emphasized that Member States have major work to do in advancing coordination and collaboration among national focal points of different CPF member organizations, so the governing bodies of each CPF member organization can give clear mandate to their secretariats on the work of the CPF.

#### **IV. Discussions and inputs from experts regarding actions related to the CPF in Section C of annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17**

13. The Co-Chair invited participants to share their own views and suggestions on the actions contained in section C of annex to ECOSOC resolution 2022/17. The main points emerged from the interactive discussions are reflected below.

**a) Progress made by CPF in carrying out its functions towards the objectives of the IAF, including provision of scientific and technical advice to the Forum, including on emerging issues**

CPF has made important progress in carrying out its functions, including by supporting the work of the Forum, and its members through provision of technical and scientific inputs, and data, reducing reporting burdens, enhancing monitoring and assessment by developing a global core set of forest-related indicators, raising awareness on forests, including through its communication activities on the International Day of Forests, including the video spot, and other outreach activities, the CPF Wangari Mathai Award, , sustainable wood for a sustainable world (SW4SW), Global Forest Expert Panels, and others.

i. It was noted that it is helpful for the CPF to assist in the development of technical capacity of UNFF member countries through organizing training workshops and seminars.

ii. Enhancing forest policy coherence and coordination has been one of the advances made by the CPF.

iii. Despite this progress, much more can be done by the CPF, including by expanding its interaction between UNFF and CPF, as well as CPF and other MEA in supporting the implementation of their respective forest-related goals and objectives. Governments should invite CPF members to act in a collaborative manner and increase transparency and sharing of information on their activities with countries. In this respect, CPF members should be encouraged to better use their individual comparative advantages to advance a coherent message on climate, biodiversity, deforestation, and the multisectoral nature of forests in different fora, noting that a lack of global policy coherence also reflects a lack of policy coherence at the national level.

iv. Regarding the involvement of major groups, a need for involvement of these partners in the activities of CPF member organizations was noted. In this respect, several members of the CPF, for example ITTO and GEF, referred to the mechanisms that they have in place for engaging the representatives of civil society in their work, including in the framework of the Joint Initiatives.

**b) Effectiveness, impact and added value of the CPF's activities as outlined in its work plan**

i. It was stressed that CPF has provided added value but there is a need to do more. One key element for increasing the added value of the CPF is for member states to increase coordination among their different national focal points of CPF members.

ii. It is also important to share and use relevant technical and scientific advice/input of the CPF members in a more systematic manner, especially in the work of the Forum.

iii. CPF Joint Initiatives such as the Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World (SW4SW) and streamlining global forest related reporting provide good basis for enhanced effectiveness, impacts and added value of the work of the CPF. As an example, ITTO informed that the UNSPF, its GFGs, and collaboration with the CPF have been integrated into their biennial workplan, which requires a reporting obligation to the ITTC. It was mentioned that this approach could be considered by the heads of other CPF member organizations to enhance coherence.

iv. While some CPF member organizations have a presence at the national and regional levels, for those who do not engage in joint initiatives such as SW4SW or in other regional platforms, such as FAO Regional Forestry Commissions, SW4SW can provide a good mechanism for such collaboration. There are some other areas that CPF members have provided more added value, like in the context of forest landscape restoration.

v. The GFFFN and clearing house provide an opportunity for CPF members to collaborate to support the development and implementation of the National Forest Financing Strategies and national action plans and other MEAs, and enhance the capacity of GFFFN.

vi. In the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at COP15 of CBD, the CBD Secretariat has been requested to review all thematic programmes of work, including Forest Biodiversity. CPF could be a relevant platform to support such review to insure coherence across forest related commitments. Nevertheless, to enable coherence across intergovernmental processes there is still a need for specific decisions by the respective governing bodies.

vii. It was indicated that the value of CPF is its voluntary nature. Fragmentation of forest governance at the global level reflects high level of interest in forests and various policies and may not necessarily need more centralization of the forest agenda.

viii. The resources to CPF for forests should be channeled to projects or joint initiatives for countries rather than the administration of CPF activities.

### **c) Consideration of the suitability of establishing criteria for membership in the Partnership**

i. It was noted that the CPF did not consider the need for criteria for membership, as there is already sufficient basis for that. It was also suggested that the discussions on the new membership requests should be transparent and the possibility for involvement of wide range of stakeholders in the activities of the CPF to be considered, including a temporary or rotating seat on the CPF for other types of organizations like forest-related philanthropies.

### **d) Assessment on how the Partnership could provide greater support to the work of the Forum and countries in strengthening their implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests- UNSPF**

i. Some governing bodies of the CPF have recognized its value and joint initiatives and officially supported implementation of the UNSPF by including them as standing items in their agendas and programmes. For example, FAO contribution to the implementation of the UNSPF and its leadership role in the CPF has been recognized by the FAO Council and the Committee on Forestry, and progress on work in support of countries' implementation of the UNSPF is regularly reported to FAO governing bodies.

ii. One area of work is to further strengthen the relationship between CPF members with member states in support of the UNSPF and GFGs at the national levels. CPF members can also play an important role in supporting and sharing best practices on how to restore various types of forests. CPF members are best suited to share all this information/best practices about restoration of forests.

iii. There was broad support to the GEF proposal to engage UNFF national focal points in the regular meetings that they have with the national focal points of the three Rio Conventions, as this would help to improve coordination at the national level.

iv. There was a suggestion on the contribution that some members of the CPF, in particular, FAO, can make in advancing mutual understanding of the technical definitions and terminologies related to forests.

v. Several participants emphasized that the joint CPF work plan is an important means for the CPF to support the work of the UNFF and that it should be more clearly linked to the work of the UNFF and the GFGs. To enhance transparency and interactivity between CPF and UNFF, when developing its workplans, it would be useful for the CPF to interact during the UNFF sessions, as well as during intersessional period, by organizing short, virtual briefing sessions focused, for example, on one joint initiative with Members of the Forum, regional partners, and major groups to solicit feedback.

### **e) Contribution of the CPF to the policy development work of the UNFF and to countries in strengthening their implementation of the UNSPF**

i. To maximize the impacts of the work of the CPF, it is important that the work plan of the CPF revolve around the GFGs, and other major global goals and commitments related to forests.

ii. It was mentioned that a few members of the CPF have integrated the UNSPF and GFGs in their operational programmes, and there may be a need to see why other members of the CPF have not done that. Some participants cautioned about the potential difficulties for some CPF members to do that, as they have their specific mandates from the respective governing bodies. In this respect, it was suggested that an overview of the mandates and commonalities and duplications could be done to help to enhance coherence in the work of CPF members.

**f) Promoting awareness of the multiple benefits of forests and the effectiveness of internal communications within the CPF**

i. While progress has been made by the CPF in communicating and interacting with Members of the Forum, regional and subregional partners, and major groups, much more can be done to improve the interaction and communication of the CPF about its activities and work plans. Such interactions can be done through convening short, virtual intersessional briefings by the CPF for countries, regional and subregional partners, major groups, and other relevant stakeholders, on different activities of the Partnership. Another suggestion made was to have regular meetings of the CPF heads/principals, with interested member states, or enhanced discussion during the UNFF. Improved interaction between CPF, and countries, regional and subregional processes, and entities, major groups, and other relevant stakeholders, would enhance the efficiency and impacts of the work of the CPF, and a better understanding of needs of countries in different regions.

ii. CPF has also an important role in contributing to sharing of knowledge, information, and best practices, e.g., on forest restoration activities, as well as provision of data and assistance to the GFFFN and its clearing house on matters related to financing SFM.

**V. Proposals on Section C: Actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests**

14. The following are the main proposals and suggestions which emanated from the discussions during the OLI on Section C on: Actions related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests:

**(CPF and its member organizations)**

a. Inviting the CPF and its member organizations to continue to enhance coherence, and collaboration on sustainable forest management, and upscale progress and impact on the ground towards SFM, in particular, by advancing an integrated approach to climate change, biodiversity, land, and forest agendas at all levels, taking into account the outcomes of UNFF and other forest-related fora.

b. Inviting the CPF to sharpen the focus of its workplans on the UNSPF and its GFGs, as well as other globally agreed forest-related goals, with clear priorities, actions, joint activities, resources, outputs, and indicators of for assessing progress. In this respect, CPF reports to the UNFF could be structured around the GFGs.

c. Inviting the CPF to undertake regular assessments of its completed JIs to identify challenges and successes and document lessons learned to share with the Forum, member states, and other stakeholders. This assessment could also include the contributions of the JIs to the GFGs.

d. Inviting the CPF to enhance interaction and communication, including through virtual means, with members of the Forum, regional and subregional partners, and major groups on its activities during UNFF sessions, as well as during intersessional periods by organizing short, briefing meetings.

e. Inviting Member States to reflect, in consultation with CPF members as appropriate, on the suggestions mentioned by some participants regarding the informal/formal nature of the CPF, including, to: i) continue with the current informal nature of the Partnership, ii) formalize the CPF through signing a multilateral MoU, or, iii) adopt a decision in the different governing bodies to support CPF work.

f. Encouraging CPF members to engage more actively in the work of the GFFFN, as an effective platform to enhance collaboration and coherence on the work of the CPF in support of the GFGs.

g. Encouraging non-UN members of the CPF, which are better placed for receiving private sector and philanthropic contributions, to work with those partners to generate funding for the CPF activities.

**(Members of the Forum, and its Secretariat)**

a. Welcoming the progress made by the CPF and its member organizations towards achievement of the IAF objectives and inviting the Partnership to continue to advance implementation of the UNSPF, promote its joint initiatives towards the GFGs, provide technical and science-based support to the work of UNFF, promote the visibility of forests in various fora, reduce burdens and streamline national reporting, and provide capacity building support to countries through the GFFFN.

b. Inviting Member States to enhance coordination and collaboration among national focal points of different CPF member organizations, send consistent and supportive messages to the work of the CPF in the governing bodies of the CPF member organizations, support funding for the CPF activities, and consider options for further supporting the mandate of the CPF.

c. Inviting the Forum to continue to actively engage CPF and its members in its work, including during UNFF sessions, to promote interaction with CPF members.

d. Requesting the Forum Secretariat to compile information about UNFF requests to the CPF since 2015, and the actions taken by the CPF in response, as well as the Forum's guidance to the Partnership, to assist in assessing progress, prioritizing actions, and identifying the areas for which Forum's guidance is still needed.

e. Inviting the Forum to prioritize its requests to the CPF to facilitate the work.