

Statement by the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat

FOREST EUROPE Expert Level Meeting

28-29 November 2017 | Bratislava, Slovakia

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for the United Nations Forum on Forests - UNFF Secretariat to address FOREST EUROPE's 2017 Expert Level meeting. We would like to thank the Government of Slovakia, our host, for its gracious hospitality. We are also grateful for the hard work of the FOREST EUROPE's Secretariat, which provided us with excellent documents.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The multi-year programme of work of the Forum for the period 2007-2015, which was prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/49 and adopted by the Forum in its resolution 7/1, set a new focus on regional collaboration and partnerships. In paragraph 2 (c) of its resolution 2006/49, the Council agreed to strengthen interaction between the Forum and relevant regional and sub-regional forest related mechanisms; in the Forum's programme of work, relevant regional and sub-regional entities were invited to address issues and agenda items planned for each Forum session, and to submit a concise summary of their deliberations to the Forum secretariat prior to the session.

Through paragraph 25 to 28 of the ECOSOC resolution 2015/33 on the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) beyond 2015, the regional and sub-regional involvement was strengthened, as an integral component of the IAF beyond 2015. More specifically, regional and sub-regional partners were invited to enhance collaboration regarding implementation of the strategic plan and the quadrennial programmes of work of the Forum.

On 27 April 2017 the United Nations General Assembly approved the Resolution A/RES/71/285, entitled "United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests" (UNSPF), which states that "regional bodies (...) provide a crucial bridge between international policies and national actions and are important partners in efforts to implement the strategic plan and achieve its global forest goals and targets"; moreover, "the Forum works with regional and sub-regional bodies and processes to identify ways to contribute to the global forest goals and targets, including by encouraging them to exchange information, enhance cooperation, raise awareness, strengthen stakeholder engagement and build capacity to scale up best practices within and across regions". Finally, "regional and sub-regional bodies and processes (...) are encouraged to build and strengthen synergies between the strategic plan and their policies and programmes, including in the context of their contributions to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals".

Moreover, the Quadrennial programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2017-2020 (4PoW) represents the Forum's contribution to implement the UNSPF; in the regard, UNFF's odd-year sessions "focus on discussions on implementation and technical advice, including exchange of experiences among members of the Forum, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and sub-regional organizations, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, and the science-policy interface".

Colleagues,

Document COFO/2016/REP, entitled “Report of the Twenty-Third Session of the Committee on Forestry”, contains an invitation from FAO’s Committee on Forestry- COFO to UNFF. In this regard, please note paragraph 53 b), which reads:

“53. The Committee invited the UNFF to:

(....)

b) consider the potential offered by the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions for enhancing regional/sub-regional involvement, including through using the Commissions for regional dialogues related to the UNFF, noting that the respective roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined in collaboration with other relevant regional forest-related bodies and processes.”

We would like to seize this opportunity to invite Member States to consider sharing their views on the matter during UNFF13. Our regional and sub-regional partners have been substantively collaborating with us for years and now, with the UN Strategic Plan for Forests, their collaboration will be even more significant.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last week our Secretariat held an expert meeting in Nairobi to address the future regional and sub-regional input to UNFF. The format and periodicity of the regional and sub-regional written questionnaire were discussed, as well as those partners’ input to the HLPF through UNFF. There was also an exchange on the work modalities of UNFF’s odd-year sessions and, regarding COFO’s invitation to UNFF, we held a brainstorming exercise hypothetically considering possible roles and responsibilities in case UNFF Member States decide to accept that Committee’s offer. After its finalization, the meeting report will be posted on our website and its main elements will be reflected in the content of the pertinent UNFF13 official document.

FOREST EUROPE’s Secretariat sent a representative to the Nairobi expert meeting, as it did to a similar event which was held in Teheran last year. As a constant and reliable partner of UNFF, FOREST EUROPE’s Secretariat always contributes in a positive manner to exercises aiming at improving the Forum’s relationship with regional and sub-regional entities. We wish this meeting to be very successful.

Thank you for your attention.