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**PREPARATIONS TOWARDS THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL
ARRANGEMENT ON FORESTS 2017-2030 AND THE RELATED WORKPLAN OF THE
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP ON FORESTS**

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In decision XII/6, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to engage actively in the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, including in the ongoing process of review of the international arrangement on forests under the United Nations Forum on Forests with a view to addressing biodiversity-related issues, and expressed the importance of the involvement of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.
2. In recommendation XIX/8, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, at its nineteenth meeting, also requested the Executive Secretary to work with the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests and the other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to contribute to the preparation of the strategic plan of the international arrangement on forests 2017-2030 and the related workplan of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to promote consistency with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and to further enhance the achievement of the forest-related Aichi Biodiversity Targets in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. This report presents the main outcomes of the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, preparation for the strategic plan of the international arrangement on forests, as well as the Collaborative Partnership on Forests workplan and further activities planned in this context.

**II. OUTCOMES OF THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
FORUM ON FORESTS**

4. In May 2015, the United Nations Forum on Forests held its eleventh session, which resulted in an omnibus resolution deciding to strengthen and extend until 2030 the international arrangement on forests.¹

* UNEP/CBD/COP/13/1.

The resolution defined the objectives and components² of the arrangement, as well as ways to improve and strengthen the functioning of the Forum on the basis of a strategic plan for the period 2017-2030. The resolution underlined that the plan shall serve as a strategic framework to enhance the coherence of and guide and focus the work of the international arrangement on forests and its components. Quadrennial programmes of work were also requested to set out priority actions and resource needs, beginning with the period 2017-2020.

5. Resolution 2015/33, on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, was adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2015. Of relevance to the Convention on Biological Diversity, section X of the resolution specifically addresses the relationship of the Forum and the post-2015 development agenda. The Council stressed the need to ensure coherence and consistency between the international arrangement on forests and the post-2015 development agenda as well as with multilateral forest-related agreements. It also decided that the Forum should offer to contribute to the implementation, follow-up and review of the forest-related aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, including its forest-related goals and targets. It affirmed that the Forum should offer to contribute to the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and invited the Forum to consider, in the context of its strategic plan, its role in and contribution to the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests was also tasked³ with promoting the contribution of forests to the post-2015 development agenda as part of its functions. The Council also invited regional and subregional entities to develop or strengthen programmes on relevant aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, and to provide coordinated inputs and recommendations to sessions of the Forum.

6. The Council also decided to strengthen and make the facilitative process more effective through (a) changing the name of the facilitative process to “Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network”; (b) setting clear priorities for the Network in the strategic plan; (c) prioritizing its work to promote the design of national forest financing strategies to mobilize resources for sustainable forest management; (d) also prioritizing its work to serve as a clearing house on existing, new and emerging financing opportunities and as a tool for sharing lessons learned from successful projects; (e) enhancing the capacity of the secretariat to effectively and efficiently manage the Network; and (f) strengthening collaboration with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in implementing the activities of the Network.

7. The resolution also included decisions on monitoring, assessment and reporting, strengthening the secretariat of the Forum and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, enhancing engagement of regional entities and major groups in the work of the Forum, and the post-2015 development agenda and its interlinkages with the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015. Provisions for the midterm review of the international arrangement, the strategic plan for the arrangement, and the follow-up activities to the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests were also addressed.

8. The Council also endorsed decision 2015/254 on the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the eleventh session of the Forum, presenting a shared vision of the benefits of forests and

¹ The international arrangement on forests was established in 2000 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/35. The objectives of the international arrangement, according to resolution 2015/33, are to (a) promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, in particular the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests; (b) enhance the contribution of all types of forests and trees outside forests to the post-2015 development agenda; (c) enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels; (d) foster international cooperation, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, as well as public-private partnerships and cross-sectoral cooperation at all levels; and (e) support efforts to strengthen forest governance frameworks and means of implementation, in accordance with the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, in order to achieve sustainable forest management.

² The international arrangement on forests is composed of the United Nations Forum on Forests and its Member States, the secretariat of the Forum, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the Trust Fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests (ECOSOC resolution 2015/33, para. 1 (b)).

³ ECOSOC resolution 2015/33, para. 20 (d).

their contribution to sustainable development. The role of forests in the post-2015 development agenda and the commitment to, among other things, developing a strategic plan for the international arrangement on forests, while enhancing major groups' participation and countries' capacities in monitoring, assessment and reporting, are also underlined in the declaration. Other forest-related developments, in particular related to the Rio conventions, were welcomed, and the Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change respectively were invited to consider outputs of the future international arrangement on forests, consistent with their mandates. In particular, the secretariats of these Conventions were invited to continue to actively participate in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests as well as to continue their involvement in the work of the Forum and the Partnership.

III. PREPARATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2030 AND THE WORKPLAN OF THE COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP ON FORESTS

9. In accordance with paragraph 48 of the Council resolution 2015/33, an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group (AHEG) of the United Nations Forum on Forests was established to develop proposals on matters referred to in paragraph 44 of the same resolution. This includes proposals on (a) replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals and targets; and (b) the strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020. The expert group is expected to develop and submit its proposals for consideration by the working group of the Forum.

10. To explore ideas on the potential content and elements of the strategic plan of the arrangement (2017-2030) and the quadrennial programme of work (2017-2020), an informal expert panel was convened in Tokyo in March 2016, organized by the Forestry Agency of Japan in collaboration with the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). A background study⁴ commissioned by the Forum secretariat was presented at this meeting, together with an illustrative outline for the strategic plan that included a matrix of six goals, potential targets, their links, potential action areas, the actors, the means of implementation, and indicators for the strategic plan. A preliminary alignment of the goals, targets and objectives of the international arrangement on forests with the forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and their targets, and with the global objectives on forests, was identified, taking into account other forest-related commitments, including the GEF-6 sustainable forest management strategy, the forest-related Aichi Biodiversity Targets, REDD+,⁵ paragraph 14 of decision 2015/254, and relevant aspects of resolution 2015/33.

11. The first meeting of the ad hoc expert group was held in New York in April 2016. The secretariat of the Forum presented a note describing recent developments relevant to the work of the expert group, as well as other background information. According to paragraph 39 of resolution 2015/33, the strategic plan should be aligned with the objectives of the arrangement and should incorporate a mission and vision, the global objectives on forests and the forest-related aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, taking into account significant forest-related developments in other forums, as well as the roles of different actors, the framework for reviewing implementation, and a communication strategy to raise awareness of the work of the arrangement.

⁴ The study "Elements for the Preparation of the Strategic Plan 2017-2030" can be found on the UNFF website.

⁵ REDD+ is used as a shorthand for "reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries", consistent with paragraph 70 of decision 1/CP.16 of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The acronym REDD+ is used for convenience only, without any attempt to pre-empt ongoing or future negotiations under UNFCCC.

12. To facilitate discussions, a document compiling views submitted by Member States, major groups and other stakeholders, and background documents on suggested elements for the strategic plan of the international arrangement on forests for the period 2017-2030, were presented to the first meeting of the ad hoc expert group.⁶

13. In July 2015 the co-chairs of the expert group presented their first proposal on the options and building blocks for the strategic plan of the international arrangement on forests and the quadrennial programme of work, based on the outcomes of the first meeting of the ad hoc expert group. Member States and other stakeholders were invited to provide comments on the co-chairs' initial proposal. The co-chairs were expected to submit their revised proposal, taking into account the submitted views, to the second meeting of the ad hoc expert group, to be held in Bangkok at the end of October 2016.⁷

14. The outcome of this work will be submitted for consideration to the Forum's working group, which will be convened in New York in January 2017. According to paragraph 50 of resolution 2015/33, the outcome of the working group is to be considered by a special session of the Forum, which will be convened immediately following the adjournment of the final meeting of the working group. The twelfth session of the UNFF is expected to be held in May 2017.

15. The CBD Secretariat has been participating in various discussions related to the development of the strategic plan of the international arrangement on forests, and has been exploring opportunities to promote cross-sectoral cooperation. Views from the Secretariat were provided to the secretariat of the Forum on the initial proposal of the AHEG co-chair's options on the building blocks for the strategic plan 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work 2017-2020.⁸ Further activities have been undertaken in concert with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

IV. FURTHER ACTIVITIES

16. In recognition of the need to enhance coherence, cooperation and synergies among forest-related agreements, and their processes and initiatives, at the policy and implementation levels, partner organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests could ensure better alignment of the forest-related multilateral commitments and goals when preparing their workplan, taking into account the recommendation of the nineteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/REC/XIX/8) as well as decisions of other bodies of the respective member organizations of the Partnership.

17. In this regard, further actions were discussed at the 2016 retreat of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to identify gaps and possible areas for joint CPF initiatives and to promote a coordinated approach to the achievement of the forest-related multilateral commitments and goals.

18. The congruence among forest-related multilateral commitments, and the mandate to develop a strategic plan for the international arrangement on forests 2017-2030 and related workplan of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, also provide constructive opportunities to further collaborative actions to consider ways and means to further enhance individual and collective contributions to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and to other globally agreed forest-related goals, objectives and targets, in a synergistic manner.

19. The CBD Secretariat will continue to collaborate with the Forum secretariat and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to ensure that biodiversity considerations are integrated in the development of the strategic plan of the international arrangement on forests 2017-2030, the related

⁶ Documents are available at <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/aheg/iaf-strategic-plan-1/index.html>.

⁷ Documents are available at www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/aheg/iaf-strategic-plan-ii-2016/index.html.

⁸ <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/aheg/iaf-strategic-plan-ii-2016/index.html>.

workplan of the Partnership, and in the follow-up and review of the forest-related aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, including its forest-related goals and targets.

20. Further opportunities could focus on supporting countries' capacities to carry out national reporting to the Forum, including on related actions in support of countries' forest-related goals and targets, including as expressed in their national biodiversity strategies and actions plans. This could promote coherence among international instruments and processes and ensure a better understanding of the interrelatedness between biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and sustainable development priorities.

21. In a similar sense, further alignment could be explored in terms of operationalizing the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network with a view to catalysing and facilitating new and emerging resources for forest ecosystem conservation and restoration in a manner that supports countries' actions towards implementing the national provisions of the forest instrument, their national biodiversity strategies and actions plans, the land degradation neutrality target, and their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Work could already be analysed for selected countries and piloted for a larger strategic initiative in the context of the GEF-7 strategy. Involvement of the CBD Secretariat in the implementation of the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance, in the context of the Green Climate Fund, could also be further enhanced to promote coherence and synergy on issues related to forest financing.

22. Decisions from the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention may provide further guidance to leverage substantive collaboration and cooperation between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the international arrangement on forests.
