

Summary of the Nineteenth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests: 6-10 May 2024

“While we have made significant progress, the harsh reality is that despite our best efforts, at our current pace, we remain off track to achieve the Global Forest Goals by 2030.”

These words of warning from Juliet Biao Koudénoukpo, the Director of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat, greeted delegates at the opening of the 19th session of the Forum. She called on delegates to take decisive action to bolster political commitment and partnerships in support of the Global Forest Goals and move from words to action. The tasks before UNFF19 were clear: adopt a declaration and a resolution that will take this decisive action. The challenge was to first agree on the words. And, at times, it wasn't easy.

Nevertheless, by the end of the week-long meeting, UNFF19 Chair Zéphyrin Maniratanga (Burundi) hailed the Forum's outcomes as “historic.” UNFF19 adopted a declaration signaling high-level commitment to forests going forward, and an omnibus resolution that included the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests and set the mandate for specific future actions by the UNFF and its stakeholders.

The declaration of the High-level Segment, among other things, commits UNFF Members to take urgent and accelerated actions to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation and prevent land degradation by 2030, while achieving sustainable development.

The declaration also reaffirms the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) as a global framework for action at all levels to protect and sustainably manage all types of forests and trees outside forests, to halt deforestation and forest degradation and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments, and goals.

The omnibus resolution adopted by the Forum offers, in light of the MTR, a list of actions going forward for UNFF Members, the UNFF Secretariat, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, and the UNFF Trust Fund. The resolution also suggests actions regarding the UNSPF, the UNSPF communication and outreach strategy, the contributions of the Forum to the 2030 Agenda, the involvement of regional and subregional partners, and the involvement of Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders.

The omnibus resolution also approved the UNFF's Quadrennial Programme of Work (4POW) for 2025-2028. The 4POW includes two thematically linked biennia: 2025-2026 (UNFF20-21) and

2027-2028 (UNFF22-23), with thematic priorities for each biennium to be picked by the UNFF Bureau based on the Global Forest Goals and targets, taking into account the programme of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and relevant international forest-related developments.

UNFF19 was held from 6-10 May 2024 at UN Headquarters in New York, with about 400 attendees from governments, UN system bodies, other intergovernmental organizations, as well as representatives from Major Groups and other stakeholders.

A Brief History of UNFF

The UNFF was established in 2000, following a five-year period of forest policy dialogue within the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). In October 2000, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in its resolution 2000/35, established the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF), including the UNFF as a subsidiary body of

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ECOSOC, with the main objective of promoting the management, conservation, and sustainable development of all types of forests.

The UNFF's principal functions are to:

- facilitate the implementation of forest-related agreements and foster a common understanding on sustainable forest management (SFM);
- provide for continued policy development and dialogue among governments, international organizations, and Major Groups, as well as address forest issues and emerging areas of concern in a holistic, comprehensive, and integrated manner;
- enhance policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues;
- foster international cooperation and monitor, assess, and report on progress; and
- strengthen political commitment to the management, conservation, and sustainable development of all types of forests.

The UNFF organizational session, held in February 2001 at UN Headquarters in New York, agreed that the UNFF Secretariat would be located in New York. Except for the third and fourth sessions, all sessions of the UNFF have been held at UN Headquarters. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), a partnership of 16 major forest-related international organizations, institutions, and convention secretariats, was also established.

Key Turning Points

UNFF5: UNFF5 (May 2005) agreed to four Global Forest Goals (GFGs) on:

- significantly increasing the area of protected forests and sustainably managed forests worldwide;
- reversing the decline in official development assistance (ODA) for SFM;
- reversing the loss of forest cover; and
- enhancing forest-based economic, social, and environmental benefits.

They also agreed in principle to negotiate, at some future date, the terms of reference for a voluntary code or international understanding on forests, as well as on means of implementation.

UNFF6: UNFF6 (February 2006) generated a negotiating text containing new language on the function of the IAF, a commitment to convene UNFF biennially after 2007, and a request that UNFF7 adopt a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. UNFF6 also finalized the four global objectives on forests for the IAF to:

- reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM, including through protection, restoration, afforestation, and reforestation;
- enhance forest-based economic, social, and environmental benefits, and the contribution of forests to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals;
- increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests; and
- reverse the decline in ODA for SFM and mobilize significantly increased new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM.

UNFF7: UNFF7 (April 2007) adopted the non-legally binding instrument and a Multi-Year Programme of Work for the period 2007-2015. Delegates agreed that a "voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest-financing framework for all types of forests" would be developed and considered, with a view to its adoption at UNFF8.

UNFF9: UNFF9 (January-February 2011) launched the International Year of Forests 2011. The Forum adopted a resolution on forests for people, livelihoods, and poverty eradication, which addressed, *inter alia*: procedures for assessment of progress; increased regional and subregional cooperation; enhanced cooperation, including with Major Groups; and means of implementation for SFM, including an ad hoc expert group process on forest financing.

UNFF11: UNFF11 (May 2015) forwarded a resolution to ECOSOC recommending, *inter alia*, to:

- rename the non-legally binding instrument the "UN Forest Instrument" (UNFI);
- strengthen and extend the IAF to 2030;
- decide that the IAF is composed of the UNFF and its Member States, the Secretariat of the Forum, the CPF, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), and the UNFF Trust Fund;
- set clear priorities for the GFFFN in a new strategic plan, later officially named the UNSPF; and
- convene an *ad hoc* expert group to develop proposals on a replacement for the reference to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the UN Forest Instrument with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, the UNSPF, and the Quadrennial Programme of Work (4POW) for the period 2017-2020.

UNFF11 also agreed on a new format for the Forum: sessions would take place annually, but based on two-year thematic cycles, with the first year comprising discussions on implementation and technical advice and the second focusing on policy dialogue, development, and decision making.

ECOSOC approved the UNFF11 recommendations in its [resolution 2015/33](#), and the UN General Assembly gave effect to the changes recommended by ECOSOC on 22 December 2015 in [resolution 70/199](#).

Recent Meetings

UNFF12: UNFF12 (May 2017) was the first session to be held under the new format. UNFF12 adopted an omnibus resolution covering monitoring, assessment and reporting, means of implementation and enhanced cooperation, coordination, engagement on forest-related issues, and contributions to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The resolution, *inter alia*:

- requested the Secretariat to revise the format for voluntary national reporting on UNSPF implementation;
- adopted guidelines for country-led initiatives in support of the Forum; and
- requested the Secretariat, with the CPF, to prepare a report on actions to accelerate progress in achieving SDG 15 (life on land) and forest-related targets, and a background study on the contribution of forests to other SDGs.

UNFF13: UNFF13 (May 2018) forwarded a resolution to ECOSOC which, *inter alia*:

- adopted a communications and outreach strategy;
- decided UNFF would consider the results of the first round of voluntary national reporting at UNFF15; and
- requested the UNFF Secretariat to initiate development of the GFFFN's online clearinghouse mechanism.

UNFF15: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with ECOSOC resolution E/2020/L.8, the Forum took place through virtual informal consultations. UNFF15 adopted an omnibus

resolution on: the implementation of the UNSPF; monitoring, assessment, and reporting; means of implementation; emerging issues and challenges; the 4POW for the period 2021-2024; and information on the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs reform pertaining to the Forum.

UNFF17: UNFF17 (May 2022) adopted an omnibus resolution on: implementation of the UNSPF; means of implementation; monitoring, assessment, and reporting; and preparations for the 2024 MTR of the effectiveness of the IAF.

UNFF19 Report

On Monday, [6 May](#), UNFF19 Chair Zéphyrin Maniratanga opened the meeting. Members approved the provisional agenda ([E/CN.18/2024/1](#)) and the organization of work as proposed by the Chair.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION noted that its head of delegation for UNFF19 had been denied a visa by the US despite submitting the required documents on time and called for the UN to invoke Article 21 of the UN Headquarters Agreement for arbitration on this matter. Chair Maniratanga took note of the request.

Maniratanga reviewed the extensive preparations for the MTR and “constructive” informal consultations on the draft omnibus resolution and draft declaration of the High-level Segment (HLS) held in January, February, and March 2024, characterizing them as major achievements and “true manifestations of stakeholders’ commitment” to forests. He expressed hope that informal negotiations on both UNFF19 outcome documents during the week would successfully conclude by the end of Wednesday, 8 May.

UNFF Secretariat Director Juliette Biao Koudénoukpo noted the world remains offtrack for achieving the GFGs by 2030. She said forests are linked to most SDGs and called for broadening audiences and building partnerships. Koudénoukpo stressed the need to strengthen the Secretariat for developing a strategic approach and increasing its effectiveness and influence. She noted its level of ambition will depend on the Forum’s mandate and the resources provided by Members.

Policy Discussions on the Implementation of the UNSPF 2017-2030: Activities in Support of the Thematic Priorities for the Biennium 2023-2024

On [Monday](#), Director Koudénoukpo summarized the Secretariat’s Notes for UNFF19, on:

- activities supporting UNFF19’s thematic priorities for the UNSPF implementation ([E/CN.18/2024/2](#));
- UNSPF means of implementation, including operations and resources of the GFFFN ([E/CN.18/2024/3](#)); and
- monitoring, assessment, and reporting in the context of the UNSPF ([E/CN.18/2024/4](#)).

INDIA reported on its country-led initiative in October 2023 on the themes of “forest fires/wildfires” and “forest certification and sustainable forest management” ([E/CN.18/2024/8](#)). Citing its recommendations, he highlighted, among others, to:

- adopt an integrated approach to prevent and manage forest fires/wildfires and manage post-fire landscape restoration through policy interventions;
- incorporate technology and digital solutions to enhance forest governance and monitoring;
- create universally accepted benchmarking standards for forest certification at a global scale; and
- evaluate current certification programmes and how they relate to universal standards.

He called on the UNFF Secretariat to facilitate the operationalization of the Global Fire Management Hub by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), which will provide a platform to share knowledge and experience about strategies for, and management of, forest fires and wildfires.

UNEP and the ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK presented on their partnership with UNFF and other organizations in the [Model Forest Act Initiative \(MoFAI\)](#), seeking to create a legal tool kit to support the conservation and sustainable management of vital forest ecosystems. Patricia Kameri-Mbote, UNEP, noted many forest-related laws predate the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment that created UNEP and do not reflect knowledge gained and principles adopted since Stockholm.

On a panel on “Valuing Forest Ecosystems in National Policy and Strategies,” Stefan Schweinfest, Director, UN Statistics Division, reviewed the [System of Environmental-Economic Accounting \(SEEA\)](#) adopted in 2012 and its recent update on ecosystem accounting, noting how the SEEA may be applied to valuing forest ecosystems. Pushpam Kumar, UNEP, discussed points to bear in mind when valuing forest ecosystems, and provided examples from India and Ethiopia on its use in policy and strategy.

The Forum then heard [general interventions](#) on the UNSPF, Trust Fund, MTR preparations, and the draft 4POW 2025-2028. Many of the 34 statements focused on national forestry developments, but others addressed issues due to be discussed during the week’s negotiations, including:

- asking UNFF to spotlight forests’ value, particularly for climate, and embed the UNSPF in the wider UN agenda;
- providing a stronger mandate for the CPF;
- calling for streamlined UNFF omnibus resolution text;
- asking the CPF to include temperate forests in its new joint initiative on tropical forest fires;
- calling for assessment of UNFF’s mandate, current resources, and gap analysis before devoting new resources for UNFF Secretariat staffing;
- the importance of Major Groups’ participation in UNFF and UNSPF implementation;
- boosting forest financing through the GFFFN; and
- emphasizing the need for new, additional, accessible funding for forests

Trust Fund for the UNFF

On [Monday](#), Director Koudénoukpo reviewed the Secretariat’s Note on the Forum’s Trust Fund ([E/CN.18/2024/7](#)), noting contributions totaling USD 943,031 from China, Germany, the Republic of Korea, and the US. She summarized expected expenditures for 2024, priorities and challenges, and urged more countries to contribute to the Trust Fund.

CANADA announced that it will soon contribute CAD 250,000 to the Trust Fund towards improving communication with country offices and forest monitoring and reporting.

Midterm Review in 2024 of the Effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests in Achieving its Objectives

On [Monday](#), Director Koudénoukpo summarized the Secretariat’s Note on the preparations for the MTR of the effectiveness of the IAF in achieving its objectives and the draft UNFF Quadrennial Programme of Work for 2025-2028 ([E/CN.18/2024/5](#)).

High-level Segment

On [Monday](#), Director Koudénoukpo summarized the Secretariat's Note on the HLS ([E/CN.18/2024/6](#)).

Chair Maniratanga opened the HLS on [Thursday](#) with a call to action on behalf of forests, particularly to halt and turn back deforestation. "Deforestation is not just a crime against nature, it's a betrayal of our collective future."

Ivan Šimonović (Croatia), Vice President, ECOSOC, said the HLS was important for articulating effective forest-based action to advance the SDGs and urged adoption of an action-oriented declaration.

Li Junhua, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, urged the HLS to adopt an ambitious declaration that serves as an important input to the Pact for the Future, that will be adopted at the [Summit of the Future](#) in September 2024.

Qu Dongyu, FAO Director General, on behalf of the CPF, cautioned that while progress has been made since the UNSPF was adopted, only six years remain for the Plan to realize the ambitious goal of increasing forest cover 3% by 2030. He called on UNFF to work together with the CPF to produce tangible outcomes by 2030.

Stressing the importance of forests for so many aspects of life and livelihoods, Dennis Francis (Trinidad and Tobago), President of the UN General Assembly, said the world needs to act urgently to create outcomes that are socially just, ecologically sound, and economically viable.

Roundtable on "Forest-based Solutions to the Triple Planetary Crisis: A Focus on People, Science, Technology, and Finance": This roundtable on Thursday was co-moderated by Glenn Hargrove, Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Forest Service, and Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Guyana to the UN. Ministers and other officials were asked to identify and discuss transformative forest-based solutions, forest policies, and actions to mitigate the threats posed to sustainable development by the triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, as well as desertification, land and soil degradation, drought, and deforestation.

The 45 interventions covered a wide variety of topics, including carbon trading, deforestation drivers, debt relief, mangrove protection and restoration, remote sensing, digital aspects of forest management, bioeconomy strategies, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, collaboration between scientific institutions and policymakers, and promoting the exchange of best practices.

A more detailed summary is available at enb.iisd.org/un-forum-forests-unff19-daily-report-9may2024

Dialogue with CPF Heads and UNFF Partners on: Achieving Globally Agreed Goals on Forests, Climate Change, and Biodiversity: This session was co-moderated by Aurélie Flora Koumba-Pambo, Ambassador-at-Large, Climate, Environment, and Sustainable Development, Gabon, and Wu Zhimin, Director, Forestry Division, FAO. Invited speakers were asked to identify transformative policies and actions that can accelerate progress towards achieving the globally agreed goals and targets on forests, climate change, and biodiversity through joint and individual efforts by the CPF and its member organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

Robert Nasi, Director General, Center for International Forestry Research, and Chief Operating Officer, Center for International Forestry Research-World Agroforestry Centre, said there is no conflict between agroforestry, conservation, and SFM. He decried compartmentalization of land management and advocated a more integrated, landscape approach.

Ivonne Higuero, Secretary-General, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), said that, by promoting frameworks for SFM, "Goal 5 of the UNSPF resonates soundly with CITES' mandate." She noted that CITES already regulates international trade of around 800 tree species and mentioned its current work of developing new standard guidance on non-detrimental findings for tree species.

Sheam Satkuru, Executive Director, International Tropical Timber Organization, said tropical forests can be the most cost-effective nature-based solution if managed sustainably. She called for "turbocharging" global efforts to invest in SFM. Noting efforts to improve collaboration within the CPF, she called for international donors to also strengthen their own collaboration.

John Parrotta, President, International Union of Forest Research Organizations, said science and information can empower producers and consumers to understand their impact on the environment, society, and the economy. This knowledge, he continued, can encourage producers to adopt more sustainable practices and motivate consumers to choose products that are produced sustainably. Parrotta suggested scientific research can provide insights into key obstacles and opportunities for changing to sustainable behavior.

Christian Peter, Global Manager for Environment, Natural Resources and Blue Economy's Global Platform Unit, World Bank, said the World Bank Group understands that issues facing forests cannot be viewed as environmental issues alone: managing forests and building sustainable forest economies that deliver for people require whole-of-society efforts, including both the public and private sectors. He described the Bank's [Global Challenge Program \(GCP\) on Forests for Development, Climate, and Biodiversity](#) to scale up the ambition on sustainable forest economies that deliver for people and the planet.

Antonio Herman Benjamin, Justice, Supreme Court, Brazil, noted forest laws are frequently fragmented, not enforced, and/or lacking in guarantees for citizen participation. He said good laws are science-based and coherent and judges have "the last word." He commended the MoFAI.

David Brand, Convening Chair, International Sustainable Forest Coalition, highlighted the wide spectrum of forest values, saying public attitudes have shifted; called forests one aspect of landscape management; and advocated expanding production systems only on degraded or previously cleared land.

Sunpil Jin, Vice-Executive Director, Asian Forest Cooperation Organization, stressed public-private collaboration and knowledge sharing among geographically similar countries on best practices, technical expertise, and innovative solutions. He said regional organizations represent their region's voice in forestry and catalyze action.

Mia Crawford, Forest Director, EU and International Affairs, Federation of Swedish Family Forest Owners, stressed Major Group collaboration to provide creative input to forest-related processes; a "whole-of-society" approach; coordination and partnerships with change makers and all stakeholders; and a rights-based approach in growing a bioeconomy and climate-resilient ecosystem.

Ministers and other high-level officials then delivered their own interventions. Many of their statements focused on national forestry developments. Other issues raised by these officials included:

- the challenge posed by the different role, mandates, and governing bodies of CPF member organizations;
- CPF's contributions to capacity building; and

- a proposal for UNFF and the CPF to establish universally accepted standards and principles for SFM that could guide forest management and certification programs globally.

A more detailed summary is available at enb.iisd.org/un-forum-forests-unff19-daily-report-9may2024

Declaration of the High-level Segment of UNFF19:

Negotiations: On [Monday](#) afternoon, an informal working group co-facilitated by the UNFF19 Vice Chairs Leticia Zamora Zumbado (Costa Rica) and Jaroslav Kubišta (Czechia), worked in a closed session to examine the “zero draft” of the HLS declaration prepared by the Bureau after the January-March electronic consultations with Members and other UNFF stakeholders. They considered Members’ further proposals for revision. Negotiations continued on [Tuesday](#), [Wednesday](#), [Thursday](#), and Friday morning. After a first reading on Monday and Tuesday, the group focused on key issues of disagreement, with less contentious issues left to the co-facilitators to craft compromise text.

The negotiations originally were due to conclude on Wednesday afternoon so that the declaration could be submitted to the HLS for its consideration, but continuing disagreements led to a Bureau decision to continue negotiations in the informal group in parallel to the HLS on Thursday. Although the Friday morning session received a “clean” text, some delegates tried to offer additions or made further amendments. The group decided against any further revisions and focused on editorial changes and clarifications.

The issues under debate during the week included:

- Whether to retain references to forest degradation. During the negotiations it was pointed out that the UNSPF specifically references degradation, so the references were kept.
- Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Several delegations wanted specific reference to agricultural expansion, the largest driver according to recent studies. Some opposed singling out one driver, and several proposed listing other drivers, such as mining, illegal logging, and urban encroachment, among others. The compromise reached was to reference “significant drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, including unsustainable practices across economic activities and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.”
- Sources of funding to halt and reverse deforestation. Many countries called for using the phrase “from all sources and all levels” while others preferred a specific reference to developed countries and developing countries instead of the “international community,” implying that developed countries will carry the responsibility for funding developing countries as beneficiaries. The compromise eventually reached was to call for strengthening “the provision and mobilization of, and access to, new and additional resources from all sources.”
- Reference to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, which was omitted in the end.
- A reference to unilateral coercive measures proposed by some, but declared a “redline” issues by others, leading to its exclusion from the final declaration.
- References to “bioeconomy.” On whether to refer to the singular or plural, and to perhaps qualify it as “forest-based bioeconomy” or “sustainable and circular bioeconomy,” the compromise was to refer to “sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches.”
- Descriptors for “technology transfer.” Citing [UNGA resolution 78/160](#) on “Science, technology and innovation for sustainable development,” several developing countries pushed to delete “voluntary” and only leave “on mutually agreed terms.”

Despite opposition from several developed countries based on longstanding positions calling for both qualifiers, “voluntary” was deleted from the final text.

- How to reference various environmental agreements, declarations, or decisions. Part of the concern was that the original formulation might imply that some outputs, such as the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), are standalone from their convention of origin.
- How best to reference forests as a solution to climate change. In the end the language about forests as a climate solution was omitted and instead the declaration speaks of “the substantial contribution” of forests and SFM to climate mitigation and adaptation to the conservation of biodiversity.
- Whether to include early-warning systems or certain management practices, such as controlled burning in a paragraph on approaches to forest fires and wildfires. They agreed to mention early-warning systems as part of an integrated approach to wildland fire management.

Final Declaration: In the final declaration adopted on Friday afternoon (E/CN.18/2024/L.1), ministers and other high-level representatives of UNFF Member States responsible for forests reaffirm the UNSPF as a global framework for action at all levels to protect and sustainably manage all types of forests and trees outside forests, to halt deforestation and forest degradation, and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments, and goals.

The declaration, among other things, commits UNFF Members to take urgent and accelerated actions to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation and prevent land degradation by 2030, while achieving sustainable development. To do this, Members will strive to, among other actions:

- address threats to forests as well as the significant drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, including unsustainable practices across economic activities and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production;
- work collaboratively to protect, conserve, sustainably manage and restore forests and forest ecosystems in line with the GFGs, and all relevant multilateral agreements and related processes, including through meaningful engagement with and supporting the contributions of partners and stakeholders, including forest owners, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, local authorities, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, women, children, youth, and scientific, academic and philanthropic organizations at all levels;
- strengthen political engagement, cross-sectoral cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies, as appropriate, and reduce fragmentation at all levels on issues related to all types of forests, by facilitating and encouraging partnerships among stakeholders, in particular within and among CPF member organizations, in line with their respective mandates; and
- strengthen collaboration across sectors and facilitate partnerships to promote sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches and restoration of ecosystems, contributing to improved livelihoods, including through building capacities of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities, underlining the need to ensure sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

The declaration expresses deep concerns that, despite welcomed recent increases in forest finance pledges, there are persistent gaps in the necessary financial resources to support the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of forest ecosystems, especially in developing countries. It stresses the urgent need to

further support developing countries, in particular by facilitating access to existing resources and strengthening multilateral funding mechanisms to support SFM.

In order to ensure adequate financial support that will deliver the desired outcomes for forests, the declaration says Member States will strive to promote investment, innovative financing mechanisms, scientific, technological, and capacity-building support for efforts towards halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and to leave no one behind. These efforts include results-based payments, positive incentives for the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of forests, and alternative policy approaches that will make this support accessible and attractive to stakeholders involved in sustainable forest management and use, including forest owners, smallholders, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth.

Omnibus Resolution

Negotiations: On [Monday](#) afternoon, an informal working group on the draft resolution was formed, co-facilitated by the Co-Chairs of the Open-ended Intergovernmental *Ad Hoc* Expert Group on preparations for the MTR, Maureen Whelan (Canada) and Avhashoni Renny Madula (South Africa). The group worked in closed sessions to examine the “zero draft” of the resolution prepared by the Bureau after the January-March electronic consultations with Members and other UNFF stakeholders, and considered Members’ further proposals for revisions. Negotiations continued on [Tuesday](#), [Wednesday](#), [Thursday](#), and Friday.

After a first reading on Monday and Tuesday, the group focused on key issues of disagreement, with less contentious issues left to the co-facilitators to suggest compromise text. The negotiations were originally scheduled to pause on Thursday for the HLS and conclude on Friday morning, but the slow pace of progress led to negotiating sessions on Thursday that continued until mid-afternoon on Friday.

Among the issues debated during the week were:

- Which actor or actors should be designated as responsible for particular activities.
- The role, competency, and resources of the UNFF Secretariat to carry out activities, such as capacity-building activities on monitoring, assessment, and reporting (MAR) on the GFGs. Eventually it was agreed that, within existing resources, the Secretariat can work with FAO “and other partners” to conduct MAR capacity-building activities.
- A deadline for the Secretariat to produce an information paper on its needs and requiring that the note provide concrete details in a set format. The original proposal was to have the paper before the next 4POW was approved, to be discussed at UNFF20. Ultimately it was agreed to give the Secretariat more time, by circulating the paper by UNFF20 and giving it “final consideration” at UNFF21.
- A proposal to require periodic, detailed and transparent reports to Forum sessions about the proposed GFFFN office in Beijing. This was resisted by both the Secretariat and China, and it was decided to instead call for them to inform each UNFF session on the role, functions and funding of the proposed office, with a “comprehensive written update” once the negotiations between the UN and China are completed.
- Whether ECOSOC should have a role in exploring options for further voluntary contributions to the UNFF Trust Fund. Several successfully argued that this role was best left in the hands of Members.

- A proposal to invite members to adopt measures to eliminate the use of unilateral economic, financial, or trade coercive measures, particularly against developing countries. As with the declaration, this provision was omitted in the final version.
- Linkages to other environmental bodies and agreements. The debate and solution on bodies and agreements paralleled that reached in the declaration, and references.
- References to “bioeconomy.” This was ultimately solved by adapting the language produced in the declaration working group.
- Whether to call for “synergies” or “collaboration” or “cooperation” with relevant multilateral environment agreements. The negotiators settled on enhancing “cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies.”
- Whether to invite the CPF and its member organizations to conduct an assessment of options to strengthen collaboration within the Partnership. This was agreed after some discussion.
- Whether to reference gender-responsive vs. gender-sensitive, or other gender-specific approaches in implementing SFM and access to forest finance for SFM. In the end, it was decided to call for promoting gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls and mainstreaming a gender perspective in the implementation of SFM.

Final Resolution: As finally adopted on Friday afternoon (E/CN.18/2024/L.2), the resolution is divided into two parts: a series of actions called for in the light of the MTR, and the adoption of the 4POW for 2025-2028.

Actions Related to the UNFF and its Members: Among other things, the resolution invites the UNFF and its Members to:

- strive to advance means of implementation, including new, and additional finance from all sources for reversing the loss of forest cover, protecting and conserving forests, halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation, restoring degraded forests, enhancing technological collaboration, sharing best practices, and scientific exchange at all levels;
- involve political leaders and high-level officials in international forest-related decision-making processes to help implement the UNFI and UNSPF and achieve the GFGs, and increase efforts to sustainably manage forests, and halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation;
- promote science-policy dialogues to support science-based decision-making on forests at local, national, regional, and global levels;
- strengthen the implementation of forest-related national legislation and the provision and mobilization of means of implementation from all sources for SFM and the achievement of the GFGs; and
- enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels to support implementation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and GBF, and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), including the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme.

Actions Related to the UNFF Secretariat: The resolution asks the Secretariat to submit a paper containing information on its workload, needs, and gaps in advance of UNFF20 for final consideration at UNFF21. The resolution invites the UN General Assembly, after the UNFF21 discussion, to consider appropriate resourcing of the UNFF Secretariat “to perform its responsibilities and mandates in an efficient, effective, and sustainable manner.”

The resolution also asks the Secretariat to:

- use a hybrid/virtual format meeting, whenever the logistical arrangement is possible, for intersessional work;
- facilitate greater cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies and engage technical and financial organizations and other international cooperation mechanisms to enhance the implementation of SFM and the contribution of forests to address climate change, desertification, land degradation, biodiversity loss, pollution, water scarcity, poverty, and food insecurity, among others;
- improve and regularly share information with UNFF National Focal Points, and Permanent Missions in New York;
- share information with UNFF members and partners about changes, accomplishments, as well as challenges affecting the implementation of the UNSPF and achievement of the GFGs; and
- maximize participation, efficiency, and value of UNFF sessions and other meetings by effective allocation of time, resources, facilitation, and agenda development, including use of innovative approaches, as feasible.

Actions Related to the CPF: The resolution invites the CPF and its member organizations to, *inter alia*:

- consider focusing the CPF workplan on supporting the implementation of the UNSPF and the achievement of its GFGs, as well as other multilaterally agreed forest-related goals, with clear priorities, actions, joint activities, resources, outputs, and indicators for assessing progress, and, in this respect, structure CPF reports to UNFF on its workplan around the GFGs;
- regularly undertake assessments of its completed joint initiatives to identify challenges, successes, lessons learned, and the initiatives' contributions to the GFGs;
- conduct an assessment of options to strengthen collaboration within the Partnership; and
- engage more actively in the work of the GFFFN.

The resolution also invites the governing bodies of the CPF members to integrate the UNSPF, GFGs, and associated targets, to CPF members' plans and operational programmes of work, in accordance with their respective mandates.

Actions Related to the GFFFN: Among other things, the resolution requests the Secretariat to:

- support Members, upon their request, to assist countries in mobilizing, gaining access to and enhancing the effective use of existing financial resources from all sources for SFM to enhance the achievement of the GFGs and targets;
- make use of digital tools and innovative technologies, including artificial intelligence, to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the GFFFN activities when feasible; and
- provide comprehensive written updates to UNFF sessions on the role, functions, and funding of the proposed office of the GFFFN in Beijing, once agreed, in line with the GFFFN mandate.

The resolution also invites Members to, *inter alia*:

- strengthen the provision and mobilization of, and access to new and additional resources from all sources, in particular for developing countries, including through innovative mechanisms;
- support effective realization of the GFGs, particularly in developing countries, including through promoting, developing, and using innovative financial mechanisms, including payments for ecosystem services, blended finance, and sustainable financing policies, as appropriate;

- foster cooperation and public-private partnerships on science and technology in the forest sector, and engage sectors beyond the forest sector to unlock sustained finance and align financial flows to help support forest conservation, restoration and sustainable use and management goals; and
- recognize, respect, and protect forest tenure and/or user rights of both men and women, provide support and foster inclusivity in accessing forest finance, as appropriate, among others, for smallholders, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and the private sector when investing in SFM.

Actions Related to the Trust Fund: The resolution invites Members to contribute to the Trust Fund and to explore options to attract further voluntary contributions.

Actions Related to the Implementation of the UNSPF: Among other things, the resolution invites Members to:

- accelerate implementation of the UNFI and the UNSPF; and
- enhance international cooperation to support developing countries' capacities to monitor, assess, and report on the implementation of the UNFI and UNSPF.

The resolution also:

- endorses the timeline for the next reporting cycle to UNFF for 2024-2026 proposed by a [June 2023 expert group meeting](#);
- establishes the advisory group on reporting to UNFF, in accordance with the terms of reference contained in the Secretariat note to UNFF18 ([E/CN.18/2023/5](#)), and decides to complete the work of the advisory group on reporting to UNFF in 2026;
- takes note of the amended format for national reporting and entrusts the UNFF Secretariat to finalize the format, in close consultation with the advisory group on reporting to UNFF; and
- encourages Members to submit voluntary national reports using this format.

The resolution requests the Secretariat, within existing resources, to conduct capacity-building activities, jointly with FAO and other partners, on facilitating the exchange of information related to monitoring, assessment, and reporting on GFGs, and to provide assistance in preparing their national reports.

The resolution invites the CPF to:

- continue the ongoing work of the Global Core Set of Forest-related indicators, in particular all Tier 3 indicators;
- further enhance coordination, streamline reporting and data sharing activities; and
- organize a joint workshop on international reporting on forests for focal points of all relevant CPF member organizations.

Actions Related to the Forum's Contribution to the HLPF:

Among other things, the resolution requests the Secretariat to:

- enhance collaboration on achieving the SDGs with the secretariats of the three Rio Conventions and other relevant bodies and conventions on forest-related issues of mutual interest, in line with respective mandates; and
- prepare a concise report and/or targeted communication products suitable for a variety of audiences to highlight the contributions of forests to the SDGs under review each year, their interlinkages, especially those with SDG15, and the critical importance of achieving target 15.b to fully realize these contributions, drawing on the Global Forest Resources Assessment, the GFGs Report, and relevant scientific studies.

It also invites CPF and its members to coordinate on "topline" key messages to the HLPF on forest interlinkages to the SDGs under review each year, including benefits, challenges and threats to forests.

Actions Related to the UNSPF Communications and Outreach

Strategy (COS): Among other things, the resolution asks the Secretariat to:

- develop a communication and outreach plan to set out its proposed short-term and medium-term activities in support of implementing the COS-related objectives, messages, and communication channels for different audiences;
- upgrade the structure and content of the UNFF website within existing resources;
- develop, with CPF support, short, sharp policy briefs on the thematic priorities of the Forum and continue its GFG report; and
- raise the visibility of the GFGs by exploring development of short, memorable titles, in consultation with UNFF members, in a fully transparent and inclusive manner, for each of the six GFGs similar to those used for the SDGs icons.

The resolution also invites regional and subregional organizations to consider the possibility of developing regional communication and outreach plans with messages that reflect regional priorities and needs regarding forests and SFM.

Actions Related to the Involvement of Regional and Subregional Partners:

Among other things, the resolution calls for these partners to:

- pursue engagement of regional or subregional financial institutions, such as regional development/investment banks, to expand collaboration on issues related to forests and to attract funding for their forest-related activities;
- explore options to organize regional/subregional partner-led initiatives to provide inputs to the Forum and implement regional, subregional, and transboundary forestry initiatives leading to the achievement of GFGs;
- consider incorporating the contribution to the GFGs in their respective strategies, plans, programmes, and strategies, as appropriate; and
- strengthen collaboration across sectors and facilitate partnerships to promote sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches and restoration of ecosystems.

Actions Related to the Involvement of Major Groups and Other Relevant Stakeholders:

The resolution welcomes the establishment of the IAF Major Groups Internal Coordination Mechanism for implementation of the UNSPF and interaction and participation in the Forum. Among other things, the resolution calls for Major Groups and other stakeholders to:

- provide information regarding their existing internal coordination mechanism, and their suggestions and options for effectively improving their internal coordination for consideration by UNFF;
- ensure their internal coordination mechanism allows for a balanced representation of subject matter experts based on transparent and inclusive processes for effective participation in UNFF; and
- develop a joint strategy and update their workplans in support of both UNFF policy dialogue and implementation of the UNSPF.

4POW for 2025-2028: The new 4POW, as approved, is included in an annex to the omnibus resolution. The 4POW includes two thematically linked biennia: 2025-2026 (UNFF20-21) and 2027-2028 (UNFF22-23), with thematic priorities for each biennium to be picked by the UNFF Bureau based on the GFGs and targets, taking into account the programme of the HLPF and relevant international forest-related developments. For 2025-2026 the focus will be:

- GFG 1: reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation,

and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change;

- GFG 3: increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests; and
- GFG 5: promote governance frameworks to implement SFM, including through the UNFI, and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda.

For 2027-2028 the focus will be:

- GFG 2: enhance forest-based economic, social, and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people;
- GFG 4: mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation and partnerships; and
- GFG 6: enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels, including within the UN System and across CPF member organizations, as well as across sectors and relevant stakeholders.

Date, Venue and Provisional Agenda for UNFF20

On Friday, UNFF19 adopted the decisions on the provisional agenda (E/CN.18/2024/L.4), and on the dates and venue for UNFF20 (E/CN.18/2024/L.3). UNFF20 will convene 5-9 May 2025 at UN Headquarters in New York. The provisional UNFF20 agenda includes:

- technical discussions on the implementation of the UNSPF;
- interlinkages between the GFGs and targets and the SDGs under review by the HLPF in 2025 and 2026, the UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, the CBD) and GBF), and the UNCCD, including the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme, and other international forest-related developments;
- implementation of the UNSPF communication and outreach strategy;
- means of implementation, including operations and resources of the GFFFN;
- monitoring, assessment, and reporting: voluntary national reports; capacity building for reporting; global core set of forest-related indicators; next Global Forest Goals Report;
- progress in implementing MTR outcomes;
- the Forum Trust Fund; and
- emerging issues.

Closing Session

On Friday afternoon, UNFF19 Rapporteur Ismail Belen (Türkiye) presented the draft report of the session (E/CN.18/2024/L.5) to be submitted to ECOSOC, noting that he would complete the report with the assistance of the Secretariat. Delegates agreed to entrust the Rapporteur with completing the report and submitting it to ECOSOC.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH underscored Major Groups' commitment to the GFGs and called for the inclusion of, and collaboration with, civil society in implementing the Goals. He decried the lack of help for Major Group representatives to attend UNFF and the lack of transparency in negotiations during UNFF19 on compiling/drafting the declaration and omnibus resolution. He closed by saying "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, working together is success."

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY underscored their commitment to forest management and stewardship, and the role of certified forests in conservation. He called for legal and sustainable trade practices and incentives to responsible sourcing and the advancement of forest-based bioeconomies.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS said the declaration gives them some hope. She urged governments to work together with civil society to “take care of our common home, our Mother Earth, for the future’s sake.”

UNFF Secretariat Director Koudénoukpo congratulated the Forum for their “hard work and dedication” that led to the adoption of the omnibus resolution and declaration of the HLS. She hailed the HLS, whose “good and enriching discussion” contributed to the outcome documents. Koudénoukpo thanked the Secretariat staff, saying they have done their best to serve the Forum. She said the Secretariat’s level of ambition will be shaped by the mandate and financial resources Members provide.

UNFF19 Chair Maniratanga declared the approval of the MTR an historic moment. He thanked all Members, CPF member organizations, UNFF regional and subregional partners, and Major Groups for their achievement, which he said would provide “new pathways” to strengthen efforts to achieve the GFGs. Recounting the two-year process to prepare for the MTR, Maniratanga noted involvement by all stakeholders throughout the process. He explained that non-governmental participants could not participate in the informal negotiations during UNFF19 because UNFF is a functional commission under ECOSOC and thus must adhere to rules about intergovernmental negotiations.

Maniratanga gaveled the meeting closed at 5:34 pm.

UNFF20 Report

UNFF19 Chair Maniratanga opened UNFF20, noting a past decision that the first session of every Forum should be opened briefly after concluding the prior one in order to elect the Bureau. The Chair recalled UNFF resolution 12/2 of 5 May 2017 where the Forum agreed to elect its officers for a two-year term of office starting at UNFF14, in order to ensure continuity between the policy and technical sessions of the Forum.

Delegates elected by acclamation Ismail Belen (Türkiye), nominated by the Western European and Other States Group, as Chair of UNFF20 and UNFF21, and Abderrahim Houmy (Morocco), nominated by the African Group, Javad Momeni (Iran), nominated by Asia-Pacific Group, and Andrés Napuri Pita (Peru), nominated by the Latin American and Caribbean Group. A fourth Vice Chair representing Eastern Europe, Maria Sokolenko (Russian Federation), was elected by secret ballot.

UNFF20 was suspended at 6:23 pm.

A Brief Analysis of UNFF19

With only six years remaining to realize the shared vision of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and achieve the Global Forest Goals (GFGs), the world’s forests remain in grave danger. In spite of significant progress, the harsh reality is that the world is off-track and, without a course correction, will not achieve any of the internationally-agreed goals and targets on forests.

The nineteenth meeting of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF19) needed to heed this sobering warning from UNFF Secretariat Director Juliet Biao Koudénoukpo. Yet, despite the expectation of urgency, especially as delegates had the task of conducting the Midterm-Review (MTR) of the effectiveness of the

International Arrangement on Forests (IAF), for much of the week the mood at UNFF19 was one of divisiveness. Negotiations on the two outcome documents—a high-level declaration and an omnibus resolution on the MTR and the UNFF Quadrennial Programme of Work for 2025-2028—were contentious and for much of the week agreement appeared beyond reach. Ultimately, UNFF19 successfully adopted both outcome documents by seemingly pulling a rabbit out of a hat.

This brief analysis will examine the obstacles that UNFF19 delegates had to overcome and the implications for UNFF itself and for the world’s forests.

The Good, the Bad, and... “The Lowest Common Denominator”

In the end, most participants characterized the UNFF19 outcomes as positive. The declaration recommitments everyone to halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation, while the MTR embedded in the omnibus resolution reaffirms the role of the IAF and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF). But neither outcome was as ambitious as some delegates had hoped, and the reaction from many at the end of the arduous process was along the lines of “at least some agreement is better than no agreement.”

A three-month period of consultations preceded UNFF19, during which time Member States and other stakeholders were invited to submit comments on drafts of the two documents, which then went through three revisions based on the comments received. There was no detailing during the session as to which states made comments during those consultations, but complaints were heard from some that the three months of consultations had produced a negotiated text—the zero draft that the UNFF19 session began with—that should not be bloated with additions and changes during the session. Others complained that comments they had made during the consultative process were “missing” from the zero draft. As a result, they tried to reinsert them in the text.

The two documents were introduced in plenary on Monday but moved quickly into two parallel “informal working groups” for discussion, which convened for most of the week. The process was clumsy, at least partially due to the austerity measures at UNHQ that kept official negotiating sessions from going into overtime by cutting off interpretation promptly at the official end time of each session. There was also a noticeable lack of enthusiasm exhibited in general for moving into small groups to try to find compromises on specific wordings. Many complained that the small size of many delegations made it difficult for them to follow both informal discussions, making moving into even smaller huddles to find compromises even harder. One delegate even argued that no small groups could take place without facilitation, and no facilitation was offered. Only in the final 24 hours did delegates appear to respond to the repeated exhortations of co-facilitators of the informal working groups to “mingle” on the sidelines and iron out issues among themselves.

As stalemates continued for most of the week, even the usual method of resorting to “previously agreed language” could not advance negotiations, as there are now so many negotiated texts—both binding and nonbinding—related to forests that sometimes the discussions threatened to become a “battle over agreed language” to cite, and, in one case, a battle of which previous agreements to list in a footnote.

Another strategy that each working group appeared to use was to give priority for a controversial topic that was common to both groups—of which there were many—to the other group, to then

be reflected *verbatim* in the second document. At one point it even appeared that both groups might be leaving it to the other to formulate a compromise on the same proposed concept. As a result, compromises on several issues were not forthcoming until late in the week as each group waited for the other.

This lack of enthusiasm also extended to UNFF's High-Level Segment (HLS). Bringing high-level officials and ministers together allows them to share best practices, exchange ideas, and weigh in on the topics under negotiation. Their presence also raises the visibility and "newsworthiness" of the negotiations, which hopefully inspires the necessary momentum to reach the finish line.

However, at UNFF19, the fact that none of the invited keynote speakers for the opening of the HLS came to New York did not bode well. Furthermore, the HLS' two three-hour sessions were labelled a "roundtable" and a "dialogue," where speakers could respond to questions about forestry solutions. Instead, they featured a series of unconnected statements by ministers and other officials with no real interaction on any topics or themes. In fact, several participants commented on the palpable sense of boredom in the room. Meanwhile, the declaration was being negotiated elsewhere behind closed doors and was not ready for adoption as the grand finale to the day, as was earlier anticipated. As a result, the HLS ended in a bit of a fizzle.

"We're all Equally Unhappy" = Compromise?

Delegates and observers shared various opinions on why UNFF19 felt so downbeat. Director Koudénoukpo's *cri de cœur* of urgency to turn the tide toward achieving the 2030 goals did not seem to "rally the troops," despite the fact that only six years remain for this undertaking. Some seasoned observers speculated that there was more of a sense of resignation and an acceptance of failure, rather than a sense of urgency.

Others, however, noted that other environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity, and other aspects of land degradation are also facing looming goals but have garnered far more attention and urgency. Indeed, some pointed out that the time required to achieve national commitments under multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) crowds out the time and energy for forests themselves. Although many MEA goals are relevant to forests, the policymaking processes themselves are, of course, different entities. The binding MEA commitments are often prioritized over the nonbinding "voluntary" actions encouraged by the UNFF, leading more than one delegate to bemoan the fact that the push for a binding forest convention in the 1990s and 2000s did not succeed.

Another factor was the participants themselves. Within the UNFF the same people do not always attend both the technical and the policy session during a UNFF biennial cycle, which definitely limits cross-pollination. Foresters tend to be more visible during the technical discussions during the first year that focus on "on-the-ground" policy implementation. More "political" operatives attend UNFF policy sessions during the second year of the cycle.

As a result, many of the delegates participating at UNFF19 were not forest experts. In fact, most came from their countries' missions in New York, with limited knowledge of the forest world or UNFF, with at least one expressing confusion over the role of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. This could have been due, in part, to the lack of UNFF funding to boost participation from developing countries. Or it could be due to a lack of interest in the work of the UNFF, as forests must compete for attention with other, seemingly more urgent, issues on the global stage.

Finally, some observed that the location of the meeting matters. Geopolitics on the larger scale influences forest talks more easily in New York. Indeed, in numerous attendees' eyes, current geopolitics have negatively affected the ability to work congenially within the UN space in general, even on more "technical" issues such as forestry.

A Dash to the Finish

A mad dash to the finish line at the end is hardly unique to UNFF. Multilateral negotiations have a reputation for reaching key compromises at the figurative "last minute" when stalling or whipsawing is no longer an option if an outcome is desired. Essentially, negotiations expand to fill whatever time is provided.

The fact that UNFF19 reached agreement, at least on the parameters of actions to undertake toward achieving critical forest-related goals and on the principles prioritized in the HLS declaration, is not to be taken lightly, especially given the many shrugged shoulders during the week on whether full agreement could be reached at all. There is certainly precedent for a "no agreement" outcome in the UNFF: UNFF5 in 2005, did not achieve agreement on the non-legally binding agreement then under negotiation, although it was eventually finalized at UNFF7 in 2007. That would be more difficult to do in this case because both documents were explicitly associated with this session.

It also goes without saying, although some did, that everyone was to some extent fairly "unhappy" with the language ultimately agreed, albeit for different reasons. Attempts to push progressive concepts such as economic circularity, gender responsiveness, and the prevention of forest degradation were watered down to achieve a "lowest common denominator" consensus, but this is always the case if there is nothing to "exchange" in return for getting the other side to make stronger commitments. Certainly, the cry for financial and technical assistance for countries lacking the resources and capabilities to meet their commitments is perennial. Yet while financing for forests has increased and the UNFF's Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network has provided some countries support in finding new sources of finance, debate over the insufficiency of such assistance, and whether it should explicitly remain "voluntary," still raged at UNFF19.

The Courage to Continue

The question repeatedly asked was whether the agreements can push the international community forward to achieve the aims so critical to keeping the world's forests alive and healthy. Or did they simply reiterate the status quo? The fact that forested area has been found to be increasing in some countries and the rate of total global deforestation has slowed continue to be reasons for some optimism. Numerous delegates pointed out that without the UNFF "talk shop" the world would have much less understanding of the situation forests face and would have made far less progress.

Perhaps the words of one retiring forester provide the greatest motivation toward keeping up this momentum. As he put it, "Everyone in the world is forest-dependent, either directly or indirectly." All the innumerable values of forests are much more difficult to quantify or understand than carbon emissions or numbers of species lost or hectares of land degraded. The fact that both a ministerial declaration and an omnibus resolution were agreed, after multiple iterations, is a testament to the tenacity of the UNFF19 delegates and their understanding, when all seemed lost, of why they were there. As Winston Churchill once said, "Success is not final; failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."

Upcoming Meetings

26th IUFRO World Congress: The 26th World Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) will convene under the theme, “Forests and Society Towards 2050.” The event will set the future research agenda and a roadmap for future generations in line with the Congress theme with an emphasis on the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. **dates:** 23-29 June 2024 **location:** Stockholm, Sweden **www:** iufro2024.com

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2024: HLPF 2024 will take place on the theme, “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.” It will conduct in-depth review of SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals). **dates:** 8-17 July 2024 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** hlpf.un.org/2024

27th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO 27): The biennial sessions of COFO bring together heads of forest services and other senior government officials to identify emerging policy and technical issues, to seek solutions, and to advise FAO and others on appropriate action. COFO27 will convene concurrently with the ninth World Forest Week (WFW 2024). The theme of COFO 27 and WFW 2024 is “Accelerating Forest Solutions Through Innovation.” **dates:** 22-26 July 2024 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** fao.org/forestry/committee-on-forestry/en

9th FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference: FOREST EUROPE ministers and heads of observer organizations will discuss SFM, resilience, and youth involvement with the aim of making decisions to strengthen future cooperation on forests in Europe and share the latest findings and developments in SFM across the pan-European region. **dates:** 1-2 October 2024 **location:** Petersberg, Germany **www:** foresteurope.org/event/9th-forest-europe-ministerial-conference

UN Biodiversity Conference 2024: The sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing will convene for the first time since the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. **dates:** 21 October – 1 November 2024 **location:** Cali, Colombia **www:** cbd.int/conferences/2024

2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 29): This event will include the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 29), the 19th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 19), and the sixth meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 6) that will convene to complete the first enhanced transparency framework and the new collective quantified goal on finance, among other matters. The 61st sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 61) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 61) will also meet. **dates:** 11-22 November 2024 **location:** Baku, Azerbaijan **www:** unfccc.int/cop29

ITTC-60: The 60th Session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC-60) and Sessions of the Associated Committees will continue the work of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the possible renegotiation of the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA). **dates:** 1-6 December 2024 **location:** Yokohama, Japan **www:** itto.int

UNCCD COP16: This meeting of the Conference of the Parties to UN Convention to Combat Desertification will commemorate the 30th anniversary of the UNCCD and review global progress made toward land degradation neutrality and confront pressing issues including enhancing drought resilience, promoting women’s land rights, and combating sand and dust storms. **dates:** 2-13 December 2024 **location:** Riyadh, Saudi Arabia **www:** unccd.int

IPBES 11: The eleventh meeting of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services will consider the assessment on interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food, and health, and the transformative change assessment. **dates:** 10-16 December 2024 **location:** Windhoek, Namibia **www:** ipbes.net/events/ipbes-11

UNFF20: The Forum will review progress in implementation of the UNSPF, progress in implementing MTR outcomes, UNFF20 inputs to the HLPF, and other international forest-related developments. **dates:** 5-9 May 2025 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/esa/forests

For additional upcoming events, see: sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

4POW	Quadrennial Programme of Work
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GFFFN	Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network
GFGs	Global Forest Goals
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
HLS	High-level Segment
IAF	International Arrangement on Forests
MoFAI	Model Forest Act Initiative
MTR	Mid-term Review
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	UN Forum on Forests
UNFI	UN Forest Instrument
UNSPF	UN Strategic Plan for Forests