



CPF
Collaborative Partnership
on Forests

International Conference

Working across Sectors to Halt Deforestation and Increase Forest Area – from Aspiration to Action

FAO, Rome – 20-22 February 2018

Concept Note

Background and rationale

In 2015, countries made a bold and ambitious commitment when adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Target 15.2 of SDG 15 on Life on Land calls for halting deforestation by 2020, among others. In addition, the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) adopted in 2017 by the UN General Assembly calls for reversing the loss of forest cover and increasing forest area by 3 percent worldwide by 2030 (Global Forest Goal 1, Target 1.1).

While global rates of deforestation have decreased in the recent past, from a net annual forest area loss of 7.3 million hectares in 2000 to 3.3 million hectares in 2015, the decrease has not been even across regions and deforestation rates in some regions, especially Africa and Latin America, are still alarmingly high.

The greatest loss of forests has been in tropical and low-income countries. At the same time, these countries have experienced the greatest expansion of agricultural land. Between 2000 and 2010, annual net forest loss in tropical countries was 7 million hectares and the annual net gain in agricultural land was 6 million hectares. This illustrates that agriculture is still the main driver of deforestation. It is estimated that 80% of forest loss is due to conversion to agriculture.

Forest loss in the tropics and sub-tropics is mainly driven by large-scale commercial production of agricultural commodities, which is prevalent in Latin America, and by small-scale and subsistence agriculture, which dominates deforestation in Africa and is also prevalent in Asia.

While four most forest-rich countries account for half of the total global forest area, more than half of 193 UN Member States have less than 20% of their land areas covered with forests, well below the average forest cover worldwide, signaling vast opportunities to expand forest area in many countries including those in the non-tropical regions in order to meet the growing need for forest products and carbon sequestration. This could be done through afforestation and reforestation

and/or integrated land use options at the landscape level including restoration of degraded lands and agroforestry.

In view of an increasing global population and the need to feed 9 billion people by 2050, halting deforestation by 2020 and increasing forest area by 3% by 2030 presents an enormous challenge and will require political will and concerted action across sectors at the landscape scale, to achieve the transformational change at the scale that is required.

In 2018, the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the United Nations central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, will review SDG 15 on Life on Land and its Targets. In May 2018, the UNFF13 will be convened, focusing on a policy dialogue, taking into account the theme and review focus of the HLPF and the theme of the international day of forests. The Forum is expected to provide its substantive input to the HLPF2018. In this regard, the outcome of the proposed conference provides a contribution and input to the discussion of the UNFF13 on this matter to the HLPF review and to the HLPF itself. It will bring together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss the challenges of halting and reversing deforestation and to jointly explore ways to accelerate progress towards achieving in particular the SDG Target 15.2 and Target 1.1 of the UNSPF.

Objectives

The main objective of the conference is to make recommendations, through UNFF13, to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development on actions to be undertaken globally and by countries to help achieve the SDG and GFG targets of halting deforestation and increasing forest cover.

More specifically, the conference will:

- Review current key drivers of deforestation and ways they are being addressed
- Identify key policy challenges to achieving the SDG and GFG targets of halting deforestation and increasing forest cover
- Help achieve a better understanding of the role and contributions of sectors impacting on forests in promoting forest smart activities to halt and expand forest areas, and identify lessons learned from existing initiatives¹, including practical examples on the ground.
- Discuss opportunities to accelerate reforestation, afforestation and forest landscape restoration.
- Recommend ways forward, including key policy measures and actions by countries and the international community.
- Provide recommendations to UNFF13 and the HLPF on further policy development, application and use of innovative technology, private-public partnerships and governance approaches needed to upscale progress on the targets.

Expected Outcomes

¹ E.g. New York Declaration on Forests; Aichi Biodiversity Targets; Bonn Challenge; Paris Agreement on Climate Change; Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; Deforestation-free commodities, Land Degradation Neutrality, among others

The main outcome of the conference will be a set of key messages and proposals for action on halting deforestation and increasing forest cover that will be brought to the attention of the HLPF 2018 through UNFF13.

Participants

As most of the drivers of deforestation lie outside the forest sector, participants will include wide representation from government ministries from different sectors, including agriculture and livestock, environment, energy, extractive industries and others. The private sector has an important role to play in halting deforestation and representatives of key companies, private sector associations and small producer organizations will be invited. Civil society organizations, especially of indigenous peoples will also participate. Participation will be by invitation.

Topics to be addressed

Key topics to be addressed by the conference include:

- Drivers of deforestation
- Issues of scale: global versus country level; small-scale and large scale deforestation
- Opportunities for increased reforestation, afforestation, agroforestry and forest landscape restoration
- Development strategies: challenges and opportunities of the forest-related SDGs and the GFGs
- Policies on land use and land-use change and land use governance
- Cross-sector coordination
- Role of different stakeholders: government, private sector, civil society
- Means of implementation
- Deforestation-free commodities and value chains
- Integrated land use options under a landscape approach

Through broad stakeholder participation from different sectors, the conference will promote intersectoral dialogue on these issues, providing an opportunity to showcase an integrated approach to addressing the implementation of the SDGs that will contribute to achieving the transformational change the 2030 Agenda is calling for.

Organizers

The conference will be organized by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), an informal, voluntary arrangement among 14 international organizations and secretariats with substantial programmes on forests that was established in 2001 in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests. A subset of CPF members will assist in substantive preparations for the Conference, supported by an Advisory Committee of all CPF members and interested donors.