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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: Draft Council Conclusions on the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and with a view to the participation of the European Union and its Member States in the Twelfth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 12)
- Adoption

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

Draft Council Conclusions on the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and with a view to the participation of the European Union and its Member States in the Twelfth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 12)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. RECALLING its earlier conclusions of 20 April 2015 on an effective post-2015 international arrangement on forests for the Eleventh Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 11) held from 4 to 15 May 2015 in New York at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters;
2. RECALLING the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) Resolution 2015/33 of 22 July 2015 entitled 'International arrangement on forests beyond 2015';

3. WELCOMING the outcome of the 11th session of the UNFF, which laid clear emphasis in particular on enhancing coherence, cooperation and synergies between forest-related agreements, processes and initiatives and on enhancing the Forum's efficiency and impact by restructuring the UNFF sessions;
4. EMPHASISING the vital role that the world's forests play in tackling current global challenges and RECOGNISING the relevance of forests in the different internal and external policies of the European Union and within the United Nations under its three pillars: Human Rights, Peace and Security, and Development;
5. NOTING with great concern that deforestation and forest degradation in the world still remain a substantial problem and that forests are under pressure; ACKNOWLEDGING that the reasons for this are complex and include the conversion of forests into agricultural land as one of the major drivers but also unsustainable forest management practices;
6. UNDERLINING that sustainable development lies at the core of European values and that sustainable management of all types of forests can contribute significantly to the implementation, at national and international level, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Rio conventions, the Paris Agreement, and other international forest-related commitments;
7. UNDERLINING the Forum's role in contributing to the implementation, follow-up and review of the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda, including its forest-related goals and targets;
8. RECOGNISING the global responsibility and significant role of the EU and its Member States as regards promoting sustainable forest management (including forest conservation), halting deforestation and forest degradation, combating illegal logging and associated trade and encouraging the consumption of resource- and energy-efficient products from sustainably managed forests, in line with the guiding principles of the EU Forest Strategy and the EU FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade) Action Plan;

UN Strategic Plan for Forests – a milestone in the post-2015 global forest policy agenda

9. **WELCOMES** and **HIGHLIGHTS** the first-ever UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 ('Strategic Plan') and the first Quadrennial Programme of Work of the UNFF for the period 2017-2020 ('Programme of Work') adopted at the Special Session of the Forum held on 20 January 2017 in New York;
10. **AFFIRMS** its full support for the Strategic Plan and **CONSIDERS** it a major achievement and an important opportunity to further enhance coherence, coordination, and synergies, and to enhance the implementation of global forest-related issues at international, regional, and national level, as well as within the EU;
11. **STRESSES** the importance of promoting synergies and mutually supportive implementation of the UNSPF Global Forest Goals and targets and the policies and programmes of the different UN bodies, organisations and specialised agencies, the Rio conventions and other forest-related intergovernmental organisations and processes, within the scope of their mandates; and **COMMITTS** to contribute to these efforts;
12. In order to fulfil the vision of the Strategic Plan: 'A world where all types of forests and trees outside forests are sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development and provide economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for present and future generations', **COMMITTS** to work in a coherent, effective, transparent and participatory manner to enhance forest policy development, implementation, cooperation and coordination, and to strengthen political commitments at all levels;
13. **HIGHLIGHTS** the fact that the Strategic Plan, by setting out clear and common Global Forest Goals and targets, supports the objectives of the International Arrangement on Forests and aims to contribute to progress on the SDGs, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Paris Agreement and other international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments and goals;
14. **EMPHASISES** that the Strategic Plan needs to be implemented in such a way as to achieve a more integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account its cross-cutting issues, including human rights, climate change, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls and ending poverty and combating inequalities;

15. HIGHLIGHTS the need to foster synergies with other relevant processes and strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships, involving all relevant stakeholders, including Major Groups, regional and sub-regional bodies and processes, the scientific community, non-governmental organisations and the private sector, in implementing the Strategic Plan and UNDERLINES the importance of inter-sessional activities in this regard;

16. UNDERLINES the important role of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and its member organisations in implementing the Strategic Plan; in this regard CALLS for strengthened collaboration of its members and the timely preparation of a joint CPF work plan;

12th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (1-5 May 2017, New York)

17. COMMITS to make an active contribution at UNFF 12 and all future odd-year sessions, and CALLS for good cooperation amongst all actors, and specifically with CPF members, in order to contribute actively to the Strategic Plan's mission and to achieve its vision;

18. ENCOURAGES all actors to participate actively in the discussions at UNFF 12 so that the UNFF can prepare a timely input for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development on the themes and review cycle for 2017-2018, with a particular focus on the follow-up, review and implementation of the SDGs and targets which are under consideration of the HLPF 2017 and HLPF 2018;

19. STRESSES that monitoring, assessment and reporting are crucial in demonstrating progress and sharing experiences in the implementation of the Strategic Plan; at the same time, however, RECOGNISES the need to avoid an additional reporting burden and duplication of efforts in this regard and to streamline existing international forest-related indicators; ENCOURAGES the CPF to compile a global core set of forest-related indicators; UNDERLINES that the cycle and format for voluntary national reporting should take into account other forest-relevant international reporting cycles, in particular relevant CPF members' cycles and the Sustainable Development Goals review cycle;

20. STRESSES that successful promotion of sustainable forest management and support for the implementation of the Strategic Plan require a combination of different means of implementation which include, for example, finance, technology, capacity building, trade, and systemic issues such as multi-stakeholder partnerships; and REAFFIRMS the importance of coherent policies and good governance at all levels, including forest law enforcement, and effective and accountable institutions;
21. UNDERLINES the continuous need to mobilise significant resources from all sources and at all levels to promote the implementation of sustainable forest management, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda;
22. HIGHLIGHTS the role of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), based on the mandate given in ECOSOC Resolution 2015/33, to support the accomplishment of the objectives of the International Arrangement on Forests, including on the basis of the Strategic Plan for the achievement of its Global Forest Goals and targets; NOTES the mandate of the UNFF Secretariat, as set out in ECOSOC Resolution 2015/33, in ensuring the effective management of the GFFFN and the implementation of its activities; in this context, CALLS upon all relevant actors to support the actions carried out by the GFFFN; UNDERLINES both the voluntary character of financial contributions in support of the GFFFN and the need to have full transparency on all aspects of its performance in order for the EU and its Member States to contribute to an informed decision-making process on possible further development of the GFFFN.
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