

Protection, sustainable management of forests 'fundamental to security of humanity's place on this planet,' UN Forum told

1 May 2017 – Kick-starting action on the recently-adopted [Global Forest Goals](#) to protect, sustainably manage and increase world's forest area will be a key focus for delegations gathered in New York for the twelfth session of the [UN Forum on Forests](#), which opened today at United Nations Headquarters.

The six forest goals and 26 associated targets, all to be achieved by 2030, the deadline set by UN Member States for the universal attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), were adopted late last week by the UN General Assembly as part of the [UN Strategic Plan for Forest 2017-2030](#), which includes a landmark target to expand the world's forests by three per cent – an area of 120 million hectares, by 2030.

“Let us make no mistake on this matter – the health of the world's forests is fundamental to humanity's place on this planet,” said Assembly President Peter Thomson at the [opening](#) of the Forum's [current session](#), emphasizing that forests were home to 80 per cent of the Earth's land-based animal, plant and insect species.

Together, they regulate climate, prevent land degradation, reduce the risk of floods, landslides and avalanches, and protect people from droughts and dust storms. Forests also played a critical role in staving off the worst impacts of climate change, serving as the world's second-largest storehouse of carbon, he said. Indeed, the world's tropical forests alone retained a quarter trillion tons of carbon in biomass.

“If we are to succeed in the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the protection and sustainable management of our forests will be fundamental to the security of humanity's place upon this planet,” Mr. Thomson said, adding that the Assembly's decision to adopt the first-ever strategic plan was “a critical one.”

Forests presently cover 30 per cent of the Earth's land area, or nearly four billion hectares. Sustainably managed forests are healthy, productive, resilient and renewable ecosystems, which provide vital goods and ecosystem services to people worldwide. An estimated 25 per cent of the global population depends on forests for their subsistence, livelihood, employment and income.

The UN forests plan provides a global framework for actions to sustainably manage all types of forests and trees outside forests and halt deforestation and forest degradation.

The goals cover a wide range of issues including increasing forest area and combating climate change, reducing poverty and increasing forest protected areas, mobilizing financing and inspiring innovation, promoting governance and enhancing cooperation across sectors and stakeholders.

VIDEO: In the Solomon Islands, once populated by head hunters, a struggle is underway to keep with the 21st Century and at the same time protect a way of life.

In his opening remarks, Peter Besseau, of Canada, Chair of the twelfth session of the Forum on Forests, said the landmark global action plan translated the aspirations of the [International Arrangement on Forest](#) into an actionable plan to guide the Forums' work for the next 13 years. "The Global Forest Goals reflect the way the Forum is transforming its work to more effectively address the challenges facing forests and the lives of the people who depend on them."

He urged all countries and stakeholders to tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation; balance economic growth, social progress and environmental sustainability; and improve governance in order to integrate forest issues, as per the guidance from the Quadrennial Programme of Work.

As a unique universal body on forests, the UN Forum has an important role to play in implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo told the Forum today.

He noted that "the new method of work of the Forum, provides an excellent opportunity for the body to address the links between forests and the [SDGs](#), as well as capacity building, financing, technology development and transfer, governance, and science-policy interface, in a holistic and coherent manner."

The six goals not only contribute to progress on the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, but also address the [Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#), the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change, and other international forest-related commitments and goals.

"To create a better, greener future, we need the right enabling environment – from governance systems that combat illegal deforestation, to policies that ensure equitable sharing of benefits from forests" stressed the Director of UN Forum on Forests Secretariat, Manoel Sobral Filho.



Sustainably managed forests hold vast potential to play a decisive role in ending hunger, improving livelihoods and combating climate change. Photo: FAO/Simon Maina

"When sustainably managed, forests provide essential goods and services worldwide," said Mr. Sobral Filho, adding that for millions of people living

in poverty, “forests serve as safety nets in crises and often provide pathways out of poverty.”

Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world

Discussions at the Forum will take into account the 2017 theme of the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development ([HLPF](#)), *Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world* and the SDGs under in-depth review by the HLPF this year.

The Forest Forum will also discuss issues related to sustainable forest management and strategies to promote implementation of the UN forest action plan.

The six Global Forest Goals

The forest-related goals proposed by the UN Forum on Forests and adopted by the UN General Assembly are:

- Global Forest Goal 1 – Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change.
- Global Forest Goal 2 – Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people.
- Global Forest Goal 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.
- Global Forest Goal 4 – Mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation and partnerships.
- Global Forest Goal 5 – Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the UN Forest Instrument, and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda.
- Global Forest Goal 6 – Enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels, including within the UN System and across Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations, as well as across sectors and relevant stakeholders.

[Middle East peace effort lacks](#)

progress on political front – UN reports

1 May 2017 – The lack of progress in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is impeding Palestine's development, according to a new United Nations report, which also reiterates the international community's commitment to a two-state solution in the region.

The report, issued by the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process ([UNSCO](#)), notes that "despite a number of international efforts over the past six months to advance the two-state solution, last year has been characterized by a [continued lack of progress](#) on the political front."

In contrast to recommendations outlined in the [July 2016 report by the Middle East Quartet](#), there has been "a surge in Israeli settlement-related activity and a continued high rate of demolitions in Palestinian and Bedouin communities" as well as "continuing acts of violence against civilians, signs of a deepening political rift between Gaza and the West Bank, and continued military build-up and firing of rockets by extremist groups in Gaza."

This environment threatens the erosion of the achievements of the Palestinian state building effort, according to the report.

"The institutions of Palestinian governance remain vulnerable to political instability and require affirmative steps to protect and advance state-building efforts," the authors wrote.

The report also notes a "deepening political rift" between Gaza and the West Bank. Tensions between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas are aggravating a "difficult situation in the Gaza Strip" with an intra-Palestinian disagreement over issues such as electricity access and payment of salaries.

Analysing the impact of the Hamas take-over ten years ago and the ensuing Israeli closures and conflicts, the report notes that "Gaza is facing a downward spiral of de-development, while the people in Gaza are caught in a cycle of humanitarian need and perpetual aid dependency."

The report covers the period from 15 September 2016 to 15 April 2017.

It will be presented to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) at its bi-annual meeting in Brussels on 4 May. The Committee, chaired by Norway and co-sponsored by the European Union and the United States, serves as the principal policy-level coordination mechanism for development assistance to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

[‘Broadly positive’ outlook for Asia-Pacific threatened by rising global uncertainty, warns UN report](#)

1 May 2017 – Warning that despite a broadly positive economic outlook for 2017, Asia-Pacific economies are vulnerable to rising global uncertainty and trade protectionism, the United Nations social and economic development arm in the region has called for better governance and stronger fiscal management resources to sustain and improve economic growth.

In its latest edition of the [Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific](#), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) noted that the region’s developing economies are projected to grow at 5.0 and 5.1 per cent in 2017 and 2018, respectively, a steeper-than-anticipated increase in those risks could reduce average regional growth in 2017 by up to 1.2 percentage points.

“As we enter the second year of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, economic growth in Asia-Pacific economies is steady but modest amid prolonged weak external demand and rising trade protectionism,” said Shamshad Akhtar, the Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, in a [news release](#) announcing the findings.

Overcoming such challenges is also important given the role of better governance for effective resource mobilization as well as the use of fiscal resources to advancing the 2030 Agenda.

In addition to ensuring sustained and robust economic growth, policymakers will need to address social and environmental challenges in order to improve the quality of this growth,” she added.

According to UNESCAP, economic expansion has been accompanied by rising income inequality with inadequate creation of “decent jobs” in the region, which trails the world in social protection coverage. Furthermore, its study has shown that developing Asia-Pacific economies use twice as many resources per dollar of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the rest of the world.

“When institutions are weak, inequalities tend to increase and the pace of poverty reduction declines,” noted the UN Asia-Pacific development arm, adding: “The quality of governance also affects environmental outcomes, as reflected in [...] environmental rules and safeguards, and initiate ecological innovation and technological transfer.”

To address such challenges, UNESCAP has called for effective governance, including a proactive fiscal policy through productive investments in such

areas as infrastructure, social protection and resource efficiency.

Effective governance can also for example, improve health outcomes in the Pacific, promote economic diversification in north and central Asia, create decent jobs in south and south-west Asia, reduce development gaps in south-east Asia, and accelerate ecological innovation in east and north-east Asia.

[On International Day, UNESCO spotlights power of jazz to promote dialogue among cultures](#)

30 April 2017 – Marking International Jazz Day, the United Nations cultural agency today stressed the power of jazz to unite people and its contribution to peace.

“Today, we celebrate the international art form of jazz and its power to promote dialogue among cultures, to make the most of diversity, to deepen respect for human rights and all forms of expression,” said UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General Irina Bokova in her [message](#) on the Day.

Ms. Bokova quoted Nina Simone as saying that “jazz is not just music, it is a way of life, it is a way of being, a way of thinking.”

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“The story of jazz is written into the quest for human dignity, democracy and civil rights,” Ms. Bokova said, noting that its rhythms and variety have given strength to the struggle against all forms of discrimination and racism.

The Cuban capital of Havana is hosting this year’s celebration of International Jazz Day, reflecting the city’s profound ties to jazz. Hometown of renowned bandleaders, Mario Bauzá and Frank ‘Machito’ Grillo, the city and, more broadly, Cuba’s thriving musical culture gave birth to the Afro-Cuban jazz movement, inspired by a great mix of cultures and peoples across the region.

The celebration features an all-star global concert that displays the world’s

greatest talents from Cuba, Latin America and around the world, including legendary jazz pianist and composer UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue, Herbie Hancock, and Cuban jazzman, Chucho Valdés.

[Angola: UN agency airlifts aid to newly-arrived refugees from DR Congo](#)

30 April 2017 – A plane carrying relief items has arrived in Luanda, Angola, to assist over 11,000 people who fled a recent surge violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the United Nations refugee agency said today.

The aircraft landed Sunday morning from Dubai, carrying 3,500 plastic sheets as well as 100 plastic rolls to provide shelter during the rainy season, 17,000 sleeping mats, 16,902 thermal fleece blankets, 8,000 mosquito nets, 3,640 kitchen sets, 8,000 jerry cans and 4,000 plastic buckets. The Office of the UN High Commissioners for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) will be airlifting more relief items to Angola in coming days.

“Arrivals are in urgent need of life-saving assistance including food, water, shelter and medical services,” [said](#) Sharon Cooper, UNHCR Regional Representative for Southern Africa in a press release. “UNHCR is also procuring food locally to support the most vulnerable persons including children, pregnant women and elderly.”

The brutal conflict in DRC’s previously peaceful Kasai region has already displaced more than one million civilians within the country since it began in mid-2016.

The border is managed by the Angolan army. UNHCR has requested the Government to allow refugees to continue crossing the border, provide unhindered access to assist new arrivals, as well as not to return people fleeing the violence to the DRC.

Angola is currently hosting some 56,700 refugees and asylum-seekers, of whom close to 25,000 are from the DRC.

UNHCR Angola had an initial annual budget of \$2.5 million to protect and assist some 46,000 people of concern. In response to the current emergency, UNHCR is appealing for a total of \$5.5 million to provide immediate lifesaving assistance.