



#YOUTH2030

7th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum CONCEPT NOTE

Thematic Breakout Session

“Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss, and the related processes”

30 January 2018

3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Room 5

United Nations Headquarters, New York

1. Background and Context

Forests cover 30 per cent of the Earth’s land area, or nearly 4 billion hectares, and are essential to human well-being, sustainable development and the health of the planet. An estimated 1.6 billion people depend on forests for subsistence, livelihood, employment and income generation. Forests provide essential ecosystem services including timber, food, fuel, fodder, non-wood products and shelter, but also contribute to soil and water conservation and clean air. Forests prevent land degradation and desertification and reduce the risk of floods, landslides, avalanches, droughts, dust-storms, sandstorms and other natural disasters. Forests are home to an estimated 80 per cent of all terrestrial species. They contribute substantially to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to conservation of biodiversity.

The sustainable management of all types of forests and trees outside forests is vital to the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the achievement of the SDGs under review by HLPF 2018. When sustainably managed, all types of forests are healthy, productive, resilient and renewable ecosystems, providing essential goods and services to people worldwide.

Despite the crucial contribution of forests to life on earth and human well-being, deforestation and forest degradation continues in many regions, often in response to the demand for wood, food, fuel and fiber. However, the drivers of deforestation are often



rooted in wider social and economic issues, including efforts to reduce poverty, urban development and policies that favour land uses that produce higher and more rapid financial returns, such as agriculture, energy, mining and transportation. It is estimated that 75% of forest loss and degradation across the world is attributable to deforestation for agricultural expansion. Per FAO figures, by 2050 global agriculture production will increase by 60%, and meat production by 76%, while demand for timber is expected to quadruple over the same period. Meeting this global demand for food, without impacting forests and taking environmental risks poses a significant challenge.

SDG7 calls for ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030. However, even today about 40% of population in less developed countries - over 2 billion people - still rely on wood fuel for cooking and heating. Nearly 90 per cent of all fuelwood and charcoal use takes place in developing countries, where forests are often the only energy source available to the poor.

SDG15 calls upon us to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” by 2030. On 27 April 2017, the UN General Assembly adopted the first ever United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF). The Plan provides an unprecedented opportunity for strengthened and decisive action by all actors at all levels, to safeguard the world’s forests and their multiple values, functions and benefits, now and in the future. It builds on the momentum provided by the 2015 global milestones including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The conservation, restoration and sustainable use of other ecosystems, including inland fresh water ecosystems is also essential for sustainable development and for achieving SDG 15. Goal 15 addresses biodiversity in the inland water through sustaining ecosystems and ecosystem services such as water flows and water quality, which are critical for many life stages of aquatic and migratory species in particular. In addition, ecosystem approaches to farming and grazing that foster biodiversity in soil microorganisms and soil macro- and microfauna promote and maintain the soil’s physical and ecological health, thus preventing its erosion, while preserving and rebuilding soil fertility. A number of targets contained under this goal relate to other SDGs. For example, Target 15.9 refers to poverty reduction strategies and is therefore relevant to SDG 1, and Target 15.6 relates to Target 2.5 on genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals. These and other goals are consistent with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity.



The SDGs and the Strategic Plan are mutually supportive and reinforcing, and therefore the implementation of one contributes to the achievement of the other.

We recognize that as actors transition into implementation of the UNSPF and the 2030 Agenda, the MGCY must be more strategic in its engagement and must be outcomes focused. A policy literate and engaged community of youth leaders will help accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

For more than four decades, UNESCO has promoted, through the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, including sustainable forest management, combating desertification and halting biodiversity loss. The UNESCO's MAB Programme is a rare UN entity which includes both a strategic comprehensive vision for sustainable development and a powerful implementation tool endorsed and adhered to by UN Member States: the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Biosphere Reserves are in fact learning sites for sustainable development, where interdisciplinary approaches are tested to understand and manage interactions between social and ecological systems, and solutions are promoted to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.

2. Objectives

This breakout session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum will:

- provide a platform for Member States, young leaders and youth organizations and mechanisms to discuss sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss, and the related processes, while fostering attractive and long-term employment opportunities linked to conservation of biodiversity and habitat restoration.
- allow for students and young professionals to go beyond 'envisaging' youth integration, rather it charts a pathway for collaboration centered on concrete actions taken by organizations and participant experiences.

3. Expected results

- Share critical and reflective analysis and experiences of young people affected by and working in matters associated with SCP patterns;
- Create more awareness of SDG 15, the UNFF, CBD, UNCCD and the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme;
- Inform the deliberations of the HLPF, the UNFF and the CBD;



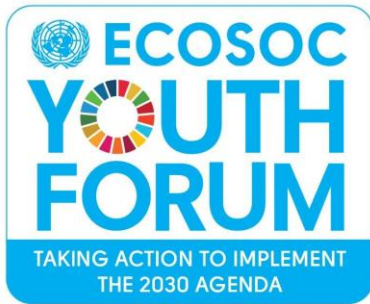
- Seek renewed commitment from partners to support the implementation and monitoring of SDG 15, UNSPF and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.
- Gain input on existing plans and strategize on how to further promote the message of SDG 15, UNFF and the CBD and the role of youth.
- Provide guiding input to a preliminary 2018-2020 plan for collaboration among leading youth entities and youth.

4. Organisation

- The session will be organised by relevant United Nations bodies' Secretariats, namely, the UN Forest Forum, the UNESCO-Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN MGCY /SDG 15/Forests/Biodiversity Working Group

Session structure and format:

- The session will be opened by the Director of the UNFF Secretariat, who will welcome participants and introduce the topic.
- A UN MGCY SDG 15 Youth Representative / representative (Youth Entity) will provide a brief overview of existing youth plans and work (UNFF MGCY 2018-2020, GYBN, etc).
- The Youth Entity will act as a moderator, providing guiding questions and expectations.
- The session will be an open discussion led by a moderator based upon the guiding questions and the expected outcomes. There will be no panelists.
- Questions to be addressed:
 - What youth led success stories or successful experiences/programs exist in relation to SDG 15?
 - How can we effectively promote the principles of SFM and importance of SDG 15?
 - Biosphere Reserves as Business Incubators: How do we leverage international designations to strengthen and promote sustainable business models involving in particular youth entrepreneurship, aligning with the SDGs and in particular forests conservation and enhancement, the fight against desertification, land degradation and biodiversity loss?
 - Safeguarding biodiversity and forests – Strengthening local communities: How can we create conditions which enable local communities—youth in particular—to stay close to Biosphere Reserves, biodiversity hotspots, key biodiversity areas and other designated areas to manage their resources more sustainably?



- The rapporteur, including a UN entity (DESA-UNFF Secretariat), and a youth entity (UN MGCY SDG15/CBD/UNFF WG or Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Youth delegate) will take notes and prepare a summary to be presented in the report back session.

5. Issues at stake

- CBD and UNFF
 - Evolution of both processes and respective targets and plans.
- SDG 15
 - Linking national, global, and regional restoration efforts to youth actors on the ground (Bonn Challenge, AFR100, Great Green Wall, and more)
- The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves
 - The potential of Biosphere reserves as places for the implementation of SDG15 in an integrated and interconnected way

6. Questions for the audience

Knowledge Exercise (Assessment of group baseline):

- What do we know about forests and biodiversity? List concepts, ideas, programs using only 2 words and do not repeat.
- Where in the world and what fields do we work/study in?

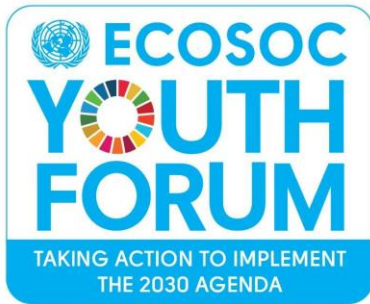
Identification of Core Contribution areas

- What youth led success stories or successful experiences/programs exist in relation to SDG 15?
- Which emerging issues, initiatives, or concepts are of particular interest to youth?

Planning Forward

- How can we effectively promote the principles of SFM, ecosystem approaches and importance of SDG 15 to the youth constituency?
- How can we enhance cooperation and coordination within the UN system and beyond to strengthen youth contribution and engagement?

7. Suggested Readings



- Global Forest Resources Assessment of FAO. Available from www.fao.org/docrep/017/ap862e/ap862e00.pdf
- Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including Aichi Biodiversity Targets. <https://www.cbd.int/sp/>
- Biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Technical note. Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). <https://www.cbd.int/development/doc/biodiversity-2030-agenda-technical-note-en.pdf>
- Youth Guide to Forest, Youth and United Nations Global Alliance (YUNGA) Learning and action series. coordinated by: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) (2014). <https://www.cbd.int/undb/media/youth/fao-youth-guide-forests.pdf>
- Youth Guide to Biodiversity, Youth and United Nations Global Alliance (YUNGA) Learning and action series. coordinated by: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) (2013). <https://www.cbd.int/undb/media/youth/fao-youth-guide-biodiv.pdf>
- CBD in a Nutshell (first edition) – A Guidebook to the CBD Process, Global Youth Biodiversity Network, Germany, 204 pages (2016). https://www.cbd.int/youth/doc/cbd_in_a_nutshell.pdf
- Strategy of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/MAB_Strategy_2015-2025_final_text.pdf
- Lima Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/Lima_Action_Plan_en_final.pdf
- UNESCO and SDG <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002477/247785e.pdf>
- Swedish Biosphere Reserves as Arenas for Implementing the 2030 Agenda http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/swedish_biosphere_reserves_as_arenas_for_implementing_the_20/