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Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note covers the contributions to and expenditures of the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests for 2019. The generous contributions of donor countries to the fund are gratefully acknowledged. Without them, implementation of many of the mandated activities of the Forum would not have been possible.

The present note was prepared pursuant to the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2017–2020.

* E/CN.18/2020/1.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [2015/33](#) on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, the Economic and Social Council urged donor Governments and organizations, including financial institutions, and others in a position to do so, to provide voluntary contributions to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests. In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017–2020, the Forum secretariat reports to the Forum at each session on the operation of the fund, including on the amounts contributed, the source of the contributions and a description of how the funds have been expended. The present note is submitted for information purposes. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 31 December 2019.

2. The present note provides an overview of the contributions to and expenditures of the trust fund for 2019. Activities were carried out pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [71/285](#), on the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, and [62/98](#), on the United Nations forest instrument, and resolutions pertaining to the Forum, including Economic and Social Council resolution [2015/33](#), as well as its resolution [2017/4](#) on the quadrennial programme of work.

II. Contributions to the trust fund in 2019

3. In 2019, seven donor countries and one donor organization contributed to the trust fund in support of the Forum's mandates, sessions and intersessional activities, as well as the work of the Forum and its secretariat (see table 1). The contributions amounted to \$1,574,755, inclusive of programme support costs. Implementation of core activities of the Forum would not have been possible without these contributions, which are gratefully acknowledged.

Table 1
Contributions to the trust fund, 2019
(United States dollars)

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Total</i>
Australia	51 621
China	258 227
Germany	683 650
Republic of Korea	19 245
Russian Federation	68 000
Slovakia	22 244
Switzerland	405 268
International Union for Conservation of Nature – Global Environment Facility	66 500
Subtotal, contributions	1 574 755
Opening balance, 1 January 2019	1 847 941
Total	3 422 696

III. Expenditures of the trust fund in 2019

4. In 2019, staffing and consultancy costs funded from extrabudgetary resources accounted for 47 per cent of expenditures and travel related to capacity development for 36 per cent. Further information is presented in table 2 and the figure.

Table 2
Expenditures of the trust fund, 2019

(United States dollars)

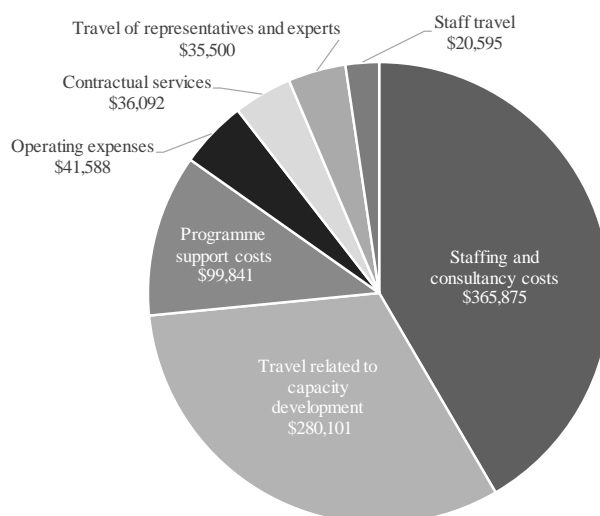
<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Staffing and consultancy costs ^a	365 875
Travel related to capacity development ^b	280 101
Travel of representatives and experts	35 500
Staff travel	20 595
Contractual services	36 092
Operating expenses ^c	41 588
Subtotal	779 751
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	99 841
Total	879 592

^a Includes staff posts funded from extrabudgetary resources, rental of office space, information technology equipment, other staff-related expenses and consultants' fees and travel costs.

^b Includes travel of participants, consultants and staff to expert group meetings, capacity development workshops of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and other capacity development activities.

^c Includes conference servicing costs, United Nations Development Programme service fees, supplies and bank fees.

Expenditures of the trust fund, 2019



5. During 2019, extrabudgetary funds were used to supplement funds from the regular budget (programme 7, Economic and social affairs, subprogramme 8, Sustainable forest management). These contributions funded a significant part of the work of the Forum secretariat in 2019, including the following:

(a) **Secretariat staff and consultants and technical experts to support Forum activities.** In order to implement mandated activities, two posts (1 P-3 and 1 P-2, the latter from April to December 2019) were funded from extrabudgetary resources. In 2020, it is expected that two posts at the P-3 level and one at the G-5 level will be funded from extrabudgetary resources. In 2019, extrabudgetary resources were also used to engage consultants and technical experts for preparations

for the fifteenth session of the Forum; expert group meetings; monitoring, assessment and reporting activities; the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network; and other mandated activities;

(b) **Travel related to capacity development.** In 2019, travel of experts to the expert group meeting on the clearing house of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, held in New York in January 2019, and the expert group meeting on the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2021–2024, held in Geneva in November 2019, were funded from extrabudgetary resources. The travel of participants, consultants and secretariat staff to capacity development workshops of the Network was also funded from extrabudgetary resources;

(c) **Travel of representatives and experts.** Travel assistance was provided to facilitate the participation of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition in Forum-related meetings in 2019; such meetings included the fourteenth session of the Forum, held at Headquarters from 6 to 10 May;

(d) **Travel of staff.** Fund resources were used to supplement regular budget funds to cover the travel costs of secretariat staff participating in key international and intergovernmental forest-related events, including meetings related to the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional coordination, major groups, capacity development workshops of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and expert group meetings related to the work of the Network and the development of its clearing house;

(e) **Contractual services, conference servicing and operating expenses.** During 2019, extrabudgetary funds were used to cover costs relating to individual contractors, conference servicing, United Nations Development Programme service fees and bank charges related to expert group meetings held away from Headquarters.

IV. Achievements and results

6. The following achievements and results are attributable to contributions made to the trust fund:

(a) The fourteenth session of the Forum, the first full technical session of the Forum since the adoption in 2017 of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, was successfully convened. The discussions focused on the contributions of forests to accelerating progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2019, namely Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17. Other issues discussed included private-sector engagement in relation to forests; monitoring, assessment and reporting frameworks; the mobilization of forest financing; and strategies for communication and outreach related to forests. The work of the United Nations Forum on Forests with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional entities and major groups were also discussed. Key outcomes of the session included the summary by the Chair, which contained key proposals for the fifteenth session and the contributions of the United Nations Forum on Forests to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2019;

(b) Substantive preparations were made for the fifteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, including through the organization of expert group meetings on the clearing house of the Network and the quadrennial programme of work 2021–2024, and in supporting the development of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests strategic vision towards 2030;

(c) Fund resources were used to supplement funds from the regular budget and the regular programme of technical cooperation for the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network;

(d) Activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including ongoing work related to the development of a global core set of forest-related indicators, the building of capacity for reporting on progress towards the global forest goals and associated targets, and the analysis of voluntary national reports submitted to the Forum at its fifteenth session, were carried out with funding for human resources from the trust fund and the United Nations Development Account;

(e) The International Day of Forests was observed in 2019, including through special events held at Headquarters and social media campaigns;

(f) Resources from the trust fund were also used to support the travel of Bureau members and representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to meetings of the Forum, including its fourteenth session;

(g) Supplementary funds were provided for the staffing needs of the Forum secretariat, which is the smallest division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In 2019, the fund covered the staffing costs of two staff members, one at the P-3 level and one at the P-2 level, the latter from April to December.

V. In-kind contributions

7. The Forum secretariat wishes to express its gratitude to the Government of China for funding a Junior Professional Officer post until April 2019. The staff member played an important role in supporting the planning and organization of Forum-related meetings and, in particular, with regard to capacity development activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the establishment of the clearing house.

VI. Priorities and challenges

8. Since the Forum was established, its mandates and outputs have continued to grow. The human and budgetary resources needed by the secretariat to support the Forum and its member States have been highlighted and well recognized in resolutions, including Economic and Social Council resolution [2015/33](#).

9. To date, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network has built the capacity of 768 national experts from 27 countries. In addition, the Network has provided capacity-building assistance through six regional training workshops, at which 364 participants benefited from training activities. In 2019, the Network had ongoing projects in 13 countries for mobilizing, accessing and enhancing the effective use of existing financial resources. Securing sufficient human and financial resources to scale up the activities of the Network remains a challenge. Furthermore, the ongoing development of the clearing house of the Network depends entirely on voluntary contributions.

10. A serious challenge has been the level of dedicated contributions to fund the travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to Forum-related meetings; such contributions have declined dramatically in recent years. If this trend continues, it will be extremely difficult for the secretariat to facilitate the balanced representation of developed and developing countries at Forum-related meetings.

11. Sustained and adequate human and financial resources are critical in enabling the secretariat to support the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests and the achievement of the six global forest goals and 26 associated targets. These resources are vital to ongoing activities related to all substantive areas of the work of the Forum and its secretariat, including capacity development; the mobilization of forest financing; monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress in implementation; enhancing cooperation and coordination; promoting regional collaboration, communication and outreach; and strengthening stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector.

12. In 2020, two key areas of work for the secretariat will be the flagship publication on progress towards achieving the global forest goals and targets, and the launch of the first phase of the clearing house of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. The production of the flagship publication, whose release is planned for 2021, will require significant extrabudgetary resources in 2020 and 2021. As a result, if the first phase of the clearing house is to be launched by the end of 2020, it will be even more important to secure sufficient human and financial resources for this work. It is thus recommended that sustainable and consistent extrabudgetary funds continue to be allocated to provide the secretariat with a stable basis for the performance of its core functions. Table 3 contains information on the estimated expenditures for 2020.

Table 3
Estimated expenditures from the trust fund for 2020
(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2020</i>
Staffing costs ^a	475 000
Consultants, experts and contractual services ^b	305 000
Travel of representatives and experts ^c	335 000
Travel of staff	150 000
Subtotal	1 265 000
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	164 450
Total	1 429 450
Closing balance, 31 December 2019	2 573 223
Expected contributions, 2020	1 000 000
Total expected funds, 2020	3 573 223

Note: Estimated expenditures refer to funds required to implement the current programme of work of the Forum secretariat; they do not include funding for any additional activities that may be decided upon by the Forum at its fifteenth session.

^a Estimate based on the cost of funding two P-3 posts and one G-5 post from extrabudgetary resources in 2020.

^b Includes costs of engaging consultants to support preparations for the sixteenth session of the Forum, in 2021, and the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network.

^c Includes travel costs of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to participate in the fifteenth session of the Forum, and any intersessional follow-up activities in 2020.