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## United Nations Forum on Forests

### Nineteenth session

New York, 6–10 May 2024

Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

### Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests

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### Note by the Secretariat

#### *Summary*

In accordance with the programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for its nineteenth session (Economic and Social Council resolution [2021/6](#), annex), the Forum, at its nineteenth session, will consider the item on the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests. The present note provides information on the contributions to and expenditures of the trust fund during 2023. The generous contributions of donor countries to the trust fund are gratefully acknowledged. Without them, the implementation of many of the mandated activities of the Forum would not have been possible.

Since the Forum was established, its mandates and outputs have grown, but the allocations from the regular budget have not increased at the same pace. Sustained, predictable and adequate human and financial resources continue to be critical in enabling the secretariat of the Forum in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to support and promote the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the achievement of the six global forest goals and the 26 associated targets.

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\* [E/CN.18/2024/1](#).



## 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 programme of work of the Forum for its nineteenth session (Council resolution [2021/6](#), annex), the Forum will consider the item on its trust fund.

2. The present note provides an overview of the amounts contributed, the sources of these contributions and the expenditures of the trust fund for 2023. It is submitted for information purposes. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 12 February 2024. 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 non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, and resolutions pertaining to the Forum, including Council resolutions [2015/33](#), [2022/17](#) and [2020/14](#), as well as the annex to Council resolution [2021/6](#).

## II. Contributions to the trust fund in 2023

3. In 2023, four donor countries 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 \$948,031, inclusive of programme support costs. The implementation of core activities of the Forum would not have been possible without these generous contributions, which are gratefully acknowledged.

Table 1  
**Contributions to the trust fund, 2023**  
 (United States dollars)

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Total</i>
China	287 410
Germany	243 429
Republic of Korea	17 192
United States of America	400 000
<b>Subtotal, contributions</b>	<b>948 031</b>
Opening balance, 1 January 2023	2 443 375
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 391 406</b>

## III. Expenditure of the trust fund in 2023

4. In 2023, travel related to capacity development accounted for around 30 per cent of expenditures from extrabudgetary resources, and staffing costs, including staff posts, other staff-related expenses and consultants' fees accounted for around 24 per cent of expenditures. Further information on the expenditure of the trust fund is presented in table 2 and the related figure.

Table 2  
**Expenditures of the trust fund, 2023**

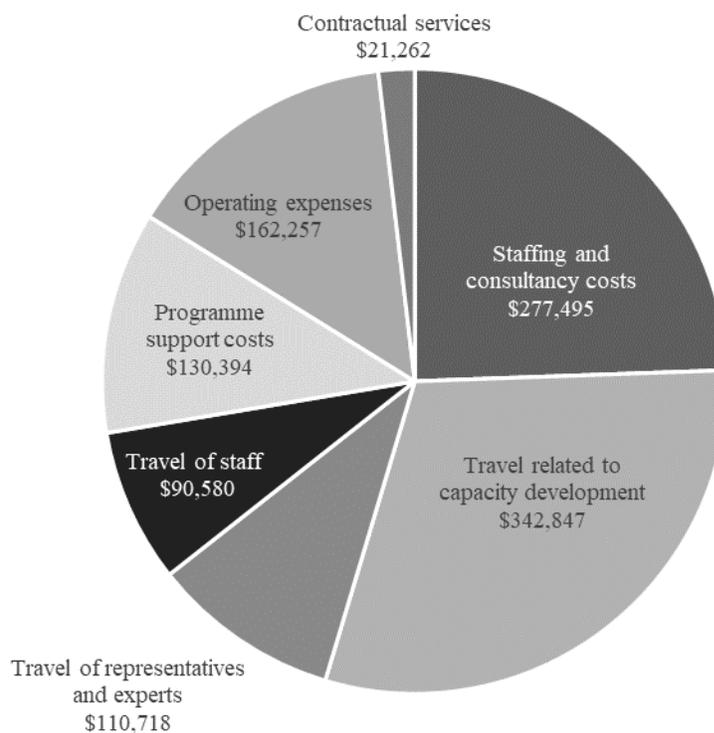
(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Staffing and consultancy costs <sup>a</sup>	277 495
Travel related to capacity development	342 847
Travel of representatives and experts	110 718
Travel of staff	90 580
Contractual services	21 262
Operating expenses <sup>b</sup>	162 257
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1 005 159</b>
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	130 394
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 135 553</b>

<sup>a</sup> Includes staff posts funded from extrabudgetary resources, other staff-related expenses and consultants' fees.

<sup>b</sup> Includes the rental of premises, information technology, training, conference-servicing costs and bank fees.

### Expenditures of the trust fund, 2023



5. During 2023, 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 2023, including the following:

(a) **Secretariat staff and consultants and technical experts to support Forum activities.** In order to implement mandated activities related to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and its clearing house, one post at the P-3 level was funded from extrabudgetary resources in 2023. Extrabudgetary resources were used to engage consultants and technical experts to support work related to the Network. Extrabudgetary resources were also used to support the intersessional activities leading up to the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests;

(b) **Travel related to capacity development.** In 2023, the secretariat continued to provide technical support, through the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, to several members of the Forum, namely, Algeria, Benin, Burundi, Liberia, Mozambique, Togo and Uzbekistan, using extrabudgetary resources. As part of such support, capacity development workshops were held in those countries, in order to enhance capacity for developing project proposals and national forest financing strategies, as well as to validate draft project proposals and strategies. The organization-led initiative on the assessment of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, held in February 2023, the global workshop on reporting on progress towards the global forest goals and targets of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, held in March 2023, the expert group meeting on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, held in June 2023, and the meeting of the ad hoc expert group on the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests, held in October 2023, were all funded using extrabudgetary resources. The cost of organizing meetings and workshops included costs related to travel of participants, consultants and secretariat staff;

(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 held in 2023, including the eighteenth session of the Forum, held in May 2023, and the meeting of the ad hoc expert group on the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests, held in October 2023;

(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 the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other meetings related to the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations;

(e) **Contractual services, conference services and operating expenses.** During 2023, extrabudgetary funds were used to cover costs relating to the rental of premises, information technology, training, conference services costs and bank fees.

## IV. Achievements and results

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

(a) At its eighteenth session, held from 8 to 12 May 2023, the United Nations Forum on Forests took stock of progress towards the global forest goals of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and identified key opportunities and challenges in this regard, including: opportunities related to interlinkages with the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2023 and with the Kunming-Montreal Global

Biodiversity Framework; emerging issues related to forests, energy and livelihoods; challenges related to mobilizing increased financing for forests; and the need to strengthen cooperation and collaboration with partners from the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional entities, and stakeholders, among others;

(b) Resources from the trust fund were used to support a series of intersessional activities held in 2023 as part of the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests. Those activities included the meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the preparations for the midterm review of the international arrangement on forests, held from 10 to 13 October, at which the ad hoc expert group reviewed the full set of assessments and outcomes of the preparatory intersessional work related to the review. The outcome of the meeting was a set of proposals by the Co-Chairs of the ad hoc expert group regarding the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement for forests, including the future steps to be taken by the international arrangement beyond 2024, which will be put forth for consideration by the Forum at its nineteenth session, in May 2024;

(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. These activities included further development of the online clearing house and the production of the “Forest financing quarterly highlight” communication product, which were carried out with funding for human resources from the trust fund. In addition, the expert group meeting on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 in June 2023 was organized with resources from the trust fund. Further details on the activities of the Network are contained in the note by the Secretariat entitled “Policy discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: activities in support of the thematic priorities for the biennium 2023–2024: means of implementation, including operations and resources of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network” ([E/CN.18/2024/3](#));

(d) Resources from the trust fund were used to support intersessional activities related to the preparations for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests. Further details on key activities are contained in the note by the Secretariat entitled “Midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives and quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2025–2028” ([E/CN.18/2024/5](#));

(e) Resources from the fund were essential in supporting work related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including organization of the global workshop on reporting on progress towards the global forest goals and targets of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, held in March 2023, and the expert group meeting on the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, held in June 2023. Further details on key activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting are contained in the note by the Secretariat entitled “Policy discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: activities in support of the thematic priorities for the biennium 2023–2024: monitoring, assessment and reporting” ([E/CN.18/2024/4](#));

(f) Resources from the trust fund were used to support the updating of the workplan of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests for the period 2021–2024 and the organization of the organization-led initiative on the assessment of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. Further details on the activities of the Partnership are

contained in the note by the Secretariat entitled “Policy discussions on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030: activities in support of the thematic priorities for the biennium 2023–2024” (E/CN.18/2024/2);

(g) The trust fund continues to be a critical source of supplementary funding for meeting the staffing needs of the secretariat of the Forum in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to manage the secretariat’s growing mandate. In 2023, the fund covered the staffing costs of one staff member at the P-3 level to support the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. It is expected that three P-3 posts and one G-5 post will be funded from extrabudgetary resources in 2024, which will support the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, monitoring, assessment and reporting activities and development of a new Forum website and new information services and products.

## V. Priorities and challenges

7. Since the Forum was established, its mandates and outputs have grown, but allocations from the regular budget have not increased at the same pace. 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 Council resolution 2015/33. Voluntary contributions to the trust fund play an essential role in supplementing funds from the regular budget, especially in the light of the ongoing liquidity crisis, which has resulted in significant reductions in non-post resources from the regular budget.

8. The scaling up of the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network continues to be limited by the availability of adequate resources. The development of the clearing house of the Network is being done in a cost-effective manner by leveraging information technology services from within the United Nations; nevertheless, such expenditures also depend on the availability of voluntary contributions.

9. Securing dedicated contributions to fund the travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition is also critical. To date, there has been a trend of declining contributions; should this continue, the capacity of the secretariat of the Forum to facilitate the balanced representation of developed and developing countries at future Forum-related meetings would be limited.

10. Sustained, predictable and adequate human and financial resources continue to be critical in enabling the secretariat to support and promote the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests and the achievement of the six global forest goals and the 26 associated targets. Such resources are vital to strengthen the impact of the work of the Forum and its secretariat, including activities related to capacity development; forest financing; monitoring, assessment and reporting; enhancing cooperation and coordination; promoting regional collaboration, communication and outreach; and strengthening stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector.

Table 3  
**Estimated expenditures of the trust fund for 2024**

(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2024</i>
Staffing costs <sup>a</sup>	600 000
Consultants, experts and contractual services <sup>b</sup>	150 000
Travel of representatives and experts <sup>c</sup>	375 000
Travel of staff	80 000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1 205 000</b>
Programme support costs (13 per cent)	156 650
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 361 650</b>
Closing balance, 31 December 2023	2 411 258
Expected contributions, 2024	855 000
<b>Total expected funds, 2024</b>	<b>3 266 258</b>

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

<sup>a</sup> Estimate based on the cost of funding one P-3 post (to support the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network) for the full year, two P-3 posts (to support monitoring, assessment and reporting and communications activities) for half of the year, and one G-5 post (Information Assistant) from extrabudgetary resources in 2024.

<sup>b</sup> Includes costs of engaging consultants to support preparations for the twentieth session of the Forum, in 2025, and the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network.

<sup>c</sup> Includes travel costs of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to participate in Forum-related meetings during 2024, including intersessional activities.