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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 2018. The generous contributions of donor countries to the fund are gratefully acknowledged. Without them, implementation of many of the mandated activities 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.18/2019/1.



I. Introduction

1. In Economic and Social Council resolution [2015/33](#) on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, Member States 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. It should be noted that the present note is submitted for information. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 31 December 2018.

2. The present note outlines contributions to and activities funded by the trust fund for 2018. 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 of 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

3. In 2018, five donor countries generously 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 total contributions to the fund amounted to \$685,133, 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, 2018

(United States dollars)

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Total</i>
China ^a	197 992
Finland ^b	63 481
Republic of Korea	21 480
Russian Federation	102 180
United States of America	300 000
Total contributions	685 133
Opening balance, 1 January 2018	2 301 144
Grand total	2 986 277

^a The amount contributed was for capacity development activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. The donor has also provided an in-kind contribution of a Junior Programme Officer post to the Forum secretariat.

^b The amount contributed was for the travel of participants from developing countries to the fourteenth session of the Forum, the travel of experts from developing countries participating in training activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and support for communication activities of the Network.

III. Expenditures of the trust fund, 2018

4. The travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition accounted for 46 per cent of total expenditures during 2018. Staffing of the secretariat funded from extrabudgetary resources accounted for 21 per cent of total expenditures in 2018. Further information on the expenditures of the trust fund is presented in table 2 and the figure.

Table 2
Expenditures of the trust fund, 2018

(United States dollars)

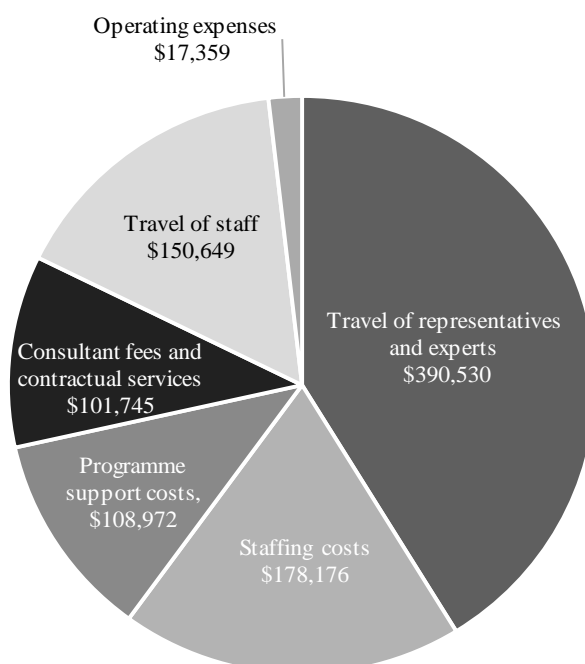
<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Staffing costs ^a	178 176
Consultant fees and contractual services ^b	101 745
Travel of representatives and experts	390 530
Travel of staff	150 649
Operating expenses ^c	17 359
Subtotal	838 459
13 per cent programme support costs	108 972
Total	947 431

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

^b Includes travel costs of consultants.

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

Expenditures of the trust fund, 2018



5. During 2018, extrabudgetary funds were used to supplement funds from the regular budget (Programme 7, Economic and social affairs, subprogramme 8, Sustainable forest management). The contributions were crucial for funding a significant part of the activities of the programme of work of the Forum secretariat in 2018, including the following:

(a) **Staffing of the secretariat.** In order to implement mandated activities, the post of one staff member at the P-3 level was funded from extrabudgetary resources using primarily unearmarked resources of the trust fund. In 2019, it is expected that one post at the P-3 level and one at the G-6 level will be funded from extrabudgetary resources;

(b) **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 2018. The meetings included the thirteenth session of the Forum, held at United Nations Headquarters from 7 to 11 May 2018, and intersessional meetings, such as the international conference on the theme “Working across sectors to halt deforestation and increase forest area: from aspiration to action”, organized by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in Rome from 20 to 22 February 2018, and the event on forests, held at United Nations Headquarters on 8 July 2018, prior to the session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(c) **Travel of staff.** Fund resources were used to supplement regular budget funds to cover the travel costs of Forum secretariat staff members 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, capacity development workshops of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and expert group meetings related to the work of the Network, monitoring, assessment and reporting, regional coordination and the contribution of major groups;

(d) **Contractual services, conference servicing and operating expenses.** During 2018, 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;

(e) **Consultants and technical experts to support Forum activities.** In 2018, extrabudgetary resources from the trust fund were used to engage consultants and technical experts for preparations for the fourteenth session of the Forum, expert group meetings, monitoring, assessment and reporting activities, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and other mandated activities.

IV. Achievements and results

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

(a) The successful convening of the thirteenth session of the Forum, which represented was the first policy session of the new restructured format and served to focus on, among other things, sustainable forest management, strategies to promote implementation of the strategic plan and thematic priorities related to the annual theme and reviews of the 2018 high level political forum on sustainable development. Key actions of the Forum at its thirteenth session included the adoption of the communications and outreach strategy of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, agreement on the format and date for voluntary national reporting on progress made in the achievement of the global forest goals, the adoption of guidelines for the operation of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and

the contributions of the Forum to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018 and to preparations for the review of the high-level political forum in 2019;

(b) Fund resources were used to supplement funds from the regular budget, the United Nations Development Account and the regular programme of technical cooperation, for activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, which is building capacity to mobilize forest financing for sustainable forest management in pilot countries;

(c) Activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including ongoing work related to the development of a global core set of forest-related indicators and the development of explanatory notes for voluntary national reporting to the Forum, were carried out through the use of funding for human resources from the trust fund;

(d) Observance of the International Day of Forests in 2018 through activities, including through special events held at Headquarters and social media campaigns, which were carried out using resources from the trust fund;

(e) 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 thirteenth session;

(f) The trust fund continues to be a critical source of funding for supplementing the staffing needs of the Forum secretariat, which is the smallest division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The fund currently covers the salary of one secretariat staff member at the P-3 level, funded from extrabudgetary resources.

V. In-kind contributions

7. The Forum secretariat would like to express its gratitude to the Governments of China and Japan for funding Junior Professional Officer posts in 2018. Both staff members played an important role in supporting the planning and organization of Forum-related meetings and, in particular, relating to capacity development activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and to monitoring, assessment and reporting to the Forum.

VI. Priorities and challenges

8. Since the Forum was established, its mandates and outputs have steadily grown. The human and budgetary resources needed by the secretariat in order 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. Since its inception in May 2015, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, in its pilot implementation phase, has contributed to the design of national forest financing strategies. In 2018, the Network assisted 13 countries in mobilizing, accessing and enhancing the effective use of existing financial resources. A key challenge that remains is to raise sufficient resources in order to be able to scale up the activities of the Network. Furthermore, the development of the clearing house of the Network will depend entirely on voluntary contributions, and therefore the scale of its design, using a stepwise approach, will also require the mobilization of sufficient resources.

10. 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 has declined substantially in recent years. This poses a serious challenge for the Forum secretariat in its efforts to facilitate the balanced representation of both developed and developing countries at Forum meetings. In the light of the significance of the fifteenth session of the Forum, which will also include a ministerial segment and at which a decision on the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2021–2024 is expected to be made, specific designated extrabudgetary resources are needed to ensure full travel support for the participation of representatives of eligible countries at the fourteenth session.

11. Sustained and adequate human and financial resources will be critical to 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. Meeting the level of ambition and carrying out the vision of the strategic plan will require the scaling up of ongoing activities related to all substantive areas of work of the Forum and its secretariat, including capacity development, mobilizing 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. The production of the flagship publication on progress towards achieving the global forest goals and targets, which is planned to be released by the end of 2021, will also require significant extrabudgetary resources in 2019 and 2020. It is thus recommended that sustainable and consistent extrabudgetary funds continue to be allocated so as to provide the secretariat with a stable basis for the performance of its functions.

Table 3
Estimated expenditures from the trust fund, 2019

(United States dollars)

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>2019</i>
Staffing costs ^a	275 000
Consultants, experts and contractual services ^b	305 000
Travel of representatives and experts ^c	335 000
Travel of staff	150 000
Subtotal	1 065 000
13 per cent programme support costs	13 845
Total	1 203 450
Closing balance, 31 December 2018	2 065 218
Expected contributions, 2019	1 000 000
Total expected funds, 2019	3 065 218

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 fourteenth session.

^a Estimate based on the cost of funding one P-3 post and one G-6 post from extrabudgetary resources in 2019.

^b Includes costs of engaging consultants to support preparations for the fifteenth session of the Forum in 2020 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 fourteenth session of the Forum, in 2019.