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Committee of Permanent Representatives  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Tuesday 7 May 2019  
2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
United Nations Office at Nairobi, Gigiri  
Conference Room 4

## **Briefing note on the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030**

### **Introduction**

UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 was passed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) as resolution [A/RES/73/284](#) on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019, following the invitation to the General Assembly by the Conference of the parties to the convention on Biological Diversity at its fourteenth meeting, in its decisions 14/30, to designate the decade 2021-2030 the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and align it with the previous decade of the Sustainable Development Goals. UN Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have been designated to lead the implementation of the Decade.

The UNGA, in its resolution, “*recalls the United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions calling for conservation and restoration of ecosystems*”. This note aims to inform about the importance of the Decade, and invites Member States to share views, expectations, advice, and guidance on how to make it impactful. The UN Environment Programme and FAO aim to offer regular consultative sessions and keep Member States updated on progress made. An initial basic website for the Decade will be launched in coming weeks, and will be further built up as ideas and proposed structures emerge from consultations.

### **Why is the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration needed?**

The resolution recognized that “*several targets related to ecosystem restoration contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have a deadline of 2020, urgent action is therefore needed to achieve them*”. Forests, wetlands, drylands, coastal areas, and other natural ecosystems are essential for sustainable development, poverty alleviation and improved human well-being.

It further emphasized “*the importance of ensuring an ecosystem approach for the integrated management of land, water and living resources and the need to step up efforts to tackle desertification, land degradation, erosion and drought, biodiversity loss and water scarcity, which are seen as major environmental, economic and social challenges for global sustainable development.*”

### **Which ecosystems are covered?**

All ecosystems are covered, though at present there is generally more experience and ongoing activities on restoration of terrestrial, freshwater ecosystems, and mangroves, rather than of marine ecosystems.

### **What could the UN Decade achieve?**

One main objective of this UN Decade is to accelerate existing global restoration goals, for example the goal of bringing at least 350 million hectares of degraded forests and landscapes

under restoration by 2030. The 350-million-hectare goal builds on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and has a solid baseline established by the '[Bonn Challenge](#)' process since 2011, under which already 57 countries, subnational governments and private organizations have committed to bring over 170 million hectares under active restoration. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is developing a tracking tool called the 'Bonn Challenge Barometer' which UN Environment Programme and FAO would use, among other tools, to report to the General Assembly.

### **Do UN Environment and FAO have mandate to work on ecosystem restoration?**

At the fourth UN Environment Assembly, Members States have requested the Executive Director, upon request and subject to availability of resources, to support the Members States also party to the UNCCD, which have pledged to do so, do develop and implement voluntary targets on land degradation neutrality, including the definition of national baselines, targets and associated measures to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030, as appropriate.

The UNGA further called upon member states to *Invite the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to lead the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Rio conventions, other relevant multilateral environmental agreements and entities of the United Nations system, including by identifying and developing possible activities and programmes, within their mandates and existing resources, and through voluntary contributions, as appropriate.*

At the outset, the UN Environment Programme and FAO would build on existing formal and informal partnerships, notably the [Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration](#), [UN Water](#), the [Global Peatlands Initiative](#), the [Mountain Partnership](#), the [Collaborative Partnership on Forests](#), the [Global Landscapes Forum](#), the [Great Green Wall Initiative](#), the [Global Soil Partnership](#), the [Global Mangrove Alliance](#) and others. UN Environment and FAO are members in all these networks. Particular attention would be paid to involving and informing the Rio Conventions and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and other relevant multi-lateral environmental agreements. A close collaboration will also be sought with IUCN, and their network of over 1000 member organizations, in particular, building on the experience of IUCN in supporting the Bonn Challenge.

### **What are the additional resource implications for countries?**

Participation of countries is voluntary. Experience from initiatives such as the 'Bonn Challenge' has shown that there is a growing interest from countries in investing in restoration action, both from domestic resources, and through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. A growing interest from the private sector in investing in ecosystem restoration and stable, sustainable commodity supply chains has also been observed by UN Environment Programme and FAO in recent years. In summary, a UN Decade could add further momentum to a situation that is already characterized by growing opportunities.

### **How does this Decade relate to the new CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Strategic Framework, expected to be adopted in 2020?**

The new Strategic Biodiversity Framework is still under discussion. However, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, at their 14th meeting in Sharm-el Sheik in Egypt in 2018, has adopted decision 14/30 which '*Invited the United Nations General Assembly to designate the decade 2021 to 2030 the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration*'.

### **Initial steps towards the implementation of the Decade**

A first consultation and brainstorming workshop on Ecosystem Restoration Decade was held on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019 in Bonn. Colleagues from FAO, UNEP-WCMC, IUCN, the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF, hosted by the Centre of International Forestry Research), and UN Environment convened to draft an initial workplan for collaboration and consultations with UN Member States, and the Rio Conventions and other UN agencies. A consultation plan for the

coming months, prior to commencement of the decade, will be developed. UN Environment and FAO also aim to draw lessons from other UN Decades and agreement on resource mobilization for the Decade. Initial consultations were also held with two Rio Conventions Secretariats based in Bonn (UNCCD and UNFCCC); consultations with the CBD Secretariat will follow shortly. The workshop also helped to agree on roles and responsibilities of the initial partners of this Decade. Additional consultations will be held globally in preparation for the launch of the UN Decade, aligning with the needs of governments globally.

Further information on restoration is available in this document: [Restoring Forests and Landscapes: The Key to a Sustainable Future.](#)

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