



## UN Forum to highlight forests' fundamental role in supporting healthy, resilient societies

Throughout history, people have depended on forests and trees for the vital resources they provide, to sustain economies, societies and human well-being. It is estimated that the economic value of ecosystem services provided by forests globally could be worth as much as US\$16.2 trillion. Billions of people rely on forests to generate energy, for materials to build their homes, as well as for livelihood, health, and food. Forests are also home to an estimated 80 per cent of all terrestrial species. On 7-11 May 2018, the UN Forum on Forests will hold its 13th session (UNFF13) at UN Headquarters in New York, to ensure that our forests are protected and sustainably managed.

This is the first policy session of the Forum since the adoption of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 by the UN General Assembly in 2017. Discussions at UNFF13 will provide a timely opportunity for the Forum to promote implementation of the Strategic Plan and provide input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2018.

The Strategic plan and its Global Forest Goals and targets provide a global framework for sustainably managing all types of forests and trees, halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation, and increasing forest area by 2030. The Plan also serves as a blueprint to promote the contributions of forests to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Forests and trees sustain life

Forests and trees provide vital resources for life on Earth. They sustain our economies, societies and promote our overall well-being. Forested watersheds and wetlands supply 75 per cent of the world's freshwater – for households as well as agriculture or industrial

use. Forests are nature's water towers, they filter, store and supply freshwater, and through transpiration they seed clouds and affect rainfall patterns.

About one third of the world's population relies on biomass-based energy from forests and trees for their daily needs, particularly cooking and heating. Sustainable forest management and sustainable use of forest products offer some of the most effective and cost-competitive natural carbon capture and storage options available.

Forests sustain human health, from clean air and water to providing components for 75 per cent of top-ranking global prescription medications. These vital ecosystems build resilience, prevent land degradation and desertification, reduce the risk of floods, landslides and avalanches, droughts, dust storms and sandstorms and other natural disasters. When properly managed, forests are healthy, productive, resilient and renewable ecosystems.

The UNFF13 agenda includes discussions on the contributions of forests in accelerating achievement of the SDGs and in supporting global efforts in the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies as well as monitoring, assessment and reporting frameworks, mobilizing forest financing, and strategies for communication and outreach. To this end, a Ministerial Roundtable and a series of interactive panel discussions will be held during this session.

The UN Forum on Forests is a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) and is composed of 197 Member States of the UN and State Members of the Specialized Agencies. Since its inception in 2001, the Forum has reached major policy milestones including the adoption of the first UN Forest Instrument in 2007, the creation of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network in 2015 and most recently, the adoption of the first-ever UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 in 2017.

For more information: [UN Forum on Forests](#)

## HIGHLIGHTS



*Zipline uses drone technology to save lives  
Photo: Sarah Farhat/World Bank*

## Pursuing resilience and sustainability with innovation

Natural disasters, climate change hazards, food insecurities, water crises and public health risks – the threats facing our societies today are multiple and complex. How can new technologies and innovation play a role and increase our abilities to prevent and efficiently respond to different hazards? This topic will be in focus as Heads of State, ministers, parliamentarians, resilience specialists and inventors gather for the 2018 ECOSOC Integration Segment at UN Headquarters on 1-3 May 2018.

Under the overarching theme “Innovative communities: leveraging technology and innovation to build sustainable and resilient societies,” the annual ECOSOC event will hone in on a number of topics that

have the potential of making our societies stronger, more sustainable and better prepared when disaster strikes.

ECOSOC Vice President Mahmamin Mahmaminov will open the event on 1 May together with UN DESA's Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin and Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan Kamoliddinzoda Ilyos Jamoliddin. Discussions will then kick off, revolving around our quest for resilience and sustainability, moderated by New York Times journalist and the author of "The Price of Everything", Eduardo Porter.

## Empowering the furthest behind first

Following these initial discussions, the first session will aim at decoding resilience, while taking a closer look at the building blocks of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. What are some of the main risks communities currently face at the local, national and regional levels? How can the needs of countries in special situations be best addressed to reach the furthest behind first and ensure that no one is left behind?

"The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [...] has the potential to address all these challenges," said ECOSOC President Marie Chatardová in a recent blog post on the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies. "But to do so its implementation needs to progress timely and effectively. Leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first is critical, including by empowering the most marginalized groups and their families so that they can lead decent and productive lives."

Empowering the most vulnerable groups is also critical from a resilience perspective. "Disaster fatalities are more influenced by socio-economic vulnerability, and exposure or lack of protection from the elements, than by the hazard itself," said Robert Glasser, UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction. "The good news though is that we have an opportunity like never before to avoid the creation of new disaster risk and apply the brakes to economic losses," he said.

## Role of new technologies to reduce risks and build resilience

Exchanging experiences and lessons learned in terms of the latest technology and innovations to reduce disaster risks, will be in focus for the segment's second session. It will also explore the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism's online platform, adopted in the 2030 Agenda, which is one of the instruments that can serve as a comprehensive mapping of and a gateway for information on existing science, technology and innovation initiatives.

One session will take a closer look at approaches that cities and countries have taken to design resilient and sustainable infrastructure, while another will zoom in on the specific challenges that Africa faces. The event will also invite Member States to take the stage during general debates.

Wrapping up, the 2018 ECOSOC Integration Segment will look ahead and explore the contribution of frontier technologies to design a resilient and sustainable future, including multi-hazard early warning systems, climate risk early warning initiatives, foresighting techniques, capacity building, partnerships, resilience investments and insurance schemes.

*Photo: Zipline uses drone technology to save lives – Sarah Farhat/World Bank*

For more information: [2018 ECOSOC Integration Segment](#)



## How well is development cooperation adjusting to the new demands the 2030 Agenda?

Development cooperation done right holds tremendous promise to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Effective development cooperation can help to initiate the profound policy and programme integration required by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It can facilitate inclusive partnerships across

sectors and support coherence of policies affecting sustainable development.

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Capacity building in areas such as domestic resource mobilization and national data infrastructure puts developing countries in the driver's seat. It empowers them to better identify and articulate their needs in national strategies and development cooperation policies. This enables partners to better target and tailor their support.

Will this promise of development cooperation be fulfilled? The answer to this question hinges on development actors learning more, and more swiftly, on how to operate and achieve results in an increasingly complex and diverse development cooperation system. The Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) supports this action-oriented learning at global level.

The Forum's 2018 High-level Meeting will take place on 21 and 22 May at UN Headquarters in New York. The special event will focus on "The strategic role of development cooperation in achieving the 2030 Agenda: Building sustainable and resilient societies".

Participants will examine different ways of closing the large SDGs financing gap and keeping the commitment to leave no one behind. They will look at the role of Official Development Assistance (ODA), especially for countries with limited capacities and high vulnerability. They will also explore how ODA can serve as a powerful catalyst to engage other actors, such as the private sector and foundations, in development efforts.

Attendees will also discuss how to embrace diversity, for instance by building more broad-based and structured South-South and triangular cooperation; and strengthening engagement of various stakeholders, including civil society, parliamentarians, mayors and local authorities. They will explore how to facilitate more systematic knowledge exchange and how to manage diversity and build synergies, while avoiding fragmentation and duplication of efforts.

The 2018 DCF will draw upon expert meetings and events, such as the 2017 DCF High Level Symposium in Argentina on "South-South and triangular cooperation for achieving

the 2030 Agenda: Building innovative and inclusive partnerships". It will also build on analytical work, including the 2018 report of the Secretary General on Trends in Development Cooperation and the 2018 Mutual Accountability Survey.

The Forum provides concrete guidance on development cooperation for policy makers and practitioners at all levels. It is open to all Member States of the United Nations and observers, members of parliament, local governments, UN entities, international organizations, civil society organizations, foundations, academia and the private sector.

For more information: 6th Biennial High-level Meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF)

## GET INVOLVED



### Giving civil society a voice: Apply for UN ECOSOC consultative status!

"We the Peoples" are the celebrated opening words of the UN Charter. It is "We the Peoples" who are embarking on the road to 2030. Our journey will involve all parts of society, and all people. Millions have already engaged with, and will own, this 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is an agenda of the people, by

the people, and for the people.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have already played active roles in shaping this new agenda and will continue to be invaluable partners to implement the goals on the ground.

One of the major platforms for NGOs to work with the United Nations is through a consultative relationship with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Consultative status is granted by ECOSOC upon recommendation of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, which is composed by UN Member States.

Currently, 4,862 NGOs enjoy this status. They are represented all over the world and work in many different areas including education, health, poverty eradication, human rights, gender equality and indigenous issues.

So what are the benefits for NGOs having this status? NGOs that are accredited with ECOSOC can participate in many events, including, but not limited to regular sessions of ECOSOC, its functional commissions and its other subsidiary bodies. They may:

- Attend official meetings;
- Submit written statements prior to sessions;
- Make oral statements;
- Meet official government delegations, UN officers and other NGO representatives;
- Organize and attend parallel events that take place during the session;

- Participate in debates, interactive dialogues and panel discussions.

The NGO Branch of UN DESA is inviting all interested NGOs that are willing to work in close collaboration with ECOSOC, to apply for consultative status. **1 June 2018** is the deadline to submit applications that will be reviewed during the following year. Read more about how to apply [here](#).

The NGO Branch is also inviting interested NGOs to join an [webinar and information session](#) about the application process on **2 May 2018 from 11 am to 12:30 pm EDT**. Register [here](#) for this session.

For more information:

Apply for ECOSOC consultative status now in order to be considered by the 2019 NGO Committee  
 How to apply for ECOSOC consultative status  
 Webinar and information session on application process on 2 May 2018 (in English)

## EXPERT VOICES



### A new global agenda for action on sustainable energy

The world has reached a critical juncture. Either we immediately ramp up efforts to achieve sustainable energy for all, or risk falling short on all the other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A new publication supported by UN DESA not only calls for more ambition – it offers practical ways of achieving universal energy access by 2030.

The publication, “Accelerating SDG 7 achievement: Policy briefs in support of the first SDG 7 review at the UN High-Level Political Forum 2018,” includes 27 policy briefs by 50 global energy authorities from within and without the UN System. It proposes a Global Agenda for Accelerated SDG 7 Action, with recommendations and best options for countries to achieve universal energy access in the next 12 years.

“Energy is one of the best enablers for sustainable development,” says Minoru Takada who leads UN DESA’s work on sustainable energy. “It empowers people, brings business opportunities, creates jobs and is the key answer to the challenge of climate change.”

“These Policy Briefs are unique because they are the product of 50 globally renowned organizations. They represent a well-worked-out consensus on where we are and what needs to be done in the future,” Mr. Takada added.

In addition to speeding up progress on sustainable energy, the briefs aim to maximize energy’s positive impact on all the other SDGs. Sheila Oparaocha, Executive Director of ENERGIA – the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy – explained how energy can lead to healthier, more empowered lives for women.

“Women are the most affected by lack of energy, because they are the poorest in our societies and communities,” Ms. Oparaocha said. “Toxic fumes from cooking on rudimentary forms of energy, affect their health. Of the 4.3 million people who die prematurely because of lack of access to energy, 80 per cent are women and girls. We are not going to achieve SDG 7 unless we address the gender inequality issues.”

Dr. Maria Nera of the World Health Organization also stressed the health hazards of poor energy access. She said that more investments in sustainable energy would bring benefits on issues “from gender to health, to education and for a more sustainable future and economy.”

“If you don’t have access to energy, there is no way to have even a simple refrigerator to keep a vaccine,” she said. “If you don’t have electricity, you will not be able to study, you will not be able to receive a treatment and, most of all, you will have a very polluted air.”

Hans Olav Ibrekk of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry offered his key recommendations for achieving sustainable energy for all and increasing the impact of energy on other goals.

“We need political leadership. Our political leaders need to give priority to energy and that has to be reflected in budgets. We need to work together with all stakeholders. We need to mobilize the private sector because it will have to provide the bulk of finance.”

For more information and to download the report:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?page=view&nr=2749&type=13&menu=1634>

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



## Regional cooperation crucial to achieve the global goals

The success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development hinges on the ability of countries in Asia and beyond to work together. Such was the key message of an expert panel, which met on 10 April at the Boao Forum for Asia, held annually on the Chinese island of Hainan. The experts, convened by UN DESA and the Boao Forum Secretariat to discuss the theme of

“Advancing Together the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, agreed on the importance of regional cooperation and partnerships in advancing the SDGs.

UN Under-Secretary-General and head of UN DESA, Mr. Liu Zhenmin, outlined the key features of the SDGs, including their focus on leaving no one behind, their integration of economic, social and environmental elements, and their universality. “All countries must work together to achieve sustainable development for all,” he said.

He also updated participants on the progress that countries have made towards the goals, referring to the [Synthesis Report of Voluntary National Reviews 2017](#) and the [SDGs Progress Report](#). The initiative launched by China to jointly build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (the Belt and Road initiative) was highlighted as a good example of a regional initiative that can help achieve the SDGs.

During the event, Mr. Liu also made the business case for investing in the 2030 Agenda: “The SDGs are good for business, creating an enabling framework under which businesses flourish”, he said, adding that thousands of companies have prepared business plans for the goals. He also discussed the importance of the 2030 Agenda for the Asia region in several bilateral meetings, including with the Secretary General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

**Jomo Kwame Sundaram** moderated the panel discussion on the SDGs, which featured Under-Secretary-General **Liu Zhenmin**, **Sir Mark Moody-Stuart**, Vice Chair of the UN Global Compact Board, **Shigeo Katsu**, President of Nazarbayev University and former Vice President at the World Bank, Satsuki Katayama, Member of the House of Councillors of Japan, **Liu Dashan**, Chairman of the China Energy Conservation and Environmental Protection Group and Mr. **Liu Zhenya**, Chairman of the Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization (GEIDCO).

For more information: [Boao Forum for Asia](#)



## Global trade at a crossroads



In the first quarter of 2018, the US imposed tariffs on a range of its imports, including steel, aluminium, washing machines and solar panels, and announced plans to impose a tariff on \$50 billion-worth of products from China. China, along with Canada, the European Union and the Republic of Korea responded with plans of retaliatory measures, sparking widely shared fears of a global trade war.

While tensions between the largest players in global trade threaten to escalate, nearly the entire continent of Africa agrees to become a free trade area. Is global trade closing down or opening up? Is the global economic recovery in danger?

The *May* briefing of the *World Economic Situation and Prospects* predicts that the current macroeconomic effect of the proposed tariffs is likely to be modest, with global trade growth expected to remain a robust 3.8 per cent in 2018.

That is, if the trade tensions and barriers do not spiral further and the spillovers are contained. In the opposite case, we could see extensive disruptions to global value chains and a sharp drop in investment and trade. A shock to investment and trade equivalent to half the losses of the financial crisis could push global economic growth down to 1.8 per cent from a baseline of 3.2 per cent.

While the world trade giants are drifting apart, Africa is coming closer together. On 21 March, forty-four African Union states signed the historic African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), agreeing to remove tariffs on 90 per cent of goods. The UN Economic Commission for Africa estimates the deal will boost intra-continental trade by more than 50 per cent.

In the past, creating a sizeable cluster of markets, similar to AfCFTA, has helped Asian countries boost trade and accelerate industrial development. As a result, close to 60 per cent of all East and South Asian trade in 2017 happened within the region. At the same time in Africa, intra-African trade stood at only 16 per cent. The hopes are for the new deal to create a large market that will allow African countries to develop more value-added production at home.

These two trends – the deepening of integration and globalization, and the backlash against it – will define the year 2018. The outcome of the struggle between them will

determine the global economic growth for years to come and, ultimately, impact the chances of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Read the World Economic Situation and Prospects Monthly Briefing:  
<http://bit.ly/wespbrief>

*Join the UN Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist Elliot Harris, and Dawn Holland, Chief of the Global Economic Monitoring Branch of UN DESA, as they launch the report World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2018 on 17 May 2018, 11 am. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/wespreport>.*

## Exploring pathways for the participation of all



In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Heads of State and Government recognized that fostering inclusive societies based on strong and transparent institutions is a crucial requirement for sustainable development. Building sustainable and inclusive societies is a cross-cutting endeavour, essential to achieving all SDGs, including SDG5 on gender equality, SDG8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG10 on reduced inequalities, SDG11 on sustainable cities and communities, SDG13 on climate action and SDG16 on peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The ECOSOC Special Meeting will be convened by the President of the Economic and Social Council on 23 May 2018 under the theme “Towards sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all”, to explore further collective action in addressing issues of participation and inclusion within the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Emerging global trends, including rising inequality, migration and climate change, are creating an increasingly complex context for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Special Meeting will explore the critical role of stakeholder participation, good governance and strong, inclusive institutions in addressing such trends and maintaining the momentum to implement the multilateral landmark agreements reached in 2015.

## Exchanging best practices and lessons learned

The Special Meeting will also provide a forum for the exchange of best practices and lessons learned from national experiences in fostering sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies that can inform policy making by Member States and highlight avenues for UN system support. In preparation of the Special Meeting, a preparatory meeting and a series of breakfast meetings with different stakeholder groups, including NGOs, local

government representatives, the private sector and academia, were convened by the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic and the Permanent Mission of Colombia in the end of 2017 and in early 2018.

For more information: 2018 ECOSOC Special Meeting

## Release of the World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision



Photo: Yang Aijun/World Bank

On 16 May 2018, the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations will launch the 2018 Revision of the World Urbanization Prospects, a recurrent series providing estimates and projections of the size of urban and rural populations for all countries of the world, and of population size for individual cities or urban agglomerations. In today's increasingly global and interconnected world, 55 per cent of the world's population live in urban areas. In the coming decades, further increases are expected both in the size of the world's urban population and in its share of the total. The widespread growth of urban areas described in the new revision highlights the importance of building sustainable cities, whose growth should be planned and well managed.

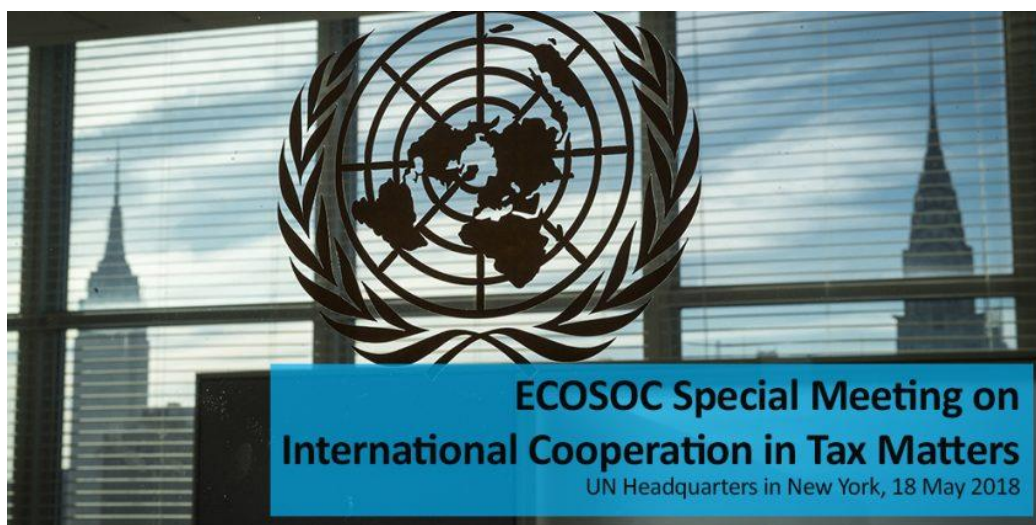
For this latest study, information on the percentage of persons living in urban areas has been updated using the most recent information from population censuses or other sources of official estimates. Similarly, this revision contains updated estimates for cities and urban agglomerations. The current revision includes the latest estimates of the size of the urban and rural populations of 233 countries or areas from 1950 to 2018, with projections to 2050. In addition, it presents the trend in population size for close to 1,900 urban settlements having 300,000 inhabitants or more in 2018.

Key results are:

- (1) By 2050 it is projected that around two thirds of the human population will live in urban areas.
- (2) Over 90 per cent of the growth in urban populations between now and 2050 will take place in Asia and Africa.
- (3) Urbanization is proceeding most rapidly in low-income countries and in sub-Saharan Africa.
- (4) About half of all urban dwellers reside in cities with fewer than half a million inhabitants.

For more information: Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

## ECOSOC Special Meeting on International Cooperation in Tax Matters



On 18 May 2018, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will hold its one-day annual meeting to consider international cooperation in tax matters, with the participation of the representatives of national tax authorities. The meeting will be held immediately following the 16th session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (Committee), to facilitate dialogue between the Committee and the Council.

The main topic to be addressed during the meeting is taxation and the digitalization of the economy. A number of countries and international and regional organizations have recently made or proposed important tax changes, which seek to address challenges that the digitalization of the economy present for domestic tax systems. Another relevant issue is how new technologies may be used to improve tax collection and taxpayer services and thereby contribute to enhancing domestic resource mobilization. Both aspects will be discussed during the meeting.

Another topic that will be discussed is the problems that arise from the wide tax exemptions requested by some governments and international organizations when they fund projects through Official Development Assistance (ODA). These include economic distortions, increases in transaction costs, potential for abuses, loss of domestic revenue and increased administrative burden for tax administrations.

The meeting will also feature updates on the work of the Committee and of the inter-agency Platform for Collaboration on Tax, a joint initiative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations and the World Bank Group (WBG), which is aimed to strengthen cooperation among these organizations in tax matters and their capacity-building support to developing countries.

For more information: [ECOSOC special meeting on international cooperation in tax matters](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 1-3 May, New York   | 2018 ECOSOC Integration Segment   |
| 7-11 May, New York  | 13th session of United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF13)                                  |
| 14-17 May, New York | Sixteenth Session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters |
| 21-22 May, New York | 6th Biennial High-level Meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF)                |
| 21-30 May, New York | Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, Resumed session                              |

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