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Webinar V
Open and Transparent: Forest data setting the course for green future under the Paris Agreement

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Open and Transparent: Forest data setting the course for green future under the Paris Agreement

15 July 2020

Recording Link: <https://youtu.be/Z19E8x5yjDE>

Questions and Answers

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1) What are the key challenges to implementing the ETF in practice?

In practice, a key challenge is establishing the necessary institutional arrangements to report a Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) in a sustainable manner. Institutional arrangements include not only identifying the roles and responsibilities of the relevant organizations/ministries, but in particular collecting the necessary data (e.g. activity data for inventories or tracking progress for the Nationally Determined Contributions, NDCs). From the UNFCCC secretariat side, we try to emphasize that 2024 is not far away, and in addition to helping support countries in the transition, we are identifying necessary procedures in the secretariat to transition from support of the current Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system to support under the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF). We encourage countries to reach out and notify us of their needs. The best preparation for the ETF is participation now through submission of a BUR; we hope to see increased submission of the Biennial Update Reports (BURs), upwards from 57, which is great preparation for the eventual initial submission of the BTR not later than December 2024.

2) How do Article 13 and the ETF help to increase the aspirations and ambitions of the parties, to take more drastic and immediate action – so important given today's climate, biodiversity and economic crises? How does the ETF bring everyone along and inspire enhanced climate action?

The UNFCCC released a new publication looking at the International consultation and analysis (ICA) process, for developing countries and the BUR, and highlights how transparency can boost mitigation action. Link: <https://unfccc.int/ica2020>.

The ETF facilitates increased ambition because the actions (or inactions) of a country are like an open book. Countries are required to clearly lay out their goals and how they will track progress towards those goals. They must report their inventory of emissions and removals every two years as well, in addition to other information on adaptation and support. An international group of experts will review this progress every two years and draft a report assessing whether the Party is making progress towards those goals. Countries will also have an opportunity to showcase what they are doing through the facilitative multilateral consideration of progress (FMCP), providing an opportunity for other countries to learn from others' experience.

Then every five years, the global community will come together to consider what countries have reported, and what the latest science is saying, to assess collectively whether all countries are doing enough to meet the 1.5 degree (or if not, the 2 degree) objective. If not, Parties ideally will send a clear message to individual countries to enhance the ambition in their next NDC. The compliance regime under the Paris Agreement is facilitative in nature; there are no strict enforcement penalties. However, there is a court of public opinion, and as you can see now, there are many organizations that also track whether commitments made to date by particular countries are sufficient.



3) How can I get involved in this CBIT project's in future?

For more information about the CBIT, please check the GEF website: <https://www.thegef.org/topics/capacity-building-initiative-transparency-cbit>

4) Does the GEF also cooperate with other initiatives? For example, working on Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) in Africa is the Africa Great Green Wall project that also has a capacity-building component.

The GEF is active globally, including in Africa. Over a decade ago, the GEF, in close partnership with the World Bank, invested in what has become a landmark project for Africa and the world—the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) in the Sahara and the Sahel. More information can be found here: <https://www.thegef.org/publications/great-green-wall-initiative>

5) Can you comment about scenario modelling as a priority of CBIT projects?

Scenario modelling is an eligible activity for CBIT projects. To date, 16% of CBIT projects have activities focused on this. Scenario modelling is an important activity for countries to determine the potential mitigation and adaptation outcomes of different policies.

6) Mangrove ecosystems are often given little attention in many countries with increasing deforestation. Do the GEF projects relating to the AFOLU Sector or other sectors include mangroves?

The GEF has invested in many projects that recognize the value of mangroves in protecting our environment, particularly through our international waters and biodiversity focal areas. For more information, please visit the GEF website: <https://www.thegef.org/>

7) In spite of the forestry sector being mentioned repeatedly as being very important to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement, and long term and mid-century goals, why is it that this sector is not receiving as much attention as it should in terms of funding and technical support?

The GEF has supported the forestry sector with specific CBIT support through the *Building global capacity to increase transparency in the forest sector (CBIT-Forest)* project. This project aims to strengthen institutional and technical capacities of developing countries, through a coordinated process for global and national forest-related data collection, analysis and dissemination, to meet the enhanced transparency requirements of the Paris Agreement and contribute with information necessary to track progress in implementing and achieving nationally determined contributions. Beyond the CBIT, the GEF has supported sustainable forest management and forest and landscape restoration. For additional information, please visit: <https://www.thegef.org/topics/forests>



8) Can you provide the size of financings of CBIT projects? Are they linked to GEF adaptation/mitigation projects?

You can learn more about CBIT projects from the GEF website: <https://www.thegef.org/topics/capacity-building-initiative-transparency-cbit> and the CBIT Platform (which includes an interactive map with information on financial volumes): <https://www.cbitplatform.org/>. As a pre-requisite all GEF projects must be coordinated and aligned with other GEF projects.

9) I work at the national agency responsible for reporting in the forest sector, and we have seen an increase in our responsibilities for reporting the state of forests for different conventions and initiatives in recent years. What are the UN system and other international agencies doing to reduce the reporting burden related to forest sector?

There are a large number of transparency-related initiatives and activities from the UNFCCC, and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. One is the Consultative Group of Experts (CGE). The mission of the CGE is to support developing countries meet their reporting obligations under the Convention and Paris Agreement, including forest-related reporting (see <https://unfccc.int/CGE>). Another initiative is of course the Capacity Building Initiative on Transparency, which supports developing countries by helping to build both institutional and technical capacity, including through the CBIT forestry project discussed at this webinar (<https://www.thegef.org/publications/capacity-building-initiative-transparency-cbit>).

It is important to remember that the forest data collected for the purposes of reporting can, and should be used, to help support a variety of domestic actions (e.g. supporting policy development, monitoring and evaluation of projects, supporting adaptation initiatives, etc) and international activities (e.g. tracking broader sustainable development goals).

10) Do you monitor dry forests in the Sahel?

Yes, FAO is working on monitoring dryland forests as well as restoring them at a global level, including in the Sahel. You can read more about this area of work here <http://www.fao.org/dryland-forestry/en/>, including about the tools used for monitoring and the [Great Green Wall initiative](#), which focuses on the Sahara and the Sahel.

11) Does the CBIT-Forest project support countries' efforts to collect field data through national forest inventories? This is one of the greatest challenges for developing countries for having reliable data on forest stocks and changes

Yes, CBIT-Forest provides capacity-building support on data collection, analysis and dissemination of forest-related data, including from forest inventory and remote sensing.

12) How can countries get access to CBIT-Forest funding and support?



Email CBIT-Forest@fao.org if you are working at an organization responsible for national-level forest monitoring and are interested in taking part and benefitting from CBIT-Forest global project. We would love to hear your ideas for how we can collaborate.

13) Can we have free access to data on forests and the case studies mentioned?

Yes the case studies, e-learning course and all other publications are and will be freely accessible and at least in 3 languages (English, Spanish, French). Here below the links that were shared during the webinar:

- Costa Rica case study in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [French](#)
- eLearning course: <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=587>
- Poster in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [French](#)
- Info brief on the NFMS assessment tool [English](#) soon in Spanish and French.

All information will be available in the CBIT-Forest web page: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/boosting-transparency-forest-data/en/>

The project also has a strong focus on facilitating data sharing and transparent reporting of forest-related data. One key output of the project include the upgrade of the FRA online platform. A new way to explore FRA 2020 data by accessing to the complete FRA 2020 database through the interactive platform and dashboards: <https://fra-data.fao.org/>

Of course, any data made available will only be made so at the discretion of the countries and or those that own the data. If you are interested in data, you might be interested to examine the various datasets made available for viewing as well as download by [FAOSTAT](#), [FAO FRA](#), [Food and Agriculture Microdata](#) (FAM) Catalogue, and the Hand in Hand [geospatial platform](#).

14) It was mentioned by the CBIT panellist that if a country's funding request is focused in sectors that are not included in the NDC these are not considered eligible. Doesn't that hinder the potential enhancement of NDCs to include sectors in which countries have decided to leave out due to lack of data or data reliability? How is CBIT supporting countries efforts to enhance the transparency of NDCs and also its climate change mitigation goals?

In accordance with paragraph 85 of the COP decision adopting the Paris Agreement, CBIT support aims to strengthen national institutions for transparency-related activities in line with national priorities; provide relevant tools, training, and assistance for meeting the provisions stipulated in Article 13; and assist with improvement of transparency over time. Developing countries can request resources to implement the priority needs to build capacity to meet enhanced transparency requirements as defined in Article 13 of the Paris Agreement at the national level. This question would fall under "activities to assist with improvement of transparency over time" and thus is eligible for support if it is identified as a national priority need aligned with Article 13.

15) What role(s) do Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous peoples have in achieving the goals we are discussing?



Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous knowledge systems are of extreme importance for the achievement of global climate goals. Indigenous Peoples manage over a quarter of the world's land surface including some of the most ecologically intact forest areas, forest biodiversity and forest carbon. Indigenous Peoples are critical stakeholders in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Their knowledge of natural resource management is key for a green future for all, having sustainably managed diverse food systems and medicines for millennia. You can read more about FAO's engagement with Indigenous Peoples in forestry in a [recent publication](#). For information on GEF's engagement with indigenous peoples please visit: <https://www.thegef.org/topics/indigenous-peoples>

16) Will the e-learning be flexible to accommodate the different time zones and ease of participants to join?

Yes, the course is not live, you can access at any time convenient to you, and can access it online or download it for later in case you want to look at it offline.

Please download the self-paced eLearning course launched during the event from the following web page: <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=587>

Soon the digital badge for this course will be available and will be announce in the web page and social media.

17) How can I link up to IFSA?

The International Forestry Student's Association (IFSA) is a global network of forestry students, with local committees in 120 Universities, taking local action on issues of forests, biodiversity, climate change and capacity building. Please get in touch through the contact form: <https://ifsa.net/about/contact/>

18) Why do you think that so few projects include focus on AFOLU?

Under the CBIT, most projects include AFOLU as one of the key sectors in countries' inventories and NDCs. In addition, approximately 27% of CBIT projects supported as of June 2020 projects had a specific focus on the AFOLU sector.

19) I am aware that some governments are not showing interest in climate change so wonder how the data is collected?

For forest resources assessments, data is collected via the FAO [FRA network of Correspondents](#) who are usually engaged in ministries of environment and other national institutions involved in forest monitoring, which helps ensure sustainability and consistency of the reporting regardless of wider government goals. Similarly, data reported to the UNFCCC will come from ideally stable networks of contacts in ministries and institutions. Also, social, economic, and environmental objectives are highly interrelated. Countries have many priorities, and even if other initiatives are seemingly higher priority than climate change, policy choices can be made that take into consideration the impacts on sustainable development more broadly and reinforce multiple objectives. As noted above, collecting the data to track action and report on



climate change results in multiple national benefits, and to the extent that these co-benefits are realized and promoted, it can raise the attention on climate. The aim of the CBIT-Forest project is to help draw this attention to the climate and to forests, and enhance the capacities of people from every part of society from students to government officials, via trainings, webinars like this one, and knowledge sharing via meetings, publications and the e-learning course that was presented, available [here](#), in the hope that this can contribute to the groundswell of climate action worldwide.

20) It is interesting to develop the ETF through the standardization of methodologies for MRV. However, not all countries have all the needed resources or apply the same methodologies to report forests. In addition, each country must monitor their deforestation, land use change, mitigation, carbon capture, etc and do it through many different institutions that are working on monitoring or conservation of forests.... Isn't this a double process requested of countries that also do not have many resources to implement diverse monitoring methods? Isn't this a vicious cycle that stretches the pool of specialists related to monitoring forests, generating poor capacities in the local and subnational levels and an agglomeration of specialists at the centralist national level by working with the ministries?

One of the key messages that one can take away from this course is the opposite. This course tries to highlight the importance of establishing robust national forest monitoring systems, that can achieve a variety of national goals, including reporting under the ETF. The IPCC Guidelines provide standardized methods for reporting on forests, with different methods depending on the data availability in the country as well as the significance of the category. There is significant international support at the moment to help countries gain the necessary capacity and establish nationally appropriate institutional arrangements to help integrate forestry reporting into the national policy and action framework.

Useful and related links:

UNFCCC

<https://unfccc.int/>

<https://unfccc.int/enhanced-transparency-framework>

GEF

<https://www.thegef.org/>

<https://www.thegef.org/topics/capacity-building-initiative-transparency-cbit>

FAO

<http://www.fao.org/home/en>

<http://www.fao.org/redd/en/>

<http://www.fao.org/forest-resources-assessment/en/>

<http://www.fao.org/in-action/boosting-transparency-forest-data/en/>



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