

Terms of Reference

Steering Committee for the UNFF Country-Led Initiative on Advancing Sustainable Forest-based Bioeconomy Approaches (CLI-ASFBA) hosted by the Government of Austria

Background

In support of the work of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) and in response to the call of the 27th session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO27) and FAO 176th Council (CL 176) related to sustainable forest-based bioeconomy¹, the government of Austria has decided to host a UNFF Country-Led Initiative on Advancing Sustainable Forest-based Bioeconomy Approaches (CLI-ASFBA) from 23 to 25 February 2026 in Vienna, Austria. This decision was communicated through an official letter, dated 23 April 2025, from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management, Republic of Austria to the Bureau Chair of UNFF20/21, and subsequently announced by the government of Austria at the UNFF20 held in May 2025.

The CLI-ASFBA aims to contribute to the discussion at the UNFF21 on its thematic priorities, namely global forest goals 1, 3 and 5², and the policy discussions on the implementation of the United Nations Forest Instrument (UNFI) and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF). It will provide a platform to promote sharing good practices among member states of the UNFF for the implementation of the UNFI and the UNSPF. The CLI-ASFBA will also contribute to the discussion at the 28th session of the FAO committee on Forestry (COFO28).

¹ At the 27th session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO27), held in July 2024, the Committee deliberated on “Enhancing the contribution of forestry to bioeconomy – opportunities and challenges” and “invited FAO to convene, subject to availability of extra budgetary resources, an international conference on the contribution of the forest sector to sustainable bioeconomy and to present its results at the 28th Session of the Committee on Forestry, and to the appropriate Sessions of the FAO Council and Conference;”(see [report source](#)). The FAO 176th Council (CL 176), held in December 2024, “invited FAO to scale up technical support, capacity building and development, and the voluntary sharing of knowledge and practices, research and technology transfer, on mutually agreed terms, to support formulating national, regional and global sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches, strategies, action plans and innovations fully incorporating sustainable forest management.”(see [report source](#))

² Global Forest Goal 1: Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change.

Global Forest Goal 3: Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.

Global Forest Goal 5: Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the UN Forest Instrument, and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In accordance with the UNFF guidelines for CLIs (adopted at UNFF12³), a committee should be established in support of the CLI-ASFBA. Accordingly, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management Republic of Austria is establishing this Steering Committee.

Roles and responsibilities

To guide the strategic direction and oversee the organization of the CLI-ASFBA to ensure it achieves its objectives and contributes substantively to address the needs and requests of countries as expressed in FAO and UNFF governing bodies, the main tasks of the Steering Committee are as follows:

- Feedback on the event concept note and objectives,
- Providing strategic guidance on format, structure, and agenda,
- Overseeing and guiding the development of background papers and technical inputs,
- Ensuring political and regional balance,
- Supporting communication, outreach/ advocacy related to the event,
- Reviewing the draft final report documents and supporting its dissemination,
- Reviewing lessons learned/debriefing.

Composition

The Committee should include representatives from member states of the UNFF and FAO, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), and other potential stakeholders. The membership aims to include countries and organizations having a global impact, expertise, and diverse approaches on the ***substantive issues under discussion*** at the CLI-ASFBA, bearing in mind the balanced representation, inclusive and participatory nature of the UNFF CLIs.

In this regard, the Austrian government, in consultation with the UNFFS, has established a Steering Committee comprising the following members from member states and organizations:

- **Countries**: Australia, Austria, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Czechia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, India, Japan, Kenya, New Zealand, Malaysia (Observer), Republic of Türkiye, Slovenia, South Africa, Thailand, United Republic of Tanzania

³ The UNFF guidelines for the CLI are available in the annex of UNFF12 report: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N17/157/26/pdf/N1715726.pdf?OpenElement>

- Organizations: BFW (Observer), Business and Industry (ICFPA), FAO, Farmers and Small Forest Landowners (IFFA), IIASA, ITTO, IUFRO, UNFFS

Duration of the Steering Committee

The duration of the Steering Committee will be until the submission of the Co-Chairs' Summary of the CLI-ASFBA to UNFF21 and FAO COFO28.

Working formality

The committee members will exchange via emails and convene virtual meetings as necessary. Time differences will be taken into account when scheduling meetings to accommodate participants from various parts of the world. The discussion and decision-making process are based on consensus principles. The minutes and technical support for the meeting will be provided by experts from Austria, supportive countries, the UNFF Secretariat and the FAO.

Chairpersonship

Austria and South Africa will serve as Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee.