

PROJECT CONCEPT NOTE

Project Title	Achieving SDG 13 and 15 by implementing the Bonn Challenge in the Caucasus and Central Asia
Project Manager	Roman Michalak
Subprogramme	Subprogramme 7: Forestry and Timber
Implementing Entity	UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section
Start Date	February 2018
End Date	December 2018
Budget	100,000 Euros
Beneficiary Countries	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan
Cooperating Entities within the UN System	FAO, UNDP
Other Implementing Partners	IUCN, ICRAF

Background

The Bonn Challenge¹ is a global effort to restore 150 million hectares of the world's degraded and deforested lands by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030. Landscape restoration is an established idea, but only recently has the world turned its collective attention to bringing health and vitality back to degraded lands at scale. World leaders launched the initiative in 2011, in response to a global study that found that more than two billion hectares of land might offer restoration opportunities worldwide – an area the size of South America. The Bonn Challenge is guided by the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration, with the International Union for Conservation of Nature as its Secretariat. It is an implementation vehicle for national priorities such as water and food security and rural development while contributing to the achievement of international climate change, biodiversity and land degradation commitments.

Forests play an essential role in achieving sustainable development and contribute to adaptation and mitigation to climate change. They are the key land ecosystem ensuring the conservation of biodiversity and storage of carbon as well as an important source of renewable materials. The ECE region accommodates about 40% of the world's forests, which provide numerous economic, environmental and social benefits. Thus, the ECE region bears a great potential to contribute to climate mitigation through restoration of deforested and degraded land. Countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia sub-region, particular, face challenges with degradation and overutilization of forest area. Forest policy and decision makers are not always aware of international initiatives and the opportunities they bear for their own countries. Therefore, forestry officers require training and capacity building in order to identify the potential areas for restoration and gain knowledge on funding opportunities for forest restoration projects.

This project will strengthen the capacity of ECE countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia to restore deforested and degraded lands in support of the international Bonn Challenge and achieving SDG 13 and 15 by (1) increasing knowledge on forest degradation and opportunities for restoration and (2) increasing the capacity for sustainable forest management towards the restoration of deforested and degraded lands. The project will be implemented between February and December 2018.

The key recipients and beneficiaries of the project are forest related ministries, national forest agencies, research institutes, and NGOs. The project will be carried out with key partners including other international organizations or initiatives already operating in the countries. Beneficiaries to the project are ECE countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan).

The Joint UNECE and FAO Forestry and Timber Section supports the implementation of Integrated Programme of Work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) European Forestry Commission (EFC) and UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Forestry and Forest Industries (COFFI) which covers 56 member States and work areas on forest and timber data, monitoring and assessment, policy dialogue and advice, communication and outreach and capacity-building.

¹ <http://www.bonnchallenge.org/commitments>

The project is part of the implementation of the ECE/FAO Integrated Programme of Work, Work Area 4: Capacity Building. Work Area 4 of indicates that special attention is provided to countries in Eastern Europe, South East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The ECE and the FAO EFC are both regional bodies explicitly mentioned in the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 as organizations providing a crucial bridge between international policies and national actions and as important partners in efforts to achieve the global forest goals and targets of the strategic plan. The global forest goal 1 is: “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”.

The objective of the ECE COFFI is to strengthen the forest sector and its contribution to sustainable development in the ECE region, through monitoring, analysis, capacity building and the provision of a forum for discussion, taking into account the changing policy environment, notably as regards climate change and bioenergy. The COFFI shall, within the context of sustainable development, provide member countries with the information and services which they need for policy- and decision-making as regards their forest and forest industry sector, including the trade and use of forest products and, when appropriate, formulate recommendations addressed to member Governments and interested organizations, according to the terms of reference.

The project will endeavor to reach provision of equal opportunities for participation of women and men in the project activities in conformity with the UNECE 2016-2017 Gender Action Plan.

Relationship to the Strategic Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals

The project is linked to the SDG 15. “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” and related targets, in particular:

- 15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and dry lands, in line with obligations under international agreements;
- 15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally
- 15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world;
- 15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development;
- 15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.

The project is also linked to SDG 13 “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”, in particular:

13.1 Strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters

13.3 Improve education, awareness raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning

The project also is a direct contribution to the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan on Forests (UNSPF), in particular its Global Forest Goal 1: “Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change.” and the related targets:

1.1 Forest area is increased by 3% worldwide.

1.2 The world’s forest carbon stocks are maintained or enhanced.

1.3 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.

1.4 The resilience and adaptive capacity of all types of forests to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change is significantly strengthened worldwide.

The project is part of the implementation of the ECE/FAO Integrated Programme of Work, Work Area 4: Capacity Building. Work Area 4 of indicates that special attention is provided to countries in Eastern Europe, South East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The project provides capacity building support in line with the 2016-2017 programme of work of COFFI and the 2016-17 ECE Strategic Framework (A/71/6) and the proposed 2017-2018 Strategic Framework under subprogramme 7, EA (b) “Increased national capacity of countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-East Europe in sustainable forest management”.

Objective

To increase the commitment of the Caucasus and Central Asia to restore deforested and degraded lands in support of the international Bonn Challenge and the achievement of SDGs 13 and 15.

Expected accomplishments

EA1. Increased knowledge of the Caucasus and Central Asian countries on forest degradation and opportunities for restoration in support of the international Bonn Challenge and achievement of SDGs 13 and 15.

EA2. Enhanced awareness of the Caucasus and Central Asian countries on sustainable forests management towards the restoration of deforested and degraded lands in support of the international Bonn Challenge and achievement of SDGs 13 and 15.

Indicators of achievement

IA1.1: Opportunities for restoration have been identified for at least 5 out of 8 target countries.

IA2.1: At least 5 out of 8 target countries have pledged to restore deforested and degraded land under the Bonn Challenge.

Main activities

A.1. Preparation of a study on degradation and restoration of forestland in the Caucasus and Central Asia (collection of relevant data and drafting).

A.2. Organization of a high-level ministerial meeting, on degradation and restoration of forest land in the Caucasus and Central Asia (including a field trip).

Assumptions and Risks

The key assumption is that the governments are supportive of the Bonn Challenge and willing to work on its accomplishment. The key risk is related to either non-availability of relevant data or reluctance to share it. This will be overcome by utilizing existing data collected by the section through different projects and monitoring work in the region.