

Urban forests for future-proof cities

Peer Learning Round Table

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region, 2022

Thursday, 7 April 2022
10h00 to 12h00 CEST

Lead Organizers:

- UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section
- FAO Forestry Division

Hybrid Event: Geneva and Online

Contributors:

- UN Habitat (TBC)
- UNEP (TBC)

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Two-thirds of humanity will live in cities by 2050; achieving national sustainable development objectives and the SDGs depends on healthy and resilient cities. Responsible for around 75% of global CO₂ emissions, cities are also at the forefront of fighting climate change while being particularly vulnerable to its impacts.

Sustainable urban forestry is an integrative and cost-effective nature-based solution to these challenges and can help develop greener, healthier and more resilient cities. Trees and forests in urban and peri-urban areas provide vital benefits for health and wellbeing, sustainable development, climate adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity, and disaster risk reduction. In other words, sustainable urban forestry contributes not only to sustainable local development and quality of life, but also to achieving national objectives and global goals, including most SDGs. Examples include:

- Create and enhance habitats, constitute a pool of biodiversity, significantly improve soil quality, and contribute to land restoration (SDG 15)
- Create green jobs and provide ecosystem services (SDG 1 & 8)
- Contribute to food security through urban food forests (SDG 2)
- Contribute to health and well-being by improving air quality, reducing contamination and non-communicable disease, and providing space for healthy lifestyles and mental health (SDG 3)
- Cool the air up to 8°C, reducing health risks of extreme heat (SDG 3)
- Regulate hydrological cycles, filter water, and protect lives and infrastructure from climate-related natural hazards such as flooding and mudslides (SDG 6, 11)
- Regulate microclimates and protect buildings from the elements, lowering energy needs and expenditure for heating and cooling (SDG 7, 8, 13)
- Contribute to sustainable cities with safe, inclusive, and accessible green space (SDG 11)
- Mitigate climate change via carbon sequestration and reduced energy demands (SDG 13)
- Adapt the urban environment to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (SDG 13)

While there is an urgent need to expand the urban forest cover in our urban and peri-urban areas, afforestation and tree planting interventions should be adequately designed and include provisions for sustainable, long-term management. This ensures that the benefits provided by the urban forest are optimized over time. Yet despite the large potential benefits across the SDGs, cities face an array of legal, financial, and other resource constraints to implementing sustainable urban forestry based on long-term plans. Furthermore, urban woodland areas are often small and fragmented, which can undermine their ecological viability, and management is complicated by a diverse patchwork of public and private owners. Integrated long-term planning, finance, and multi-stakeholder cooperation is, therefore, critical to overcome traditional silos and the many challenges faced by sustainable urban forestry practitioners.

In this context, the roundtable will focus on the following policy actions:

1. What national and local **policies and tools** are currently available to support urban and peri-urban forestry so that it can effectively contribute to achieving agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, and other global, national, and local goals?
2. What **financing sources** and **financial mechanisms** have been used and are available to implement sustainable urban and peri-urban forestry in cities?
3. How can **cooperation** be enhanced across sectors and boundaries, including with private owners and the community, to advance sustainable urban forestry as an integrative solution?

Agenda (ENG/FRE/RUS)

	Opening Segment
10h00	Opening Statements <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UNECE• FAO
10h12	Moderator's welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Simone Borelli, FAO
	Policy Action 1
10h15	Focus on the question: What national and local policies and tools are currently available to support urban and peri-urban forestry so that it can effectively contribute to achieving agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, and other global, national, and local goals? Presentation
10h25	Moderated Discussion
	Policy Action 2
10h45	Focus on the question: What financing sources and financial mechanisms have been used and are available to implement sustainable urban and peri-urban forestry in cities? Presentation
10h55	Moderated Discussion
	Audience Poll
11h15	Reflections on opportunities and challenges in urban forestry policy and finance
	Policy Action 3
11h20	Focus on the question: How can cooperation be enhanced across sectors and boundaries, including with private owners and the community, to advance sustainable urban forestry as an integrative solution? Presentation
11h30	Moderated Discussion
	Closing Segment
11h50	Wrap up and closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Simone Borelli, FAO• Ms. Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, UNECE/FAO