

Concept Note

## Celebrating Forests and Culture, Youth and Music

Forest harmonies: A forestry youth event on  
connections between forests, wood and music

1 July 2025, 19:45 - 20:50 (CEST)  
8th Floor, Building B, FAO headquarters

### Introduction

Forests provide the foundation for life on Earth through their *productive* functions, which provide food and livelihoods to millions of people, and their *protective* functions, which support species and food diversity, regulate climate and water cycles, and combat desertification and land degradation.

**For generations, forests have provided important material, health and cultural benefits for all people, deeply embedding themselves in human history. One of the most profound connections between forests and culture is through music.** Wood provides resonant qualities essential for crafting high quality musical instruments with distinctive acoustic characteristics. Young people contribute to forest sustainability in diverse ways and capacities, and many are active in the forest sector.

As part of the celebrations for FAO's 80th Anniversary, the event will showcase the contributions of youth, explore the sustainable sourcing of wood and highlight its unique value for the creation of musical instruments.

Musicians and consumers are increasingly aware of the importance of sustainability. By choosing instruments made from sustainably sourced wood, they support legal and sustainable practices and contribute to forest conservation.<sup>1</sup> *Tonewood*<sup>1</sup> refers to specific wood varieties used in woodwind and acoustic stringed instruments. Ancient wooden musical instruments include the *bullroarer*, dating to around 18,000 BC.

However, the wood used for soundboards in acoustic musical instruments is a rare natural resource. Over-exploitation threatens the very trees that make these instruments possible, emphasizing the need for sustainable forest management.

As a result, some wood species used in making musical instruments—such as *Dalbergia nigra* (Brazilian rosewood) for guitars—are listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/in-action/legal-sustainable-wood-assurance-programme/fao-eu-flegt-programme-2008-2022/news-events/news-details/en/c/1475656/>



Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, wooden musical instruments are included on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>3</sup> and recognized under the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.<sup>4</sup>

Youth-led initiatives are stepping up, blending innovation with tradition to promote sustainable sourcing, instrument preservation, and forest restoration efforts that secure sustainable use, ecological balance and cultural continuity. The event will embody this legacy, serving as a platform for storytelling, cultural exchange, and action. By bringing together young foresters and musicians, the event will foster dialogue on how to sustain forests while preserving the musical traditions they inspire.

The event will feature the participation of the FAO Director-General, Dr QU Dongyu and the FAO Deputy Director-General, Mr Godfrey Magwenzi. The target audience of the event includes participants of the 44th Session of the FAO Conference, youth networks, and FAO staff members.

## Objectives

The event will engage youth organizations, showcase the cultural connection between trees and music, and highlight the contributions of young forestry champions.

It is focused on:

1. **Contribution to FAO 80th Anniversary:** Serve as a thematic milestone in the lead-up to the World Food Forum (WFF) in October 2025;<sup>5</sup>
2. **Youth Engagement:** Providing a platform for youth to share perspectives and experiences that drive action in the forestry sector; and
3. **Cultural Connection:** Celebrating the cultural link between forests and music, fostering creative expressions that connect communities to nature and sustainability.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://cites.org/eng/app/appendices.php>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-safeguarding-intangible-cultural-heritage>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.world-food-forum.org/>



Provisional Agenda

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Moderators: Mr Patrizio Tiscioni and Ms Jigchen Norbu

**Welcoming remarks:** Dr QU Dongyu, FAO Director-General

**Opening performance, A Journey Through Baroque Classics:** Italian Baroque Ensemble,  
featuring wooden violins and cellos, Musical Group

**Presentation on traditional violin craftsmanship:**<sup>6</sup> Master Edgar Russ, distinguished violinmaker  
from Cremona, Italy

**Rhythms of nature:** Mr Yahya Sonko, Kora instrumental performance with audience interaction

**Tree-Talk, “How do you envision the future of forestry over the next 80 years?”:** Ms Eva Ntara,  
Young Forest Champions Initiative

**Sounds from the field:** Best video submissions from “Sounds of wooden musical instruments  
campaign”

**Performance, “Whispers of Bamboo”:** Indonesian Angklung<sup>7</sup> Ensemble, Musical Group

**Closing remarks:** Mr Godfrey Magwenzi, FAO Deputy Director-General

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**Group photo and cake-cutting**

**Reception** with performance of wooden musical instruments

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<sup>6</sup> **Traditional Violin Craftsmanship** is recognized on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/traditional-violin-craftsmanship-in-cremona-00719>

<sup>7</sup> **The Angklung** is recognized on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/indonesian-angklung-00393>