



NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

Tlemcen, Algeria, 13 - 17 December 2015

GLOBAL POLICY PROCESSES

I. Background

1. 2015 is a decisive year for forests and forestry witnessing the culmination of a number of global policy processes related to, and/or affecting them. In May, the 11th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF11) reviewed the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) and decided on its future. Between January and September, member countries of the United Nations negotiated a new, post-2015 development agenda, including a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will replace the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21) will convene this December in Paris with the aim of achieving a legally binding and universal agreement on climate, to keep global warming below 2°C. Forests will have a central role in achieving this ambitious goal.

2. The outcomes of these processes influence global forest governance, but they also impact forest management at country level. This paper describes the key expected outcomes and analyzes their potential impact on forests and forestry as well as the need for action by countries.

II. Main expected outcomes of global policy processes

A. 11th Session of UNFF

3. During its 11th Session in May 2015, UNFF adopted a Ministerial Declaration, the International Arrangement on “The forests We Want beyond 2015”, in which Ministers responsible for forests committed to, *inter alia*, implementing and integrating sustainable forest management (SFM) into poverty reduction strategies and national sustainable development strategies; and strengthening and building a more effective post-2015 arrangement on forests.

4. In addition, the Forum adopted the draft ECOSOC resolution titled “International Arrangement on Forests beyond 2015”, in which member States:

- Extended the mandate of the IAF and the timeline of the global objectives on forests to 2030 and called to strengthen the IAF through various measures, including annual UNFF sessions

with alternating focus on policy development and discussions on implementation and technical advice;

- Requested UNFF to draft and operationalize a strategic plan covering the period 2017-2030;
- Emphasized the need to strengthen and catalyze the implementation of the Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (now called “United Nations forest instrument”), using it as a framework for forest-related aspects of the post-2015 development agenda;
- Agreed to strengthen the Facilitative Process and rename it the “Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network”;
- Proposed measures to strengthen the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

B. Post-2015/SDG process

5. The 17 SDGs and 169 targets developed by the UN General Assembly's Open Working Group were adopted at the UN summit in September 2015 as part of a new post-2015 development agenda. Forests are specifically addressed under two of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals:

- **SDG 6**, *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*;
- **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*.

6. Under SDG 15, two specific, forest-related target address implementation of SFM, restoration of degraded forests and afforestation and reforestation. One target under SDG 6 calls for protection and restoration of forests as water-related ecosystems. SDG indicators are under development and are expected to be finalized in 2016. They will focus on a limited number of measurable parameters, for which statistical data is available. Beyond the official indicators, countries may wish to consider indicators reflecting the contributions of forests to other SDGs, such as the ones on food security, poverty reduction, etc.

C. UNFCCC COP21

7. The outcome of the negotiations – the so-called “Paris Package” – will consist of a legally binding and universal agreement on climate at COP21 to take effect in 2020 and a decision on arrangements prior to the agreement’s entry into force. The agreement is expected to adopt a comprehensive approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation (i.e. no sector excluded from implementation) and to put greater emphasis on adaptation than in the Kyoto Protocol so as to achieve a better balance between mitigation and adaptation. At the time of writing, the negotiation text¹ explicitly mentions REDD+² and actions in the land use sector, and also highlights links between mitigation and adaptation, which are particularly strong in the land sectors. Whether or not these references are retained in the final text adopted in Paris, widespread recognition of the importance of forests to climate change mitigation and adaptation will ensure that implementation of the new agreement will entail actions in the forest sector.

III. Implications of the global policy processes for forests and forestry

8. The post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs will guide efforts towards sustainable development during the coming 15 years. It is to be expected that the SDGs will become a major reference point for forests and forestry and will have a strong influence on global forest policy. The SDGs are ambitious and aspirational and encompass a wide range of sectors. Many are interrelated and

¹ Document FCCC/ADP/2-15/1 <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/adp2/eng/01.pdf> ; see also Co-Chairs’ scenario note <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/adp2/eng/4infnot.pdf> (24 July 2015).

² Reducing deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

will require intersectoral coordination and collaboration. Through the SDGs, closer linkages are expected between forests and other areas of sustainable development.

9. UNFF11 emphasized the economic, social and environmental contributions of all types of forests to the achievement of the post-2015 development agenda and the draft ECOSOC resolution includes strengthening these as a specific new objective of the IAF and as a new core function of the CPF. UNFF has been called upon to contribute to the implementation, follow-up and review of the forest-related aspects to the post-2015 development agenda, using the UN forest instrument as a framework, and to consider this role in the context of the development of its strategic plan for 2018-2030.

10. A new climate agreement will give new impetus for climate change mitigation and adaptation in the forest sector. Moreover, the climate change policy process and related initiatives have wider implications for the sector; they furnish new opportunities in forest financing and heightened political and stakeholder commitment to support sustainable forest management (SFM). The third forum of the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) of UNFCCC, held from 8-9 September in conjunction with the World Forestry Congress in Durban, South Africa, focused on enhancing coherence and coordination of forest financing. The results will be presented at COP21. SCF seeks to strengthen coordination between climate financing and broader financing for sustainable forests management, work on which is on-going under UNFF and is supported by various members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. The New York Declaration on Forests adopted at the UN Climate Summit in September 2014³ provides a key example of how climate change concerns are leveraging stronger support for SFM. The Declaration, drawing on but amplifying some existing global targets, includes commitments to halve the rate of loss of natural forests globally by 2020 and strive to end natural forest loss by 2030, to restore 150 million hectares of degraded landscapes and forestlands by 2020 and to restore at least an additional 200 million hectares by 2030, and to remove deforestation from commodity supply chains. Concerted and careful work by governments, the private sector and civil society organizations to achieve these targets will contribute to overarching goals in sustainable forest management.

IV. Moving towards implementation

11. Even though forestry is not specifically mentioned in all SDGs or targets, due to their multi-functionality they have a role to play in achieving many of the SDGs, especially those related to ending poverty, achieving food security, promoting sustainable agriculture, ensuring access to sustainable energy for all, achieving gender equality and sustainable economic growth, ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns and combating climate change.

12. For forestry, implementing the SDGs will require a much stronger emphasis by countries on the economic, social and environmental contributions of forests to sustainable development. For this to happen, closer integration of forests with other mainstream processes will be required at both the international and national levels. In addition, the availability of information on the actual and potential socio-economic contributions of forests needs to be strengthened so that policy makers have the evidence needed to make decisions in line with the SDGs. In accordance with the UNFF11 recommendation, the UN forest instrument should serve as a framework to guide implementation.

13. The new climate agreement and associated climate financing can be expected to stimulate investment in forest-based mitigation and adaptation and to support the sector's contributions to the global move toward a green economy. The Paris agreement will trigger results-based REDD+ payments (the foundation for which is largely set by the COP19 decisions comprising the Warsaw

³ <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/07/New-York-Declaration-on-Forest-%E2%80%93-Action-Statement-and-Action-Plan.pdf> . The Declaration has been signed by 179 governments, civil society organizations and private sector entities.

Framework on REDD+) and will reinforce developed country efforts in forest-based mitigation. REDD+ and forest-related adaptation actions in developing countries will be facilitated by financing from the Green Climate Fund and other sources, including Global Environment Fund, the Forest Investment Program under the World Bank and important bilateral support.

14. The challenge for developing countries will be to manage the transition from early action in REDD+ (including the strengthening of national forest monitoring systems; enhancing forest governance, including stakeholder rights and engagement; and establishing systems to ensure social and environmental safeguards are identified and respected) to results-based payments for REDD+. All countries are faced with the need to ensure that their climate change goals and commitments are well articulated with their broader goals for sustainable forest management. REDD+ has so far dominated the dialogue on forests and climate change; it is time to devote greater attention to optimizing forests' contributions to resilience and climate change adaptation.

15. The recent developments in UNFF, the post-2015/SDG process and UNFCCC, makes it imperative and creates unique opportunities for countries to build strong and sustainable forest sectors that meet national objectives and the needs of their diverse stakeholders while contributing to global sustainability goals. This will entail investing in capacity and institutional development, creating an enabling policy environment, and ensuring sustainable forest financing that together will create a robust, self-sustaining forest sector.

V. Points for consideration

16. The Commission may wish to consider:

- Encouraging countries in the region to actively engage in the implementation of the SDGs as they relate to forests by strengthening the socio-economic contributions of forests and to monitor progress, using the UN Forest Instrument as a framework for implementation;
- Requesting FAO to assist in identifying appropriate indicators for forests' contributions to the SDGs and efficient ways of measuring them, and, jointly with other CPF members, provide support to country implementation of the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda as they relate to forests.
- Encouraging countries to continue efforts to integrate climate change into their national forest programmes and to reflect forests adequately in their climate change strategies and plans, including their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs).
- Requesting FAO to continue to provide support to countries, through providing tools and technical assistance, to integrate climate change into their forest and related sectors, including through, *inter alia*, its programmes in forest and landscape restoration, dryland and Mediterranean forest management, mountain development, climate smart agriculture, and policy and institutional support; and to continue to assist in strengthening national forest monitoring systems for climate change mitigation (i.e. REDD+) and adaptation.