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A NEW STRATEGIC DOCUMENT FOR FORESTS AND FORESTRY

SECRETARIAT NOTE

Background

1. The Committee on Forestry (COFO), at its 23rd session in July 2016, discussed the outcome of the XIV World Forestry Congress, in particular the possible implementation of the 2050 Vision for Forests and Forestry. The Vision foresees a world, where forests are fundamental for food security and improved livelihoods; protect biodiversity and help mitigate and adapt to climate change; and where integrated approaches to land use help improve policies and practices and capitalize on the benefits of integrating forests with agriculture¹. COFO noted that the FAO Council also welcomed the 2050 Vision² and recommended that FAO "actively support strengthening the contributions of its work on forests to the Organization's Strategic Objectives, including alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by means of inter alia technical support and promoting best practices and dialogue"³.

2. In discussing the 2050 Vision, COFO recalled that the current Strategy for Forests and Forestry⁴ (Strategy) was adopted in 2009 by the Committee⁵ and was designed for a 10-year period, and as such, would not be a solid basis for supporting the implementation of this forward looking Vision. The Committee also recalled the substantive changes that have taken place globally and within the Organization and requested FAO to "initiate a process for reviewing the FAO Strategy for Forests and Forestry in the light of recent developments, elaborate a new strategic document that is fully aligned with the corporate Strategic Framework and present it to the 24th Session of the Committee after consultation with the Regional Forestry Commissions"⁶.

Main developments on key areas covered by the Strategy

3. The Strategy was based on the outcomes of the most relevant global policy processes at that time. Its main focus was to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, FAO's

¹ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/wfc2015/Documents/Durban_Declaration_FINAL.pdf

² CL 153/REP paragraph 30. a)

³ Ibid, paragraph 30. c)

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/al043e/al043e00.pdf>

⁵ COFO 2009/REP paragraph 18

⁶ COFO 2016/REP paragraph 8

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Vision and Global Goals, and the Global Objectives on Forests contained in the UN Forest Instrument. It also intended to provide a major contribution to the implementation of relevant agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the UN Forest Instrument itself.

4. While comprehensive and visionary at the time of its adoption, a number of recent global developments affecting forests are having an impact on FAO's work in forestry and may require a refocused strategy. Some of these are discussed also in document FO:APFC/2017/15.

5. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets⁷ have fundamental implications for forests as they include legally binding commitments promoting sustainable forest management.

6. B). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will guide development actions at all levels in the coming years. Forests are recognized in particular in SDG 6 and SDG 15, however, they are relevant for all SDGs. The 2018 edition of the State of the World's Forests will provide a comprehensive analysis of these relationships, placing particular emphasis on the ten most relevant goals and associated targets, illustrate the efficiency of forest pathways to sustainable development, and provide good examples and propose practical ways forward.

7. The Paris Agreement⁸ on climate change has opened a new era in global efforts to combat climate change, ascribing a major role to forests. According to some estimates, forests will represent 10-20 percent of the mitigation options in the next 10 years⁹. The Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) appear to support these projections: 89 percent of all countries and 86 percent of all developing countries refer to agriculture (crops and livestock) and/or land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) when outlining their mitigation contributions¹⁰. Forests are mentioned when referring to LULUCF (Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry) mostly for climate change mitigation and it has been as such also in the UNFCCC report on INDCs¹¹. Also in this report for example, policies and measures for the forest are linked to SFM and REDD+.

8. A main financial instrument supporting the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) has defined key investment priorities including support for reducing emissions from deforestation and land use, and enhancing the resilience of people's livelihoods and food security. FAO is enabled to support countries to develop and implement country-led projects including on adaptation, climate-smart agriculture, combatting land and forest degradation, sustainable forest management and disaster risk reduction.

9. On the area of biodiversity the 2016 UN Biodiversity Conference and its high-level segment on "Mainstreaming Biodiversity for Well-being"¹² gave way to several far-reaching decisions and led, among others, to the proposal by FAO to act as a Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform. In this capacity "FAO will ensure consideration of biodiversity by its Governing and Statutory Bodies facilitating dialogue among governments, communities of practice and other stakeholders on concrete and coordinated steps to mainstream biodiversity across the agricultural sectors."¹³ The Platform will facilitate the exchange of information and expertise to improve the design and coordination of relevant policies across sectors and at all levels. The ultimate goal of the platform is to adopt good practices across all agricultural sectors supporting biodiversity conservation and increasing the productivity,

⁷ <https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=12268>

⁸ http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

⁹ COFO 2016/6.1 Rev. 1 paragraph 6

¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6573e.pdf>

¹¹ <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2016/cop22/eng/02.pdf>

¹² 2-3 December 2016, Cancun, Mexico

¹³ C 2017/33 paragraph 13

stability and resilience of production systems in an integrated landscape approach, while reducing pressure on natural habitats and species¹⁴.

10. In July 2017, the FAO Conference endorsed this proposal and to facilitate its implementation called on the Committees of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to address mainstreaming biodiversity in agriculture, forestry and fisheries as a cross-cutting issue for their meetings in 2018¹⁵.

11. With the steadily growing population and with agriculture being one of the most influential external factor impacting the forest sector, developments in the area of nutrition are particularly relevant. In April 2016 the UN General Assembly endorsed the outcome of Rome Declaration on Nutrition¹⁶ and its Framework for Action and proclaimed the United Nations Decade on Nutrition (2016-2025)¹⁷, with FAO, together with the World Health Organization, co-leading the implementation of the Decade. The aim of the Decade is to provide a clearly defined, time-bound cohesive framework that works within existing structures and available resources to implement the commitments of the Rome Declaration.

12. COFO has considered the progress in this area at its 23rd session and while inviting countries to mainstream the important role of forests and trees outside forests in policies and programmes and across all four dimensions of food security and nutrition, it requested FAO to support countries in this area and in forest tenure reform, and in strengthening the capacity of government institutions and of local communities to integrate food security and nutrition objectives into their sustainable forest management practices. Furthermore, the High-level Panel of Experts of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) have conducted a study on Sustainable Forestry for Food Security and Nutrition¹⁸ which will be considered by the CFS for policy recommendations for countries and for FAO in October 2017.

13. The ECOSOC resolution 20155/33 on the International Arrangement beyond 2015¹⁹ should be recalled as a major document shaping the international landscape for forests in the coming decade and a half. This resolution led directly to the development of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF)²⁰ negotiated by the United Nations Forum on Forests and adopted by the UN General Assembly²¹, containing six Global Goals for Forests and associated targets, and describing potential actions for the international community, the United Nations System and other stakeholders in support of sustainable forest management. To date, the UNSPF is considered to be the most comprehensive response by the global community to halt deforestation and forest degradation and achieve sustainable management of all types of forests and trees, and as such, it should serve as a reference framework for any action in this regard.

Evolution of the FAO Strategic Framework

14. Since the adoption of the Strategy, FAO itself has gone through a considerable reform process emanating from the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal²² and resulting in a new planning documentation “*including a Strategic Framework, prepared for a period of ten to fifteen years and reviewed every four years, a Medium Term Plan (MTP) covering a period of four years, and a two-year Programme of Work and Budget (PWB). In addition, the new arrangements envisaged the Regional Conferences, Technical Committees and the Programme and Finance Committees advising*

¹⁴ *Ibid*, paragraph 14

¹⁵ C 2017/Unedited Report paragraph 47. b)

¹⁶ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>

¹⁷ A/RES/70/259

¹⁸ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/HLPE_Reports/HLPE-Report-11_EN.pdf

¹⁹ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/110/73/PDF/N1511073.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁰ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N17/034/53/PDF/N1703453.pdf?OpenElement>

²¹ A/71/L.63

²² http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/IEE/Resolution_IPAEnglish.pdf

the Council on programme and budget matters, including priority areas of work for the Organization”²³.

15. The reviewed Strategic Framework includes FAO’s vision, the three Global Goals of Members and Strategic Objectives²⁴ representing the main areas of work of the Organization:

- Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition;
- Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable;
- Reduce rural poverty;
- Enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems;
- Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises; and an
- Additional (Sixth) Objective: Technical quality, statistics and cross-cutting themes (climate change, gender, governance, and nutrition).

16. The Strategic Objectives had been introduced to provide a framework for working across sectors and stakeholder groups to achieve the global goals and to remove sectoral boundaries and silos that could lead to decreased efficiency and less than optimal use of the available resources.

17. Furthermore, in order to remain responsive to global developments, FAO recently developed a common vision for sustainable food and agriculture²⁵ aiming at a streamlined approach to the SDGs, and developed a strategy for FAO’s work on Climate Change²⁶.

18. In discussing these strategies, COFO gave broad guidance for its members and the Organization. It invited countries to strengthen dialogue with agriculture, fisheries and other relevant sectors on joining efforts for transformative change towards the achievement of the SDGs²⁷ and use the five interconnected principles developed by FAO²⁸ as an approach to promote sustainability across these sectors and along the value chains. The Committee also requested FAO to support countries’ efforts in this regard and continue and strengthen the collaboration across sectors within the Organization’s work as well as in the global dialogue on forests including through the International Arrangement on Forests and by providing input to the High-Level Political Forum on its area of expertise²⁹.

19. COFO invited countries to ensure sound forestry and its integration in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and/or their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) as appropriate. It requested FAO to assist countries in developing cross-sectoral policies, enabling governance frameworks, addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, increasing resilience and reducing vulnerability, monitoring, reporting and verification, enhancing the use of sustainable wood to substitute use of more carbon-intensive products. COFO further requested FAO to develop technical guidelines and support their application³⁰.

20. The most recent Medium Term Plan 2018-2021 (MTP), which was compiled on the basis of, among others, the inputs from Regional Conferences, Technical Committees (and through them the Regional Forestry Commissions), the World Forestry Congress and the UNSPF, identifies the following core functions³¹ for FAO:

²³ C 2013/7 paragraph 1

²⁴ C 2017/3 Figure 1

²⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-13940e.pdf>

²⁶ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ms540e.pdf>

²⁷ COFO 2016/REP paragraph 12

²⁸ COFO 2016/5.1 Figure 1

²⁹ COFO 2016/REP paragraph 13-14

³⁰ *Ibid*, paragraph 18-21

³¹ C 2017/3 paragraph 11

- Facilitate and support countries in the development and implementation of normative and standard-setting instruments;
- Assemble, analyze, monitor and improve access to data and information;
- Facilitate, promote and support policy dialogue at global, regional and country levels;
- Advise and support capacity development at country and regional level;
- Advise and support activities that assemble, disseminate and improve the uptake of knowledge, technologies and good practices;
- Facilitate partnerships for food security and nutrition, agriculture and rural development between governments, development partners, civil society and the private sector;
- Advocate and communicate at national, regional and global levels in areas of FAO's mandate.

21. According to the MTP, the 2018-2021 Strategic Objectives results framework includes targets and indicators for 15 of the 17 SDGs³², hence SDGs are in the focus of the foreseen activities. A detailed description of all planned action for the first biennium (2018-19) for all Strategic Objectives, describing focus, change in emphasis, outcomes and outputs, is provided in the Programme of Work and Budget³³, providing insight to the implementation of the guidance received from governing bodies.

Potential focus of the new strategic document

22. The new strategic document for forestry is expected to consider the existing governance framework of the Organization and present a medium term plan of action (preferably till 2030, to be reviewed in line with the MTPs) to be implemented within the Strategic Framework. It should identify priority areas for actions for implementing the 2050 Vision, the UNSPF, the outcomes of global agreements relevant for forests, in particular those referred to in paragraphs 4-11, as well as the emerging organizational strategies and the guidance from members through the Regional Forestry Commissions, COFO and other governing bodies of FAO.

23. In doing so and in order to keep highest level of compatibility, the new strategic document for forestry could follow the structure of the MTP and the UNSPF and provide discussion on the:

- Role of forests in the broader sustainable development agenda.
- Overview of challenges and developments.
- Core functions of FAO in forestry.
- Specific objectives for forestry.
- Implementation and review framework.

Points for Consideration

24. The Commission may wish to consider the above elements for a new strategic document and provide advice on its appropriate structure and key components.

25. The Commission may also wish to provide guidance on:

- clarifying and operationalizing forests' contributions to the SDGs;
- ways and means of operationalizing the 2050 Vision on Forests and Forestry and the Global Goals on Forests of the UNSPF;

³² *Ibid*, Figure 1

³³ C 2017/3 page 40-74

- identifying key normative and operational functions for FAO in the above.