



# NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

## TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

19 – 21 October 2021

### UPDATE ON GLOBAL INITIATIVES AND PROCESSES OF RELEVANCE FOR THE REGIONAL FORESTRY COMMISSIONS

#### Executive Summary

This paper provides an overview of key global developments of relevance to forests and the forest sector and of interest to the Commission, notably:

- (a) Update on the preparation of State of the World's Forests 2022;
- (b) The UN-Secretary-General Initiative on Turning the Tide on Deforestation;
- (c) The UN Food Systems Summit 2021;
- (d) The 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests;
- (e) The 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);
- (f) The 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD);

and seeks specific advice on the organization of the XV World Forestry Congress (XV WFC), as presented in Section III.

#### Suggested action by the Commission

The Commission may wish to:

- (a) consider forest-relevant updates on international events and processes as contained in this document to facilitate policy dialogues and technical exchanges, and to assist in achieving Members' goals and contributions to international processes and goals;
- (b) welcome the topical focus of FAO's flagship publication "The State of the World's Forests" 2022, titled "*Forestry and Green Recovery, Building Inclusive and Sustainable Green Economies*";
- (c) welcome FAO's efforts in mainstreaming forest-related issues into the preparations of the UN Food Systems Summit and its Pre-Summit;
- (d) welcome the developments under the UN Secretary-General's Initiative on

Turning the Tide on Deforestation;

- (e) welcome the themes of the International Day of Forests 2022 and 2023 and consider them in the preparations of celebration events in the region.

Regarding the XV World Forestry Congress, the Commission may wish to:

- (f) Identify key areas and messages for the WFC outcomes;
- (g) recommend ways and means to best collaborate with relevant global processes and instruments and to create synergies including in implementing the WFC's outcomes;
- (h) Invite countries to support the XV World Forestry Congress by encouraging and facilitating good attendance, and encourage countries in a position to do so to provide financial support to the Congress to enable balanced participation.

The Commission may wish to request FAO to:

- (a) promote SOFO 2022 within and outside of the forestry sector;
- (b) take an active part in advancing the UN Secretary-General's Initiative on Turning the Tide on Deforestation and related activities;
- (c) continue to take an active role as the Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and through this enhance advocacy on forests through relevant global processes and initiatives.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Forests continue to be a crucial topic in several global processes and negotiations. In his message for the 2021 International Day of Forests, UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, reiterated that humanity's well-being is inextricably linked to the health of our planet and that forests play a crucial role.

2. This paper provides an overview of key global developments of relevance to forests and the forest sector and of interest to the Commission, notably:

- (a) Update on the preparation of State of the World's Forests 2022;
- (b) The UN-Secretary-General Initiative on Turning the Tide on Deforestation;
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and seeks specific advice on the organization of the XV World Forestry Congress (XV WFC), as presented in Section III.

## **II. KEY DEVELOPMENTS OF GLOBAL PROCESSES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FORESTRY**

### **A. Update on the preparation of the State of the World's Forests 2022**

3. FAO's flagship publication "The State of the World's Forests" (SOFO) presents data and analysis on the interaction between forests and people every two years, with a focus on a specific pertinent topic. SOFO complements the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA), issued every five years.

4. SOFO 2022 will focus on the topic of "Forestry and Green Recovery, Building Inclusive and Sustainable Green Economies". The climate, biodiversity and the recent health crises raised awareness on risks and weaknesses in current societal and economic systems. Forests and trees play a central role in containing or preventing these crises. Given that wood is a renewable material, forest-based sectors have the potential to be amongst the leaders of sustainable economies, providing jobs and income in particular in rural areas. Forests and trees could have a key role in accelerating a transformation of societies towards being more sustainable, resilient and inclusive.

5. SOFO 2022 will provide a new perspective on environmentally friendly development. It will review the status and trends of forest and tree assets as well as the benefits they provide to society. It will discuss "solution pathways" for managing, restoring and using forests and trees in ways that build more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable green economies in the context of a green recovery. It will demonstrate how these pathways could potentially be integrated in existing and emerging policy and finance/investment frameworks and mechanisms in ways that reach local communities, farmers and foresters, thus contributing effectively to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

6. Findings of SOFO 2022 should spur policy dialogue on pathways and actions that maintain and use forests and trees more effectively to solve a range of existential crises and build more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable green economies.

7. The SOFO report is planned to be launched at the XV World Forestry Congress (WFC) "Building a Green, Healthy and Resilient Future with Forests" in May 2022 and will be discussed at the 26<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO26) on 3-7 October 2022.

### **B. The UN-Secretary-General's Initiative on Turning the Tide on Deforestation**

8. In September 2019, the UN Secretary-General called for scaling up action to "turn the tide on deforestation", stating that "we must halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and change the way we farm", and initiated a discussion aimed at exploring how the UN can accelerate efforts to halt deforestation and restore forests, through ambitious and concerted action and advocacy across the UN system.

9. To this end, in October 2019 the UN Executive Committee (EXCOM) decided, *inter alia*, to strengthen UN advocacy efforts to combat deforestation and establish new partnerships with the aim to halt deforestation. A Working Group on Turning the Tide on Deforestation, led by FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in coordination with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) and the United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)/United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was established to operationalize actions requested by EXCOM. The actions requested by the EXCOM include, inter alia, strengthening UN advocacy efforts to combat deforestation and its linkages to peace and security, sustainable consumption and production and health, and agreement on common UN messages on deforestation; establishment of new partnership strategies with local governments, corporations and youth and indigenous communities, including through New York Declaration on Forests (NYDF) and the private sector; support ongoing processes in countries to clarify and secure land tenure rights, especially for rural people, indigenous people and local communities; provide enhanced support to UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams to strengthen their efforts to enhance country-level sustainable land and forest management develop more innovative instruments and adequate incentives to mobilize resources to finance sustainable forest management and reforestation/restoration, including through advocating for a strong replenishment of the Green Climate Fund.

10. In response to the above mandate, work is in progress on several points. The Working Group has defined common key messages based on state-of-the-art insights and scientific and institutional publications. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) has reviewed these and has launched a joint statement entitled "Challenges and Opportunities in Turning the Tide on Deforestation"<sup>1</sup>.

11. In order to increase advocacy, several high-level events contributed to building momentum and political engagement for the initiative<sup>2</sup> and highlighted the key role of forests in solving climate, biodiversity, hunger and poverty challenges, as well as the role of forests in a green recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. To strengthen advocacy further, as well as to support efforts of countries, a CPF Joint Initiative on turning the tide on deforestation is being developed.

### C. The UN Food Systems Summit 2021

12. The UN Secretary-General has convened a high-level Food Systems Summit, to be held at the margins of the UN General Assembly meeting in September 2021, as part of the Decade of Action to Deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. The Summit is designed to develop principles and identify, raise awareness of, and elevate public discussion about positive solutions for improving global food systems as well as to generate significant action towards implementing those solutions. To present initial results and create momentum for the Summit, a pre-Summit was held in Rome on 26-28 July 2021<sup>3</sup>. While the Summit will not produce any formal declaration, the UN Secretary-General will summarize the key messages and conclusions in a concluding statement.

13. The majority of the Summit's activities have been organized along five action tracks to focus on safe and nutritious food, sustainable consumption, nature-positive production, equitable livelihoods, and resilience. Each of these action tracks includes elements related to forests, however, the action track that most strongly focuses on forests is the one concerned

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cpfweb.org/50449-0941d79c54a6810d4c9eb2f45bbcb25f7.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> "High-Level Dialogue on Turning the Tide of Deforestation" ([www.fao.org/redd/news/detail/en/c/1410559/](http://www.fao.org/redd/news/detail/en/c/1410559/)), and the High-Level Panel organized at the European Development Days (16 June 2021) "Forest are too precious to lose: Halting deforestation and enhancing biodiversity" ([www.fao.org/redd/news/detail/en/c/1413809/](http://www.fao.org/redd/news/detail/en/c/1413809/))

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/pre-summit>

with nature-positive production (Action track 3). FAO and the Summit's Advisory Committee and Scientific Group have been actively involved in all five action tracks.

14. Action track 3's work is focused on three areas: protecting natural ecosystems from conversion, sustainably managing existing production systems, and restoring degraded ecosystems. Within this context, specific groups have been working on various forest-related topics, including deforestation-free and conversion-free supply chains, transformation through agroecology and regenerative agriculture, and indigenous people's food production systems, among others. Each of these groups has been preparing short position papers on their topic and identifying Member Governments and other potential partners with whom to collaborate on specific activities. This is likely to increase attention to these issues in global and national forestry policy dialogues. National dialogues about food systems are also taking place in many countries, which may contribute to national policy reforms. Farmer organizations - including many agroforestry and forestry producers - have also been holding regional and global dialogues to discuss solutions to the pressing problems affecting food systems.

#### **D. The 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests**

15. The Sixteenth Session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF16) was held on 26-30 April 2021 as a technical session, in accordance with the guidance provided in Annex I of ECOSOC resolution 2020/14. The thematic priorities for UNFF16 (and UNFF17) are: (i) reversing the loss of forest cover; (ii) enhancing forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits; and (iii) mobilizing financial resources and strengthening scientific and technical cooperation; promoting governance frameworks to advance implementation; and enhancing cooperation, coordination and coherence, for sustainable forest management. FAO participated actively in the technical discussions.

16. The output of UNFF16 is the Chair's Summary, which will be transmitted to the next session. UNFF16 adopted three decisions and the report through silence procedure: Date and Venue & Provisional Agenda for UNFF17<sup>4 5</sup>, UNFF Programme of Work for the period 2022–2024<sup>6</sup> and the UNFF16 Report<sup>7</sup>.

17. The CPF proposed themes for the worldwide celebrations of the International Day of Forests 2022: *Forests and Sustainable Consumption and Production*, and 2023: *Forests and Health*. Both themes were supported by UNFF16.

18. The new CPF Work Plan 2021-2024<sup>8</sup> was presented by FAO, as the CPF Chair, and was welcomed by UNFF16. The member organizations of the Partnership were invited to further enhance coordination and coherence regarding forest-related issues at the global level, through their activities and initiatives.

19. The UNFF16 welcomed further development of the global core set of forest-related indicators by the CPF. Extending the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) could help to address the socioeconomic aspects of sustainable forest management. The UNFF secretariat was requested to continue to organize, jointly with FAO, capacity-building workshops on the global core set of forest-related indicators.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/099/12/PDF/N2109912.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>5</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/099/12/PDF/N2109912.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>6</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N21/099/26/PDF/N2109926.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>7</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/120/62/PDF/N2112062.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>8</sup> CPF Work Plan 2021-2024 : <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/cpf-work-plan-2021-2024/index.html>

20. The UNFF Flagship Publication: *Global Forest Goals Report 2021*, which builds on the FRA as a source of quantitative data and on country reports to UNFF for qualitative data, was launched during a high-level event. As a next step, it was recommended that efforts be made to disseminate the report widely.

21. The next session of the UNFF (policy session) will be held from 9 to 13 May 2022, in New York, United States of America. The session will hold, inter alia, policy discussions on the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030 and the preparations for the midterm review in 2024 of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests in achieving its objectives, including the communication and outreach strategy of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030.

#### **E. The 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**

22. The 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will take place on 1-12 November 2021 in Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

23. Priorities for COP 26 are to (1) secure global net zero emissions by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach, countries are being requested to come forward with ambitious emissions reduction targets to be achieved by 2030 that align with this goal; (2) adapt to protect communities and natural habitats, by protecting and restoring ecosystems and by building defences, warning systems and resilient infrastructure and agriculture; (3) mobilise financial resources; developed countries must make good on their promise to mobilise at least \$100bn in climate finance per year by 2020; (4) work together to deliver and finalise the Paris Rulebook and accelerate action to tackle the climate crisis through collaboration between governments, businesses and the civil society.

24. The negotiations continue on the rules that would operationalize market and non-market mechanisms for the mitigation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, thus very relevant to REDD+. The draft text issued by the 2021 Session of the Subsidiary Body of Scientific and Technological Advice on Article 6<sup>9</sup> will continue to be discussed until COP 26 by technical experts and is expected to be concluded by the Parties during COP 26.

#### **F. The 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD)**

25. At the time of preparing this document the UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP15) is scheduled for 11-24 October 2021 in Kunming, China and is expected to adopt the post-2020 global biodiversity framework as a steppingstone towards the 2050 Vision of "Living in harmony with nature".

26. Further, CBD COP15 will be reviewing progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Forestry, even though not always explicitly mentioned, is relevant for several targets of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, including - but not

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<sup>9</sup> Article 6 enables Parties to choose to pursue voluntary cooperation in the implementation of their nationally determined contributions to allow for higher ambition in their mitigation and adaptation actions and to promote sustainable development and environmental integrity.

limited to - species conservation, people's benefits, restoration, and biodiversity mainstreaming.

### III. THE XV WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

27. The XV World Forestry Congress, originally scheduled for 24 to 28 May 2021, will be held on 2 to 6 May 2022 in Seoul, Republic of Korea, at the Coex convention center. The postponement was necessary because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Preparations for the Congress are being steered by a Secretariat, composed of staff of the Korea Forest Service and the FAO Forestry Division.

28. Consultations with FAO Members started in 2019 when the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions provided their guidance on the preparations, and continued through the 25<sup>th</sup> session of COFO. Most recently, the Congress was presented to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the FAO Conference. These fora identified priority issues that could form the basis of technical sessions at the Congress. The Secretariat has also been seeking advice from various stakeholder groups and is being supported by the Consultative Group of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the Congress' own Advisory Committee composed of representatives of all stakeholder groups and regions.

29. The consultations led to selecting *Building a green, healthy and resilient future with forests* as the theme of the Congress, reflecting the integral role that forests play in ensuring the health, well-being and stability of the planet and its people. It also seeks to recognize forests' contributions to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to promote nature-based solutions as the most efficient means to achieving progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

30. The programme is built around six sub-themes that cover the most important current issues concerning forests and the products and services they provide. The sub-themes also guide the review of progress in implementing the recommendations of previous Congresses, especially the Durban Declaration. The sub-themes are:

- i. Turning the tide: reversing deforestation and forest degradation
- ii. Nature-based solutions for climate-change adaptation and mitigation and biodiversity conservation
- iii. The green pathway to growth and sustainability
- iv. Forests and human health: revisiting the connections
- v. Managing and communicating forest information and knowledge
- vi. Forests without boundaries: enhancing management and cooperation

31. Following guidance received from the Congress' advisory bodies, the thematic and topical focus of the programme will be maintained despite the postponement and relevant recent developments will be included. This will ensure that the Congress discussions remain topical and timely. The proposed draft programme of the Congress can be found at <https://wfc2021korea.org/sub02/programme.html>.

32. The Congress aims to serve as a platform for the global forest sector to exchange views and experiences on the state of forests and forestry in order to discern trends, adapt policies and raise awareness among decision and policy makers, the public and other stakeholders, as well as to consider recommendations for appropriate follow-up actions. The outcomes of relevant global fora including the Conferences of the Parties of the Rio Conventions, the UN Food Systems Summit, and the International Union for Conservation of

Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress, as well as the UN Forum on Forests will be taken into account during the Congress deliberations. Should any of these gatherings be postponed beyond the Congress, the outcomes could be presented there as input from the Congress. The Congress also seeks to make substantive contributions to enabling progress in the UN Decade of Family Farming and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and the UN Secretary-General's initiative on turning the tide on deforestation.

33. The programme schedule will encompass high-level dialogues; plenary sessions; technical sessions; a variety of events that provide an opportunity for sharing expertise, good practices and innovations; poster sessions, publicizing research carried out around the world; and speakers' corner providing a flexible opportunity for participants to present their views.

34. The Congress will include an exhibition featuring products, technologies, and services available to the forestry sector and field trips to sites of interest in the Republic of Korea. Time has been allocated in the programme for providing participants with the opportunity to network and informally share ideas and experiences.

35. Congress preparations are progressing smoothly with the amendment of session plans, the re-opening of voluntary submissions for side event proposals, papers, posters and videos, and renewed outreach efforts. Early bird registration is open until 30 November 2021 and a financial support scheme for participants is being prepared. The scheme will seek to ensure equitable representation of all regions, countries and stakeholder groups. Further details on the financial support scheme as well as on sponsorship opportunities are presented on the Congress website.

36. The Congress is planned to be an event held "physically" and it is expected that - in addition to a broad participation from a wide range of stakeholders - the Congress will also attract the attention of leaders of governments, scientific and business communities and stakeholder associations. The organizers aim to ensure strong representation of youth, women and indigenous peoples. Korea is also working on a programme to sensitize middle-school aged youth on forest issues and will provide a special programme dedicated to this audience to learn about forests through the Congress.

37. The host country is fully prepared to provide the safest conditions for Congress participants under the health regulations in place. The Congress venue has the highest standard of sanitary measures in place, and will be adapted to social distancing requirements as needed for the Congress. In the unfortunate event of the mass COVID-19 vaccinations around the world not bringing the needed changes supporting in-person participation in the next year, the Secretariat will consider employing virtual elements to allow for and encourage active participation in the Congress.

38. The key findings of the Congress' deliberations will form the Congress outcomes formulated through an open and transparent consultative process involving forest-sector stakeholders at the global, regional and national levels. It seeks to contribute to:

- i. renewed commitment to halt deforestation, prevent forest degradation and increase forest areas through increased investment in forests and forestry-related activities;
- ii. enhance appreciation for the critical role that forests, trees, forest products and services play in a green, healthy and resilient future of the planet;
- iii. acknowledge the role of forests and forestry in sustainable development and specifically in the efforts to build back better post COVID-19.