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Продовольственная и
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Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
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CONFERENCE

Forty-second Session

Rome, 12-16 July 2021

Report of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry (5-9 October 2020)

Executive Summary

The Committee:

- a) welcomed the launch of the *State of the World's Forests 2020* (SOFO 2020) jointly prepared by FAO and UNEP, and its timely focus on Forests, Biodiversity and People; congratulated FAO on the publication of SOFO 2020 as the first fully digital FAO flagship report (para 10).
- b) stressed the need to deliver on global commitments, including in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (para. 14 c.);
- c) recommended that an open, transparent and Member-led consultation process be convened to finalize the draft Action Plan to implement the Strategy for Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and that comments and inputs from all Technical Committees, as well as the group of national focal points for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) be considered (para.15 b.);
- d) recommended that in the future any papers dealing with inter-related issues between agriculture and forests be presented to both COFO and COAG (para. 24).
- e) approved the revised Rules of Procedure of the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems, with adjustments made to gender-neutral language, as proposed by the First Session of the Working Group (para 39 a.);
- f) provided guidance on the Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition, from the perspective of forestry, to ensure its relevance to fulfil FAO's mandate and to support countries in their effort to reach their SDG targets (para. 44 e.);
- g) adopted the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2020-2023 and noted the need to adjust to new realities in a post-COVID-19 world and to address its mid and long-term impacts (para. 45; 45 a.);
- h) elected Mr León Jorge Castaños of Mexico as Chairperson of the 26th Session of the Committee on Forestry (para. 52).
- i) requested FAO to:
 - i. raise awareness on the drivers of forest biodiversity loss and how to address these (para. 10 b. i.);

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

- ii. step up actions to halt deforestation, forest degradation and loss of forest biodiversity and support Members in their efforts (para. 10 b. ii.);
- iii. continue to produce a Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) report every five years; ensure the sufficient allocation of resources to the FRA Programme by maintaining FAO's regular budget and seek to increase voluntary multi-year extra-budgetary resources from donor countries; identify and promote new technologies and digital innovation for data collection and dissemination on forest resources, their sustainable management and use - including livelihoods and socio-economic data - as well as on forest products, in synergy with other relevant data-related initiatives of FAO, such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and provide a background document for the consideration of the 26th Session of COFO (para. 13a., c. h.);
- iv. conduct a review of biodiversity mainstreaming in forestry and share good practices on solutions that balance conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity, and report on progress made at the 26th Session of the Committee of Forestry (para. 17 b.);
- v. strengthen the promotion of sustainable management of wildlife along the whole wild meat value chain and the adoption of measures to better prevent zoonotic disease risk, including through the One Health approach and through strengthened collaboration with the World Organisation for Animal Health and the World Health Organization (para. 17 c.);
- vi. consider an initiative to mainstream biodiversity in food systems, in consultation with Members (para. 17 e.);
- vii. strengthen further the international standard setting activities and enhance visibility of the work of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and CODEX Alimentarius (para. 22 d.);
- viii. support, upon request, Small Island Developing States to implement or strengthen sustainable forest management in order to increase resilience and sustainability of communities and forest ecosystems, including in the context of climate change, natural disasters, and other risks (para. 22 n.);
- ix. integrate forestry in FAO's work on food systems (para. 23 a.);
- x. enhance FAO's cross-sectoral work to address impacts of certain agricultural production systems and related food systems on forests (para. 23 d.);
- xi. ensure close coordination and collaboration between the UN Decade of Family Farming and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (para. 29 b.);
- xii. ensure that FAO's new Strategic Framework gives adequate recognition to FAO's vital role in ecosystem restoration, particularly with regard to productive ecosystems and strengthening synergies with existing regional and global initiatives in this regard, where appropriate through extra-budgetary resources (para. 29 c.);
- xiii. include in the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture initiative issues related to the use of digital technology applications in land use planning, land use change and forestry, taking into account their impacts; continue developing and refining the Terms of Reference for further review by the Programme Committee and the FAO Council (para. 32 d.);
- xiv. cooperate with the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat in preparing an initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable forest management to be presented at the 16th Session of UNFF (para. 33 c.);
- xv. report on the relevant deliberations of the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 during the 26th Session of the Committee on Forestry (para. 43 b.);
- xvi. align the World Forestry Congress discussions and subsequent outcomes with global COVID-19 rebuilding efforts as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strengthen the contribution of the Congress to establishing a more effective interface between science, policy, and investment in the forest sector (para. 50 a.).

<p>xvii. ensure that FAO's new Strategic Framework adequately reflects the importance of forest issues, the need for cross-sectoral work within the Organization as appropriate and FAO's leading role on forest matters in the UN system (para 51 v.);</p> <p>xviii. <u>requested</u> FAO to review the result and effect of the structural changes on FAO's activities in forestry for the 26th Session of COFO;<u>emphasized</u> the need for forestry issues to remain visible and the capacity of FAO in forestry to remain strong and effective in light of these changes, both at headquarters and in the field offices (para. 31).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested action by the Council and Conference</p> <p>The Council and Conference are invited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• endorse the report of the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry and the recommendations therein.
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mr Ewald Rametsteiner Secretary of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) a.i. Tel: +39 06570 53592</p>

Global policy and regulatory matters for the attention of the Conference

- a) *State of the World's Forests 2020: Forests, biodiversity and people* (Paragraph 10 a.)
- b) *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020: Key findings and ways forward including digitalization* (Paragraphs 11 b., c.; 13 b., d., e., f., g., h., i.)
- c) *Forests and Biodiversity* (Paragraphs 14 c., 15 b., c., 17)
- d) *Forests: Nature-based Solutions for Climate Change* (Paragraphs 20, 22)
- e) *Transforming Agriculture and Food Systems: Halting deforestation and promoting sustainable production and consumption of forest products* (Paragraph 23)
- f) *UN Decades: Family Farming and Ecosystem Restoration* (Paragraph 29)
- g) *Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture* (Paragraph 32 a., c., d.)
- h) *Report on Progress including the Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests* (Paragraph 33 b., c., d., e., g.)
- i) *Dialogue with Statutory Bodies in Forestry* (Paragraphs 34, 35, 37, 38 b., d., e., 39 b., d.)
- j) *Food Systems Transformation and the UN Food Systems Summit* (Paragraphs 42, 43)
- k) *Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition* (Paragraph 44)
- l) *Preparations for the XV World Forestry Congress* (Paragraph 50 a., c., d.)

Programme and budgetary matters for the attention of the Council

- a) *State of the World's Forests 2020: Forests, biodiversity and people* (Paragraph 10 b.)
- b) *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020: Key findings and ways forward including digitalization* (Paragraphs 11 a.; 13 a., c.)
- c) *Forests and Biodiversity* (Paragraph 14 e.)
- d) *Forests: Nature-based Solutions for Climate Change* (Paragraph 22 b.)
- e) *Transforming Agriculture and Food Systems: Halting deforestation and promoting sustainable production and consumption of forest products* (Paragraphs 23, 24)
- f) *UN Decades: Family Farming and Ecosystem Restoration* (Paragraph 29 c.)
- g) *Decisions and Recommendations of FAO Bodies of Interest to the Committee* (Paragraph 31)
- h) *Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture* (Paragraph 32 b., e.)
- i) *Report on Progress including the Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests* (Paragraph 33 a., f.)
- j) *Dialogue with Statutory Bodies in Forestry* (Paragraph 40)

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- k) *Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on Forestry for 2020-2023* (Paragraphs 45, 47)
 - l) *Preparations for the XV World Forestry Congress* (Paragraph 50 b.)
 - m) *FAO's Work in Forestry under the Reviewed Strategic Framework* (Paragraph 51 b.)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee on Forestry (COFO) held its 25th Session from 5 to 9 October 2020, in conjunction with the 7th World Forest Week. The Session was convened virtually, on an exceptional basis, in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the associated public health concerns and constraints.

2. Prior to beginning its deliberations, the Committee confirmed that the virtual meeting constituted a formal regular Session of the Committee. The Committee agreed to apply its Rules of Procedure and practices to the conduct of this Session and to suspend any rules that may be incompatible with the virtual meeting for the purposes of this Session. The Committee also agreed to the application of any special procedures or amended working modalities as may be required for the efficient conduct of the Session.

OPENING OF THE SESSION (Item 1)

3. The session was attended by delegates from 112 countries and one Member Organization, representatives of six United Nations Agencies and Programmes and observers from 12 intergovernmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations were also in attendance.

4. Mr Won Sop Shin (Republic of Korea), Chairperson of the 25th Session of COFO, opened the session stressing the relevance of COFO in addressing urgent challenges and giving guidance for FAO as the international organization with the most comprehensive mandate in forestry. He introduced the speakers at the opening session: Mr QU Dongyu, the Director-General of FAO; Ms Inger Andersen, the Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); His Excellency Virginijus Sinkevičius, the Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, European Commission.

5. Mr Hiroto Mitsugi, Assistant Director-General, welcomed delegates to the session.

6. The Chairperson delegated the responsibility of chairing the sessions in the afternoon and as the situation required to Vice-Chairperson Ms Christine Farcy (Belgium), with support of Vice-Chairperson Mr Yusuf Serengil (Turkey) to help the smooth conduct of COFO in light of differences in time zones.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Item 2)

7. The Agenda (*Appendix A*) was adopted. The documents considered by the Committee are listed in *Appendix B*.

DESIGNATION OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE (Item 3)

8. The Committee was advised that the Regional Forestry Commissions had elected the following Chairpersons, who thus serve as Vice-Chairpersons of the Committee on Forestry for the duration of their terms in office in their respective Commissions: Ms Morongoa S. Leseke (South Africa), representing the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission; Mr Ko Ki-yeon (Republic of Korea), representing the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission; Ms Christine Farcy (Belgium), representing the European Forestry Commission; Mr Pedro Soust (Uruguay), representing the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission; Mr Victor Eduardo Sosa Cedillo (Mexico), representing the North American Forest Commission; and Mr Yusuf Serengil (Turkey), representing the Near East Forestry and Range Commission.

9. The following Members were elected to the Drafting Committee: Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, European Union, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Sudan, Zambia. The Committee elected Mr Don Syme (New Zealand) as Chairperson.

THE WORLD'S FORESTS IN 2020 (Item 4)

4.1 STATE OF THE WORLD'S FORESTS 2020: FORESTS, BIODIVERSITY AND PEOPLE

10. The Committee welcomed the launch of the *State of the World's Forests 2020* (SOFO 2020) jointly prepared by FAO and UNEP, and its timely focus on Forests, Biodiversity and People. It congratulated FAO on the publication of SOFO 2020 as the first fully digital FAO flagship report. Based on its findings, the Committee:

- a) took note of the key findings of *SOFO 2020* and invited Members to take these into consideration in the negotiations of the post 2020 biodiversity framework, as appropriate, so as to reflect the critical role that forests and sustainable forest management play in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;
- b) requested FAO to:
 - i. raise awareness on the drivers of forest biodiversity loss and how to address these;
 - ii. step up actions to halt deforestation, forest degradation and loss of forest biodiversity and support Members in their efforts, including through fostering various forms of international cooperation;
 - iii. support Members with the required tools and methodologies for generating better evidence of the contribution of forests to the conservation of biodiversity and strengthen countries' capacity to monitor biodiversity outcomes and address existing data gaps;
 - iv. continue to demonstrate that solutions that balance conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity, such as sustainable forest management, restoration and agroforestry, are possible, through sharing best practices, in line with national capacities, priorities and contexts; and that agriculture and forestry can synergistically support sustainable development;
 - v. support Members, upon request, to strengthen efforts to ensure the involvement of forest-dependent people and women in forestry and biodiversity conservation, and improve information on the socio-economic benefits of forest biodiversity;
 - vi. support Members in the development of innovative financing modalities for forest conservation, restoration and sustainable use, including payments for ecosystem services;
 - vii. use multilaterally agreed concepts and science and evidence-based linkages in flagship publications in line with the guidance of the FAO Council;
 - viii. facilitate consultation with Members, through their Permanent Representations to FAO, in the preparation of the next SOFO to ensure an inclusive and informed process;
 - ix. provide a channel for Members to provide information for specific revisions in SOFO to help the secretariat improve its accuracy;
 - x. showcase and promote ongoing practices that harmonize agricultural activities with the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of forests, avoiding deforestation and maintaining ecosystem services; and
 - xi. support Members, upon request, to enhance efforts aimed at providing income generation opportunities for forest dependent people in order to avoid activities that are detrimental to forests.

4.2 GLOBAL FOREST RESOURCES ASSESSMENT 2020: KEY FINDINGS AND WAYS FORWARD INCLUDING DIGITALIZATION

11. The Committee welcomed the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2020 report and invited countries to:

- a. provide frequent updates, on a voluntary basis, on key forest-related indicators, and use the FRA on-line reporting platform to promote and share publicly available tabular and geospatial information on national forest resources at their desired level of detail, and use FRA data for evidence-based policy decisions and forestry outlooks;

- b. collaborate with FAO, through the FRA National Correspondents and other experts, to further develop and improve the Global Core Set of Forest-related Indicators as per the recommendation of the related Expert Workshop hosted by FAO in 2019;
 - c. encourage their FRA National Correspondents to communicate with the focal points of other processes to facilitate consistent reporting on forest resources and forest products taking into account reporting related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030, and the Rio Conventions.
12. The Committee invited the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and forest-related international bodies and processes to consider the use of the Global Core Set of Forest-related Indicators within their respective mandates and reporting processes, as appropriate.
13. The Committee requested FAO to:
- a. continue to produce a FRA report every five years;
 - b. develop, in consultation with Members, Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ) partners, international experts and other stakeholders, a flexible FRA reporting process that allows voluntary updates of key indicators related to SDG15 and other indicators at the discretion of Members, as new information allows, while ensuring data quality and transparency;
 - c. ensure the sufficient allocation of resources to the FRA Programme by maintaining FAO's regular budget and seek to increase voluntary multi-year extra-budgetary resources from donor countries;
 - d. develop, in consultation with Members, guidance and operational tools for more consistent reporting on forest characteristics, including on primary forests, and suggestions on using remote sensing, based on country capacity and capability;
 - e. in cooperation with CPF members and other restoration initiatives, prepare an information note for the 26th session of COFO that analyzes if and how reporting on restoration-related indicators to future FRAs can streamline reporting for countries between multiple restoration initiatives;
 - f. implement the recommendations of the Expert Workshop hosted by FAO on the "Global Core Set of Forest-related Indicators" with regard to further work on Tier 2 and Tier 3 indicators and steps needed to utilize the full potential of the Global Core Set of Forest-related Indicators at all levels, in collaboration with CPF members and other relevant international organizations and processes;
 - g. analyze, in collaboration with CPF members, the uptake of the Global Core Set of Forest-related Indicators by other reporting processes and the extent to which they decrease reporting burden on countries;
 - h. identify and promote new technologies and digital innovation for data collection and dissemination on forest resources, their sustainable management and use - including livelihoods and socio-economic data - as well as on forest products, in synergy with other relevant data-related initiatives of FAO, such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and provide a background document for the consideration of the 26th Session of COFO;
 - i. support Members, upon request, in their data generation, analysis and reporting efforts including through capacity building, technological cooperation and in mobilizing additional resources.

FORESTS AND BIODIVERSITY (Item 5)

14. The Committee:
- a. reviewed the COFO Document COFO/2020/5/Rev.2 and noted that the guidance of the FAO Council at its 163rd Session, which adopted the Strategy for Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors, was fully followed, especially with regard to the preparation of a draft Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy;
 - b. highlighted the importance of forest biodiversity for ecosystem services and food security;

- c. expressed concerns about the continued loss of biodiversity and stressed the need to deliver on global commitments, including in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
 - d. noted the progress made in the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors;
 - e. reviewed the draft 2021-23 Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors as set out in Appendix I to COFO/2020/5/Rev2.
15. The Committee:
- a. acknowledged that Members may submit further comments in writing as inputs to the document to the FAO Forestry Division for their subsequent submission to the Office of FAO responsible for the elaboration of the Action Plan;
 - b. recommended that an open, transparent and Member-led consultation process be convened to finalize the draft Action Plan and that comments and inputs from all Technical Committees, as well as the group of national focal points for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) be considered;
 - c. emphasized the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture, including access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization.
16. The Committee invited Members to:
- a. strengthen the mainstreaming of biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use in the forest sector and collaboration with other relevant sectors in this regard;
 - b. finalize their country reports for the Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources, and submit them to FAO, as soon as possible.
17. The Committee requested FAO to:
- a. strengthen forestry considerations in the work on mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural sectors;
 - b. conduct a review of biodiversity mainstreaming in forestry and share good practices on solutions that balance conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity, and report on progress made at the 26th Session of the Committee of Forestry;
 - c. strengthen the promotion of sustainable management of wildlife along the whole wild meat value chain and the adoption of measures to better prevent zoonotic disease risk, including through the One Health approach and through strengthened collaboration with the World Organisation for Animal Health and the World Health Organization;
 - d. contribute to relevant work on biodiversity of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other organizations and processes to strengthen forest biodiversity monitoring, reporting, and review, as appropriate;
 - e. consider an initiative to mainstream biodiversity in food systems, in consultation with Members.

FORESTS: NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE (Item 6)

18. The Committee recognized the role of forests and sustainable forest management in building climate change resilience and their importance in climate change mitigation and adaptation;
19. The Committee also recognized the importance of forests and sustainable forest management in supporting the socio-economic and overall recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
20. The Committee noted the need to intensify actions at all levels to halt deforestation and forest degradation across all forest ecosystems, expand forest area, where appropriate and applicable, and enhance forest ecosystem health;

21. The Committee invited Members to:
 - a. consider ways to strengthen the role of forests and the use of wood in their climate adaptation, resilience building and mitigation actions, as appropriate, according to national priorities and circumstances, including, but not limited to: optimizing the mitigation, adaptation and resilience potential of forests, and strengthening relevant policies, national strategies and plans, including in nationally determined contributions (NDCs) as appropriate and as applicable;
 - b. strengthen management systems to address issues such as forest fire, disaster risk, pests and diseases that may be exacerbated by climate change, among other processes such as land use change and natural environmental variability, in order to reduce the risk of forest loss, enable advanced preparation and fast action for these risks to promote the recovery of forests;
 - c. deploy recovery actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that support the transition to low-carbon economies and enhance the resilience of forest ecosystems, and other co-benefits;
 - d. accelerate implementation of national REDD+ strategies, action plans, and other REDD+ components, and landscape approaches, in line with national priorities and capacities, to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, and promote forest restoration and sustainable forest management.

22. The Committee requested FAO to:
 - a. support Members, upon request, to increase capacity to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation as part of their climate actions, including in the implementation and/or enhancement of their NDCs, as appropriate;
 - b. strengthen its collaboration with the private sector and facilitate dialogue, including by providing opportunities to share knowledge and lessons learned, aimed at mobilizing climate finance for forests and enhancing the role of the private sector in efforts to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation while contributing to job creation, livelihood resilience and poverty reduction;
 - c. increase understanding of impacts that deforestation and forest degradation and climate change, among other processes, may contribute to increasing the risk of spread of zoonotic diseases, to help inform policy making for mutually beneficial recovery approaches;
 - d. recognizing the importance of plant health and the need to address issues through a One Health approach, strengthen further the international standard setting activities and enhance visibility of the work of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and CODEX Alimentarius;
 - e. assist Members, upon request, to address the forest-related impacts of emergency, natural disasters and after-outbreak situations, and in establishing long-term prevention, risk mitigation and forest management strategies to address them, as appropriate to national or ecological circumstances, including fires, pests and diseases and drought; and strengthen the respective regional networks and availability of and access to information at national and global levels;
 - f. assist Members, upon request, to conduct vulnerability and impact assessments of climate change on forest ecosystems to develop informed policy interventions;
 - g. support capacity building, and provide technical assistance and data to underpin national efforts to enhance, redesign and implement, as appropriate, policies and actions to halt deforestation and forest degradation, and support adaptation measures, including in the context of post COVID-19 recovery actions, related to forests, and promote South-South and Triangular Cooperation;
 - h. assist Members, upon request, in their efforts to manage landscapes in an integrated way through innovative approaches to halt deforestation, to facilitate investments, and to strengthen capacities and education to this end;
 - i. in any intergovernmental multilateral deliberations or negotiations within the UN system that address or seek to define nature-based solutions, be actively involved and support the integration and role of sustainable forest management in the discussions;

- j. together with other organizations of the CPF, build on outcomes of a joint initiative of the CPF “Working Across Sectors to Halt Deforestation and Increase Forest Area: From Aspiration to Action”;
- k. support Members in their efforts in forest landscape restoration;
- l. support Members in developing financial instruments to address deforestation, including through payments for ecosystem services;
- m. continue to support Members in their efforts to conserve, restore and sustainably manage forests including through reducing and reversing deforestation and to access funding and results based payments from relevant sources, in close collaboration but not restricted to the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, and including financial mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund; and
- n. support, upon request, Small Island Developing States to implement or strengthen sustainable forest management in order to increase resilience and sustainability of communities and forest ecosystems, including in the context of climate change, natural disasters, and other risks.

FORESTS AND THEIR ROLE IN TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS (Item 7)

7.1. TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS: HALTING DEFORESTATION AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF FOREST PRODUCTS

23. In order to strengthen contributions from the forest sector to the improvement of food systems and stepping up action on halting deforestation, the Committee requested FAO to:
- a. integrate forestry in FAO’s work on food systems;
 - b. promote synergies and address trade-offs between forestry and agriculture in initiatives and projects, including through COVID-19 pandemic recovery measures;
 - c. integrate forestry in FAO’s Hand-in-Hand initiative with interested partners, at the request of the Member;
 - d. enhance FAO’s cross-sectoral work to address impacts of certain agriculture production systems and related food systems on forests;
 - e. enhance FAO’s cross-sectoral work on afforestation, reforestation and forest restoration at all levels for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, contributing to the UN System-wide efforts to "Turning the tide on deforestation" co-led by FAO, and take into account forest-related issues in the preparation of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit;
 - f. engage with public, private sector and civil society stakeholders and initiatives aimed at halting deforestation and at promoting legal and sustainable value chains of forest and agricultural products, as well as sustainable food systems as a whole; and
 - g. consider ways of strengthening coordination between COFO and COAG on cross-sectoral matters.
24. The Committee recommended that in the future any papers dealing with inter-related issues between agriculture and forests be presented to both COFO and COAG.
25. The Committee invited Members to:
- a. promote policy coordination and align public incentives to halt deforestation, in accordance with their national legislation, and foster sustainable food systems; and
 - b. promote sustainable production practices and responsible consumption of forest and agricultural products to this end and their contributions to resource-efficient economies, ensuring that policies and incentives are in accordance with multilateral trade rules and taking into account the need to avoid creating unnecessary or inappropriate barriers to trade.

7.2. UN DECADES: FAMILY FARMING AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

26. The Committee commended FAO on being tasked with co-leading two important and closely linked UN Decades of Family Farming and on Ecosystem Restoration and stressed the need to ensure close collaboration and coordination of efforts in support of the Decade of Action on the SDGs.

27. The Committee welcomed the update on progress and took note of the FAO Position paper on Ecosystem restoration of production ecosystems in the context of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (COFO/2020/Inf.7).

28. In view of the importance of the UN Decades, the Committee invited Members to support the implementation of the UN Decade of Family Farming and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in ways that address both short term impacts of COVID-19 and lead to long term resilience of family farmers, forests and forest dependent communities and businesses, including through national level implementation and voluntary contributions, as appropriate.

29. The Committee requested FAO to:

- a. enhance learning and sharing about solutions to the short and long term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as it relates to forest ecosystem restoration and to family farming;
- b. ensure close coordination and collaboration between the UN Decade of Family Farming and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration;
- c. ensure that FAO's new Strategic Framework gives adequate recognition to FAO's vital role in ecosystem restoration, particularly with regard to productive ecosystems and strengthening synergies with existing regional and global initiatives in this regard, where appropriate through extra-budgetary resources;
- d. increase the engagement of the private sector, family farmers, smallholders, communities and entrepreneurs as active agents of change, as well as forest and farm producer organizations and other relevant stakeholders in activities related to the two UN Decades and scale up its support to forest and farm producer organizations through the Forest and Farm Facility;
- e. support Members, upon request, with tools, methodologies and best practices in line with national priorities and capacities to scale up forest and landscape restoration efforts and monitor progress;
- f. take into account the importance of an open, rules-based, science and evidence based, predictable, non-discriminatory, and fair multi-lateral trade system, consistent with WTO rules; and abstain from using non-agreed language, concepts and ideas, in co-leading the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION (Item 8)

8.1 DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF FAO BODIES OF INTEREST TO THE COMMITTEE

30. The Committee took note of the decisions and recommendations of FAO bodies of its interest, including when it addressed the related agenda items.

31. With regard to the structural changes as reflected in Annex I to document CL164/3 of the 164th Session of the FAO Council, the Committee:

- a. emphasized the need for forestry issues to remain visible and the capacity of FAO in forestry to remain strong and effective in light of these changes, both at headquarters and in the field offices; and
- b. requested FAO to review the result and effect of the structural changes on FAO's activities in forestry for the 26th Session of COFO.

8.1.a TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM FOR DIGITAL FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

32. The Committee requested FAO to:
- a. ensure that the initiative will create synergies between international organizations, other relevant related initiatives and stakeholders and strengthen coordination between them without duplicating activities under their respective mandates;
 - b. include in the Terms of Reference reporting mechanisms through which voluntary guidelines from the Platform on issues related to digital food and agriculture are submitted to the FAO Members for consideration through the FAO Governing Body process;
 - c. develop a solid and predictable funding concept based on voluntary contributions;
 - d. include in the initiative issues related to the use of digital technology applications in land use planning, land use change and forestry, taking into account their impacts; and
 - e. continue developing and refining the Terms of Reference for further review by the Programme Committee and the FAO Council.

8.2 REPORT ON PROGRESS INCLUDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FORESTS

33. The Committee welcomed the report on progress and requested FAO to:
- a. continue supporting the work of the major programmes in Forestry contained in the report, encouraging stronger linkages between these programmes and main projects led by FAO, as appropriate;
 - b. continue supporting the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF), including promoting knowledge on the role of sustainable forest management in sustainable development, establishing clear links between its activities and the UNSPF and reporting on implementation accordingly;
 - c. cooperate with the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat in preparing an initial assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable forest management to be presented at the 16th Session of UNFF;
 - d. support increased involvement of its regional forestry commissions in preparation of technical sessions of the UNFF with an aim to present experience and forest-related best practices of regions and to increase their involvement in UNFF related regional dialogues;
 - e. invite its regional forestry commissions to review UNFF related subjects and provide information useful to UNFF;
 - f. continue and strengthen its leadership role in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and steer the work on developing the CPF work programme in line with the UNFF quadrennial Programme of Work 2021-2024 and present it for information to the 16th session of UNFF; and
 - g. continue to support UNFF review functions, in accordance with its mandate.

8.3 DIALOGUE WITH STATUTORY BODIES IN FORESTRY

34. The Committee stressed the importance of the Regional Forestry Commissions and the need for them to have a more policy-relevant role in the FAO Regional Conferences.

35. The Committee requested FAO to consult with the Regional Forestry Commissions on ways to help facilitate their policy dialogues and technical exchanges to assist them in achieving their Members' goals and contributions to international processes and goals.

36. The Committee encouraged Members of *Silva Mediterranea* to:
- a. contribute to the preparation of, and commit to high-level participation in, the 24th Session of *Silva Mediterranea* and the Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week, planned to be held in 2021; and

- b. review the activities of *Silva Mediterranea* to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on Mediterranean forest ecosystems and related livelihoods, and how forests and forestry can contribute to the recovery from the pandemic in the region.
37. The Committee reviewed the activities of the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries (ACFSI) and:
- a. acknowledged the ACSFI outputs and key messages arising from its 60th and 61st sessions;
 - b. taking note of the ACSFI Strategic Framework 2020-2030, encouraged the ACSFI to enhance sharing of information and consult on its work with the Committee;
 - c. encouraged the FAO Forestry Division to share frequent updates of the work of the ACSFI with Members; and
 - d. invited ACSFI to continue catalyzing strategic partnerships between FAO and the private sector to support country efforts to achieve the SDGs, in particular in developing countries.
38. The Committee, reviewing the work of the International Commission on Poplars and Other Fast-Growing Trees Sustaining People and the Environment (IPC):
- a. took note of the achievements of the IPC Reform process;
 - b. encouraged the IPC Executive Committee to take concrete actions through fast-growing tree species, where appropriate, to support the UN Decade of Action, UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and UN Decade of Family Farming;
 - c. encouraged participation in the 2021 IPC Session and membership in the IPC in view of the expansion of the IPC scope;
 - d. encouraged the IPC to enhance sharing of information and consult on its work with the Committee; and
 - e. encouraged the FAO Forestry Division to share frequent updates of the work of the IPC with Members.
39. The Committee reviewed the work of the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems (Working Group) and:
- a. approved the revised Rules of Procedure, with adjustments made to gender-neutral language, as proposed by the First Session of the Working Group;
 - b. welcomed the progress made in the work of the Working Group;
 - c. encouraged countries that have not yet done so to nominate their national dryland experts to serve on the Working Group; and
 - d. encouraged the Working Group to take measures to strengthen its work, given the importance of agrosilvopastoral systems for sustainable production.
40. The Committee invited FAO to explore options for further linking the work of these Statutory Bodies to the work of the Forestry Division and other policy areas with relevance for forestry, in order to increase their relevance and efficiency and to create synergies and enhance participation.
41. The Committee invited FAO to support the private sectors' involvement, in accordance with the relevant national legislation, in capacity building for sustainable production, responsible consumption and related trade in forest products.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS (Item 9)

9.1 FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION AND THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

42. The Committee:
- a. recognized the significance of developing sustainable food systems in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, acknowledged the important role of forests, trees, agroforestry and other innovative forest-related approaches in this regard and underscored the importance of coordination of all stakeholders in adopting a food systems approach, in line

with national priorities and capacities, and highlighted the added urgency in light of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

- b. acknowledged the role that FAO is playing in supporting the preparatory process towards the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021, as well as in facilitating dialogue, knowledge sharing, and developing the capacities of food systems stakeholders to identify, design and scale-up coordinated initiatives to catalyse meaningful change towards sustainable food systems appropriate to local contexts.
43. The Committee requested FAO to:
- a. support Members, upon request, in taking actions and increasing investments towards the systematic integration of forests and trees, agroforestry and other innovative forest-related approaches into more sustainable food systems, acknowledging the added urgency in light of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - b. report on the relevant deliberations of the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 during the 26th Session of the Committee on Forestry.

9.2 VISION AND STRATEGY FOR FAO'S WORK IN NUTRITION

44. The Committee:
- a. recognized the role of forests and forestry in contributing to healthy diets and preventing all forms of malnutrition; relevant also for the provision of additional jobs and income and ensuring livelihoods especially in rural areas, while also increasing the value of forests and the need for their sustainable management;
 - b. recognized the importance of promoting agro-forestry systems including multi-purpose tree species in order to enhance food security, protect the environment and generate income;
 - c. took note of the draft Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition (Strategy), as contained in the document COFO/2020/9.2, and looked forward to its finalization;
 - d. appreciated the comprehensive nature of the Strategy encompassing all sectors in food systems approaches, including forests, to address all forms of malnutrition and underlined the importance of the diverse contextual realities and national circumstances including for the forestry sector in the implementation of the Strategy;
 - e. provided guidance on the Strategy, from the perspective of forestry, to ensure its relevance to fulfil FAO's mandate and to support countries in their effort to reach their SDG targets, including that the Strategy should take into account and highlight:
 - i. the potential of forests and forestry to contribute to healthy diets and prevent all forms of malnutrition;
 - ii. the direct contribution of forest products to healthy diets from sustainable food systems, and their indirect positive impacts on the forest sector itself and rural areas, as mentioned in paragraph 44a.;
 - iii. the importance of innovation in that regard;
 - iv. the importance of partnership including the civil society, the private sector as well as smallholder and family farmers, youth and women, indigenous peoples and local communities, and agri-business and agro-forestry operators and their associations irrespective of their size; and
 - v. the importance of the engagement with and the empowerment of indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as women and youth.

9.3 MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY FOR 2020-2023

45. The Committee reviewed and adopted the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2020-2023 with the changes contained in Appendix D to this report. The Committee noted the need to:
- a. adjust to new realities in a post-COVID-19 world and to address its mid and long-term impacts;

- b. strengthen its and FAO's work related to the essential role the sustainable management of forests plays in fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals and the need for sufficient budget and adequate capacity to perform these tasks; and
- c. further explore opportunities to enhance efficiency of work, ensure participation of Rome-based delegations in the inter-sessional processes, and improve interaction between Rome-based delegations and the COFO Steering Committee.

46. The Committee called on Members to actively support its and FAO's work, underlining the importance of forests and forestry for climate change, biodiversity and post COVID-19 recovery.

47. The Committee looked forward to receiving an adjusted MYPOW at its 26th Session, following the adoption of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031 and the Medium Term Programme 2022-2025.

9.4 PREPARATIONS FOR THE XV WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

48. The Committee welcomed the report on the status of preparations of the XV World Forestry Congress (Congress) and invited Members to:

- a. support the Congress through the participation and attendance of high-level government officials and well-known people, and the provision of sponsorship for nationals desirous of attending;
- b. present proposals for matters of national and global interest that may be covered in the Congress deliberations and outcome documents;
- c. identify potential target audiences of the Congress outcomes, including global forest-relevant processes and instruments as well as those in other land-use sectors; and
- d. engage in events to be held during the Congress to continue to have in-depth discussions on the main agenda items of COFO 25.

49. The Committee invited the Republic of Korea, as host country of the Congress and a party to several international instruments and processes, to:

- a. provide logistical support and guidance for those who have an interest in the Congress to be able to participate, including virtually, with a view to the COVID-19 pandemic situation;
- b. have the Vision paper developed in an inclusive and transparent way, keeping in mind the character of the Congress; and
- c. present the outcomes of the Congress to relevant international instruments and processes, as appropriate.

50. The Committee requested FAO to:

- a. align the Congress discussions and subsequent outcomes with global COVID-19 rebuilding efforts as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strengthen the contribution of the Congress to establishing a more effective interface between science, policy, and investment in the forest sector;
- b. present the outcomes of the Congress to the Regional Forestry Commissions and the 26th Session of the Committee on Forestry, and through it to the FAO Council and Conference, with a view to considering as appropriate these outcomes in the planning of policies and programmes of the Organization and monitoring progress in implementation;
- c. collaborate with the Republic of Korea in presenting the outcomes of the Congress to relevant intergovernmental instruments and processes; and
- d. take into account the importance of multi-lingualism at FAO.

9.5 FAO'S WORK IN FORESTRY UNDER THE REVIEWED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

51. The Committee:
- a. welcomed the accomplishments of FAO's work in forestry in the 2018-19 biennium including in support of the SDGs and the Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030.
 - b. requested FAO to:
 - i. continue its priority related to normative and technical work in forestry;
 - ii. put further emphasis on the provision of up-to-date and high-quality data on forests;
 - iii. support Members, upon their request, in their efforts to protect, restore and sustainably manage forests, including through halting deforestation; restoring forest ecosystems, including degraded forest ecosystems; and promoting the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources, agroforestry and legal and sustainable value chains for forest products;
 - iv. consider national priorities, local realities and different production systems when planning and implementing activities related to forests and forest management as well as sustainable food systems as a whole, in a way that acknowledges those differences and supports the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
 - v. ensure that FAO's new Strategic Framework adequately reflects the importance of forest issues, the need for cross-sectoral work within the Organization as appropriate and FAO's leading role on forest matters in the UN system;
 - vi. regularly update Members on the development of initiatives in the forest sector in which FAO participates, including the internal cross-sectoral initiative on 'Transforming food systems to feed the planet without deforestation', the System-wide Working Group to Turn the Tide on Deforestation and a possible initiative on forest foods, and consult Members.
 - c. encouraged Members to integrate their priorities in forestry in post COVID-19 recovery plans and in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Item 10)

52. The Committee elected Mr León Jorge Castaños of Mexico as Chairperson of the 26th Session of the Committee on Forestry.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Item 11)

53. In order to enable the Programme and Finance Committees to take into consideration the report of the Committee and to submit its recommendations to the Council, the Committee recommended that its next session be held in 2022 and suggested that the final date be decided by the FAO Secretariat in consultation with the COFO Steering Committee, following review of the FAO Calendar of Governing Body Sessions for the next biennium by the Council.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT (Item 12)

54. The Committee adopted the Report as amended by consensus.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION (Item 13)

55. The Chairperson closed the session at 19:30 hours on Friday, 9 October 2020, thanking Ms. Christine Farcy, Vice Chairperson, for chairing a number of sessions as well as Mr Yusuf Serengil, Vice Chairperson, for chairing some sessions of the Friends of the Chair's Group.

APPENDIX A**AGENDA**

1. Opening of the Session
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Designation of the Drafting Committee
4. The World's Forests in 2020
 - 4.1 State of the World's Forests 2020: Forests, biodiversity and people
 - 4.2 Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020: Key findings and ways forward including digitalization
5. Forests and Biodiversity
6. Forests: Nature-based Solutions for Climate Change
7. Forests and their Role in Transforming Food Systems
 - 7.1 Transforming Agriculture and Food Systems: Halting deforestation and promoting sustainable production and consumption of forest products
 - 7.2 UN Decades: Family Farming and Ecosystem Restoration
8. Progress in Implementation
 - 8.1 Decisions and Recommendations of FAO Bodies of Interest to the Committee
 - 8.1.a Terms of Reference of the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture
 - 8.2 Report on Progress including the Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests
 - 8.3 Dialogue with Statutory Bodies in Forestry
9. Strategic Directions
 - 9.1 Food Systems Transformation and the UN Food Systems Summit
 - 9.2 Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition
 - 9.3 Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on Forestry for 2020-2023
 - 9.4 Preparations for the XV World Forestry Congress
 - 9.5 FAO's Work in Forestry under the Reviewed Strategic Framework
10. Election of Officers
11. Date and Place of the Next Session
12. Adoption of the Report
13. Closure of the Session

APPENDIX B**LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

Document symbol	Title
COFO/2020/1/Rev.1	Provisional Agenda
COFO/2020/4.1	State of the World's Forests 2020: Key messages
COFO/2020/4.2/Rev.1	Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020: Key findings and ways forward including digitalization
COFO/2020/5/Rev.2	Forests and biodiversity
COFO/2020/6	Forests: nature-based solutions for climate change
COFO/2020/7.1	Transforming agriculture and food systems: halting deforestation and promoting sustainable production and consumption of forest products
COFO/2020/7.2	UN Decades: family farming and ecosystem restoration: building back better, including in response to COVID-19
COFO/2020/8.1/Rev.1	Decisions and recommendations of FAO Governing Bodies of interest to the Committee
COFO/2020/8.1.a	International platform for digital food and agriculture - Terms of Reference
COFO/2020/8.2	Report on progress including the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests
COFO/2020/8.3/Rev.1	Dialogue with Statutory Bodies in Forestry
COFO/2020/9.1	Food systems transformation and the UN Food Systems Summit
COFO/2020/9.2	Vision and Strategy for FAO's work in Nutrition
COFO/2020/9.3	Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on Forestry for 2020-2023
COFO/2020/9.4	Preparations for the XV World Forestry Congress
COFO/2020/9.5	FAO's programme of work in Forestry under the reviewed Strategic Framework
Information documents	
COFO/2020/Inf.1	Provisional Timetable
COFO/2020/Inf.2	List of Documents
COFO/2020/Inf.3	List of Participants
COFO/2020/Inf.4	Statement of Competence and Voting Rights Submitted by the European Union (EU) and its Member States
COFO/2020/Inf.5	Report on COVID-19 Forestry Webinar Week, 22-25 June

- COFO/2020/Inf.6 Financial and technical implications of elaborating an assessment of global forest resources, comparing the positive and negative aspects of a two year and five year cycle
- COFO/2020/Inf.7 Position paper on “Ecosystem restoration” of production ecosystems, in the context of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030

*APPENDIX C***MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

- Afghanistan
- Algeria
- Angola
- Argentina
- Armenia
- Australia
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Bahamas
- Bangladesh
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Bhutan
- Bolivia
(Plurinational State of)
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Cabo Verde
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Chad
- Chile
- China
- Colombia
- Congo
- Costa Rica
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Croatia
- Cuba
- Cyprus
- Czechia
- European Union
(Member Organization)
- Finland
- France
- Gabon
- Gambia
- Georgia
- Germany
- Ghana
- Greece
- Guatemala
- Guinea
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Hungary
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran (Islamic Republic of)
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Jamaica
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Kuwait
- Latvia
- Lebanon
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Libya
- Lithuania
- Nicaragua
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Philippines
- Poland
- Portugal
- Republic of Korea
- Republic of Moldova
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- San Marino
- Sao Tome and Principe
- Saudi Arabia
- Senegal
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Somalia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Suriname
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Thailand
- Tunisia
- Turkey
- Uganda
- Ukraine

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- Democratic People's Republic of Korea
 - Democratic Republic of the Congo
 - Djibouti
 - Dominican Republic
 - Ecuador
 - Egypt
 - El Salvador
 - Equatorial Guinea
 - Eritrea
 - Estonia
 - Ethiopia
 - Madagascar
 - Malaysia
 - Mali
 - Mauritania
 - Mexico
 - Morocco
 - Mozambique
 - Myanmar
 - Namibia
 - Netherlands
 - New Zealand
 - United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
 - United Republic of Tanzania
 - United States of America
 - Uruguay
 - Uzbekistan
 - Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
 - Viet Nam
 - Yemen
 - Zambia
 - Zimbabwe

APPENDIX D**AMENDMENTS TO THE MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY FOR 2020-2023**

These amendments refer to Document COFO/2020/9.3 'Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on Forestry for 2020-2023'

- In paragraph 8, add a new bullet to the “working methods”: “Inter-sessional work of the Steering Committee periodically reported to Rome-based delegations, and consultations arranged”. The reporting and/or consultations could be virtual, either by videoconference or e-mail, in order to minimize costs;
- In paragraph 13, add a new bullet to the “working methods”: “Activities periodically reported to Rome-based delegations, and inter-sessional consultations arranged”;
- In paragraph 15, on “indicators and targets”, add the following at the end of the last bullet: “and reporting and/or consulting with Rome-based delegations, in order to improve inclusiveness”;
- In paragraph 16, on “outputs”, add the following at the end of the last bullet: “available to all COFO Members”;
- In paragraph 18, on “working methods”, add at the end of the last sentence “in consultation with COFO Members.”

*APPENDIX E***High-Level Dialogue on Turning the Tide on Deforestation**

Ms Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General of FAO, opened the session. The moderator, Mr Tim Christophersen, Coordinator of the Nature for Climate Branch at the United Nations Environment Programme, introduced the speakers: The Right Honourable Lord Zac Goldsmith, Minister of State, Minister for Pacific and the Environment of the United Kingdom; His Excellency Virginijus Sinkevičius, EU Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries; His Excellency Alue Dohong, Vice Minister of Environment and Forestry, Republic of Indonesia; Her Excellency Jeanne Ilunga Zaina, Vice Minister, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Ms Ester Asin, Director, European Policy Office, WWF International; Mr Justin Adams, Executive Director, Tropical Forest Alliance - World Economic Forum; Mr German Velasquez, Director, Division of Mitigation and Adaptation, Green Climate Fund; and Ms Mette Wilkie, Director of the Forestry Division of FAO.

The High-level dialogue underlined the crucial role of forests in tackling climate change, achieving ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions and preventing further loss of biodiversity. Speakers called for concerted action by governments, the private sector and civil society to achieve transformational change in food systems and promote sustainable agricultural value chains that halt deforestation. They highlighted the potential of regulatory and voluntary action in consumer and producer countries to effect national and global impact by influencing forest management, and the legal and sustainable production and trade of forest and agricultural products. The dialogue noted the critical role of women, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities in sustainable forest and land management. Social forestry and forest restoration were identified as key strategies for poverty reduction and employment generation. Speakers pointed to the opportunity of post COVID-19 recovery plans and investments to pave the way towards transformational change.

The dialogue recognized that regulatory actions and due diligence requirements in consumer countries should be paired with strong partnerships and technical and financial support to producer countries. Speakers noted the significant increase in private sector interest in forests and commitments to reduce deforestation from their supply chains: Governments could capitalise on this momentum and mobilize investment at scale by strengthening governance, tenure and integrated landscape planning with all stakeholders, and by enabling markets for sustainable food and agroforestry products and environmental services. The dialogue noted the importance of leveraging domestic and international public finance, including REDD+ results-based payments, to fund priority actions to halt deforestation and to mobilise greater flows of private finance.

Speakers called on FAO to support countries to accelerate innovation and investment to address the drivers of deforestation, and to mobilise climate finance. The dialogue recognized FAO's co-leadership of the UN system efforts to reduce deforestation, its longstanding support to countries to halt deforestation through the flagship UN-REDD and FLEGT programmes, and its emerging work to transform food systems to feed the planet without deforestation and partner with the private sector. Speakers reiterated the importance of building upon this dialogue to ensure the prominent consideration of deforestation in the UN Food Systems Summit, the UNFCCC COP26 and CBD COP15, as well as the UN Decade of action to deliver the SDGs and the UN Decades on Family Farming and on Ecosystem Restoration.

25th Anniversary High-Level Dialogue on Forests in the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals - and beyond

Mr Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme, opened the session with a presentation to set the scene. The moderator, Mr Tony Simons, Director-General, World Agroforestry (ICRAF), introduced the speakers: Ms Beth MacNeil, Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Forest Service, Natural Resources, Mr León Jorge Castaños, General Director, Mexico's National Forestry Commission, Ms Carina Håkansson, Chairperson, FAO's Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries, Ms Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Coordinator, Association of Peul Women and Autochthonous Peoples of Chad (AFPAT) and Mr Khaled al Manaseer, Head of Biodiversity Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Jordan.

The session gathered insights and guidance on how forestry can address current and emerging issues, responding to societal needs and development ambitions, using the Decade of Action to drive necessary change. Celebrating the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry, panellists reflected on past challenges where forestry contributed to the solution; on future challenges looking 25 years ahead and how transformational change can be driven through the Decade of Actions.

According to speakers, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires halting deforestation, protecting intact forests and restoring degraded forest landscapes – and an upsurge of action by communities, forest industries and responsible businesses provides the best hope of doing so. They referred to the “quadruple planetary emergency”, comprising a climate crisis, a nature crisis, an inequality crisis and now a global health crisis, and emphasized that forests need to be placed at front and centre while tackling these interlinked crises.

Speakers stressed that indigenous peoples and the forests they rely on are already feeling the impacts of climate change. Chad, for example, has lost nearly one-third of its forest cover in the last 20 years, and the country is struggling with increased desertification and a dramatically shrinking Lake Chad. Worldwide, indigenous peoples are suffering from droughts, floods and increased temperatures, and communities are going hungry. On the other hand, indigenous peoples play crucial roles in protecting forests, and ensuring their rights and learning from them will help save the planet. The situation is also critical in Jordan, where forests are vital for the ecosystem services they perform and the safety net they offer to vulnerable communities, including during the Syrian refugee crisis.

The biggest challenge for Canada's forest sector today is responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial concern has been to ensure the health and safety of forestry workers and their communities. Nevertheless, the pandemic offers an opportunity to reimagine the sector, which can be a major part of the solution in supporting a green, inclusive economic recovery. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a huge impact on forests and forest-dependent people in Mexico, speakers reiterated that the forest is a living matter, which needs to be protected by protecting the people living in it and to give them their proper rights.

It was highlighted that the world will need more forests for many reasons, including to increase the supply of sustainably produced wood as an alternative to many of the fossil-fuel based products we currently rely on. Speakers concluded that, although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused health, social and economic havoc around the world, it also offers an opportunity to pursue sustainable, climate-smart recovery plans.