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# LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

## THIRTY-SECOND SESSION

6 - 10 September 2021

## RESTORATION OF FORESTS AND OTHER ECOSYSTEMS

### Executive Summary

The restoration of degraded ecosystems, including degraded forests, is vital in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals - particularly those related to climate change, poverty eradication, food security, water and biodiversity conservation - and contributes considerably to achieving the Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030. It is also a pillar of several international environmental conventions, such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Rio Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification.

In terms of productive agri-food systems, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration provides a unique opportunity to transform food, fibre and feed production systems to the needs of the 21st century, and to eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition through effective and innovative landscapes and seascapes management. In this regard, the restoration of forest landscapes, farming, livestock and fish-producing ecosystems should primarily contribute to restoring these ecosystems to a healthy and stable state, so that they are able to support human needs for sustainable food production and livelihoods. The ultimate objective of these restorative efforts should be to reverse the trend in many unsustainable agricultural systems, optimizing the ecological interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment, while leaving no-one behind.

Investments in forest and landscape restoration could significantly contribute to economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by creating green jobs, generating incomes, improving human health, and increasing food security at multiple scales.

This document provides an update on the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) and on forest landscape restoration initiatives at global and regional level with a specific focus on Latin America and the Caribbean. It further outlines FAO's support and relevant activities in the region.

### Suggested action by the Commission

The Commission may wish to invite countries to:

- Actively engage in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) by strengthening forest and landscape restoration activities for both production and protection purposes and ensuring that such activities support economic recovery from COVID-19;
- Implement the “*Action Plan for the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean*”<sup>1</sup> developed within the framework of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) and adopted by the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. Consider inclusion of restoration in their national sustainable development strategies, nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement, REDD+ strategies and national COVID-19 recovery plans.

The Commission may wish to request FAO to:

- Provide technical support, to enhance enabling conditions and support on-site restoration of degraded ecosystems;
- Further develop and share good practices and provide advice to support forest and landscape restoration actions and the use of the tools and methodologies, to help countries to scale up their efforts and monitor progress;
- Support national partners in Latin American to access funding for forest and landscape restoration from bilateral or multilateral financial instruments.

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## I. Introduction

1. Latin America and the Caribbean, the region with one of the world’s largest and most biodiverse forest ecosystems, reported in the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020 (FRA 2020)<sup>1</sup>, an area of 940 million hectares of forests, and an alarming rate of deforestation resulting in an average net loss of 2.7 million hectares of forest per year in the period 2015–2020. Agriculture, infrastructure development, and mining have been identified as the main drivers of deforestation<sup>2</sup>.

2. On a global scale, about 20 percent of the Earth’s vegetated surface shows declining trends in productivity<sup>3</sup>. By 2050, degradation and climate change could reduce crop yields between 9 and 21 percent<sup>4</sup> and by up to 50 percent in certain regions<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> FRA open database: <http://www.fao.org/forest-resources-assessment/en/>

<sup>2</sup> FAO and UNEP. 2020. *The State of the World’s Forests 2020. Forests, biodiversity and people*. Rome. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8642en>

<sup>3</sup> The Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) 2011. *A World of Opportunity*. World Resources Institute, South Dakota State University and IUCN. Authored by Minnemeyer, S., Laestadius, L., Sizer, N., Saint-Laurent, C. and Potapov, P.

<sup>4</sup> FAO, 2009. High Level Expert Forum – How to Feed the World in 2050. Office of the Director, Agricultural Development Economics Division. Rome, Italy. 4p.

<sup>5</sup> Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services, 2018. Summary for policymakers of the thematic assessment report on land degradation and restoration. Available at: <https://ipbes.net/assessment-reports/ldr>

3. Ecosystem restoration is vital in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - particularly those that apply to climate change, poverty eradication, food security, water and biodiversity conservation - and can contribute considerably to achieving several Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030. It is also a pillar of several international environmental conventions, such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Rio Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification.

4. Forest and landscape restoration (FLR)<sup>6</sup>, a process that aims to regain ecological functionality and enhance human well-being in deforested or degraded landscapes, has emerged as a key element in strategies to meet this challenge, encompassing efforts to address land management, biodiversity conservation, and climate change. FLR is a means of regaining, improving, and maintaining vital ecological and social functions of forested landscapes. In the long term, this can lead to more resilient and sustainable landscapes<sup>7</sup>.

5. In FAO's Common Vision on Sustainable Food and Agriculture and SDG2<sup>8</sup>, restoration and sustainable management play a fundamental role in productive ecosystems and landscapes. In this regard, the restoration of productive forest landscapes, farming, livestock and fish-producing ecosystems should primarily contribute to restoring these ecosystems to a healthy and stable state, so that they are able to support human needs for sustainable food production and livelihoods. The ultimate objective of these restorative efforts should be to reverse the trend in many unsustainable agricultural systems and optimize the ecological interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment, while leaving no-one behind<sup>9</sup>.

## II. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030

6. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, declared by the UN General Assembly on 1 March 2019<sup>10</sup>, aims at “supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration.”

7. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and FAO were asked to lead the implementation of the Decade and have consulted widely with Members, UN entities, Non-governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, the private sector and youth organizations to develop an implementation strategy, which was published in September 2020.

8. The overarching vision for the Decade is a world where – for the health and well-being of all life on Earth and that of future generations – the relationship between humans and nature has been restored, where the area of healthy ecosystems is increasing, and where ecosystem loss, fragmentation, and degradation has been ended<sup>11</sup>. The Decade will help countries confront the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss and open new avenues, including through forest and landscape restoration.

9. The Strategy includes a call to action to protect and restore ecosystems through a global movement (#GenerationRestoration). It aims to combine political support, science, and financial resources to massively scale up restoration from successful pilot initiatives to areas of millions of

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<sup>6</sup> The Global partnership on forest and landscape restoration. What is FLR?. Available at: <https://www.forestlandscaperestoration.org/what-is-flr/>

<sup>7</sup> Besseau, P., Graham, S. and Christophersen, T. (eds.), 2018. Restoring forests and landscapes: the key to a sustainable future. Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration, Vienna, Austria.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>

<sup>9</sup>

FAO 2020. Position paper on “Ecosystem Restoration” of production ecosystems, in the context of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030. Committee on Forestry. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/nd651en/nd651en.pdf>,

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1182090/icode/>

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Environmental Programme and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration: Strategy. Available at: <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/strategy>

hectares by expanding and replicating current efforts and catalysing action to meet existing global restoration goals under several global and regional initiatives, for example, the Bonn Challenge, and the regional initiative 20x20 in Latin America.

10. Restoration of degraded forest ecosystems can help mitigate and adapt to climate change, conserve biodiversity and water resources and combat desertification. Investments in forest and landscape restoration can also significantly contribute to economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by creating green jobs, generating incomes, improving human health, and increasing food security at multiple scales.

11. At the global level, FAO is leading two task forces on monitoring progress and on collection and dissemination of good practices. The task force on monitoring<sup>12</sup> is a collective of over 270 practitioners and monitoring experts from 100 organizations, who guide the development of the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring (FERM<sup>13</sup>). The FERM aims to improve data access and transparency and is a key delivery mechanism at global, regional, and national levels for capitalizing on state of the art tools and platforms in support of fit-for-purpose monitoring systems. The task force on best practices focuses on shaping the knowledge component of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, including capacity development efforts and capitalization as well as sharing and dissemination of good practices for restoration in all ecosystems. It already has developed a set of ecosystem restoration principles, a knowledge and learning plan (based on a global capacity needs assessment online survey) and a framework to collect good restoration practices.

12. At the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (1-2 February 2021), a regional joint action plan for the Decade, prepared with support by FAO and UNEP, was presented and approved. In alignment with the global strategy of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration<sup>14</sup>, this action plan is structured along three pathways of change: (1) Generating a regional movement that engages society in ecosystem restoration, (2) fostering the political will so that decision-makers in public and private entities champion restoration, and (3) catalyzing research and development to ensure there is technical capacity to restore ecosystems at the relevant scale.

13. In Brazil, the framework of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration has led to the development of a joint programme building on state commitments towards the Decade, supported by eight UN organizations led by UNEP and FAO. The programme will soon be signed by "Amazonia Legal", the conjunction of the nine Brazilian states with Amazon forest and covering half the area of Brazil. The nine amazon states are: Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Maranhão, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima and Tocantins.

### **III. Forest and landscape restoration global and regional initiatives**

14. Several international initiatives are helping to raise awareness of the importance of forest and landscape restoration. Some of these related to LAC are:

#### **A. The Bonn Challenge**

15. The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes into restoration by 2030. It was launched in 2011 by the Government of Germany and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and later endorsed and extended by the New York Declaration on Forests at the 2014 UN Climate Summit.

16. Underlying the Bonn Challenge is the FLR approach, which aims to restore ecological integrity while improving human well-being through multifunctional landscapes. To date, 210 million

<sup>12</sup> The Monitoring Task Force established in support to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration: <http://www.fao.org/3/cb0424en/cb0424en.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> FERM platform: <https://data.apps.fao.org/ferm/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/strategy>

hectares have been pledged worldwide under the Bonn Challenge<sup>15</sup>. Africa represents 62 percent of these national pledges through its African Restoration Initiative with a total of nearly 130 million hectares and Latin America represents 17 percent with a total of more than 35 million hectares pledged through its Initiative 20x20.

### **B. The Initiative 20x20**

17. The Initiative 20x20<sup>16</sup> started as a country-led effort seeking to change the dynamics of land degradation in Latin America and the Caribbean by bringing 20 million hectares of degraded land into restoration by 2020. The initiative - launched formally at the COP 20 in Lima - supports the Bonn Challenge and the New York Declaration on Forests.

18. The Initiative 20x20 is now led by 17 countries<sup>17</sup> in Latin America and the Caribbean who now aim to protect and restore 50 million hectares of forest farms, pasture, and other landscapes by 2030.

19. The initiative, a regional partnership, is supported by more than 40 technical organizations and institutions, and a coalition of impact investors and private funds deploying USD 2.5 billion in private investment. The initiative's Secretariat is led by the World Resources Institute (WRI).

## **IV. FAO support for forest and landscape restoration globally and in Latin America**

20. To respond to the international commitments, FAO has significantly increased its support to forest and landscape restoration by bringing experiences, technical know-how, and innovative tools to promote ecosystem restoration and land use planning through the continued work on agroecology, rangeland and grassland management, ecosystem services, soil health, legume integration<sup>18</sup>.

21. FAO is involved in several forest and landscape restoration initiatives in collaboration with a number of different partners. Through the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM)<sup>19</sup>, FAO supports scaling up, monitoring, and reporting of the restoration of forests and other degraded land, particularly at country level. Twenty countries are receiving targeted support from the FLRM, and in LAC, Guatemala and Peru have been supported.

22. Country-level work focuses on governance, institutional support, and enabling environments; preparing national forest and landscape restoration plans; sustainable financing of FLR; and pilot actions focused on the implementation of innovative models.

23. At the regional level, FLRM is involved with the Initiative 20x20 in Latin America and the AFR100 in Africa. It also plays a leading role in facilitating the preparation of a regional strategy and action plan on FLR in Asia and the Pacific and in framing the restoration agenda in the Mediterranean region. These regional initiatives aim to facilitate the implementation of national commitments, by improving knowledge sharing on good practices; financial resources mobilization; capacity development; and FLR monitoring.

24. FLRM at global level contributes to several initiatives in collaboration with other members of the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration, such as: capitalization of knowledge

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<sup>15</sup> Bonn Challenge website (<https://www.bonnchallenge.org/>)

<sup>16</sup> Initiative 20x20 website: <https://initiative20x20.org/>

<sup>17</sup> Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, el Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay

<sup>18</sup> FAO 2020. Position paper on "Ecosystem Restoration" of production ecosystems, in the context of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030. Committee on Forestry. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/nd651en/nd651en.pdf>,

<sup>19</sup> The Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM), was established by FAO to help countries meet the Bonn Challenge commitments, the Aichi Targets and other internationally agreed initiatives/efforts on forest-related goals and targets. It is funded by the governments of France, Germany, Republic of Korea and Sweden and by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) See: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/background/en/>

through multiple knowledge platforms and several Communities of Practices; publication of several FLR knowledge products (e.g. Unasylva issues 245 “Forest and Landscape Restoration” and 252 “Restoring the Earth”, Forestry Working Papers, e-learning courses, restoration principles) and advice on sustainable financing and monitoring.

25. The initiative Action Against Desertification (AAD)<sup>20</sup> has been supporting restoration efforts in Haiti, six African countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal) and Fiji. This initiative was formulated to tackle desertification as a means of increasing the sustainable management of vital natural resources, combating hunger and improving resilience to climate change in OACPS countries.

26. AAD’s interventions and activities focus on creating an enabling environment and building capacities to manage land and forests sustainably. A total of 46 workshops and training sessions on restoration were carried out through Farmer Field Schools in Haiti, benefiting almost 10 000 farmers.

27. Through the AAD 11 645 ha of land was restored in Haiti and almost 13 000 people benefited from these activities. Roughly 12 000 jobs in seedling production and manual restoration were created. Non-timber forest products developed for income generation included crop and restoration seeds and honey.

28. Forest and landscape restoration requires reliable data for planning, implementation, reporting, and evaluation of progress at the global, regional, national, sub-national, and local levels. In recent years, governments and international organizations and initiatives, including FAO and the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD), have invested significant financial resources in the consolidation of National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS<sup>21</sup>). It is recommended that these systems be strengthened to include data collection from forest restoration efforts, rather than promoting independent monitoring structures. To this end FAO has prepared a document on “Integrating forest and landscape restoration monitoring into national forest monitoring systems” to be launched in the second half of 2021. The document is partially based on lessons learned in the LAC region and includes case studies from Colombia and Guatemala.

29. In addition, FAO has been working to develop funding for projects focusing on restoration, several of which have received support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). As for the Green Climate Fund (GCF), FAO has been assisting Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala and Paraguay since 2019 to mobilize USD 128 million with a cofinancing of USD 275 million for sustainable forest and land management, reforestation, or agroforestry. FAO also supported Argentina, Chile and Colombia to mobilize USD 173.8 million for results-based payments<sup>22</sup>. Regarding resources mobilized in the region from the seventh GEF replenishment, projects in seven countries have been designed and approved since 2019 with the main focus on sustainable forest and land management, conservation, reforestation, or avoiding deforestation for a total of USD 33.7 million for the Bolivia (Plurinational State of) Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/en/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/i6767e/i6767e.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> see FO: LACFC/2021/5 for more details on RBP