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COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

Twenty-seventh Session

Rome, 22–26 July 2024

Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on Forestry 2024–2027

Executive summary

Following the recommendation of the 26th Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO 26), this document presents the Committee's approach and working method to achieve its objectives in 2024–2027, with the planning cycle fully aligned with other FAO Technical Committees.

The document further informs the Committee on progress in implementing the Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on Forestry (MYPOW) 2020–2023 covering the full period between COFO 26 and COFO 27.

Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- a. review the progress in implementing the MYPOW 2020–2023 and the full period between COFO 26 and COFO 27; and
- b. review and adopt the MYPOW 2024–2027 as outlined in Section III of the document.

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I. Background

1. The Committee on Forestry (COFO) adopted its Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2020–2023 at its 25th Session in October 2020 (COFO 25). The MYPOW was subsequently endorsed by the 165th Session of the FAO Council and the 42nd Session of the FAO Conference. The Secretariat reported on the implementation of the MYPOW 2020–2023 at COFO 26 (COFO/2022/7.3), the 171st Session of the FAO Council and the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference.
2. At its 26th Session, the Committee welcomed the adjustment of the MYPOW 2020–2023 based on the request made at the 25th Session of the COFO, and the progress in implementing the MYPOW 2020–2023, as well as the efforts of the Committee and FAO towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. At its 26th Session, the Committee also recommended aligning the planning cycle of its MYPOW with those of the other Technical Committees (TCs) starting in 2024, to facilitate cross-sectoral work among the TCs. Accordingly, this document provides the new draft MYPOW 2024–2027.
4. The Secretariat provides regular updates to the Committee and its Steering Committee, the Council and the Conference. This document also provides a progress report on the implementation of the MYPOW 2020–2023, as well as on actions taken in 2024, to inform on all activities between COFO 26 and COFO 27. In addition, a complete report on actions undertaken in response to the recommendations of COFO 26 can be found in document COFO/2024/INF/5.

II. Progress report on the Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on Forestry 2020–2023: results for 2022–2023 and 2024

A. Strategy, priority setting and budget planning

5. The Committee held its 26th Session from 3 to 7 October 2022 in a hybrid format, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated public health concerns and constraints.
6. With a view to addressing global and emerging challenges, and advising its Members and FAO on appropriate actions, the Committee held substantive discussions on matters related to:
 - a. *The State of the World's Forests 2022: Forest pathways for green recovery and building inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies.*¹
 - b. Forests and sustainable production of wood and non-wood forest products: meeting demands and supporting resilient local economies.
 - c. Agriculture and forestry linkages.
 - d. Forest solutions for combating climate change, including:
 - i. the Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022–2031; and
 - ii. forests fires and the Global Fire Management Hub.
 - e. Progress in implementation, including on:
 - i. the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and its 2021–23 Action Plan;
 - ii. the Global Forest Resources Assessment and Remote Sensing Survey 2021–2022;
 - iii. finance and investment in forest pathways; and
 - iv. restoration and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030;
 - f. Dialogue with Statutory Bodies in Forestry.

¹ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en?details=cb9360en>

- g. Outcomes of the XV World Forestry Congress.
 - h. Implementing the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and strengthening FAO's contribution to the international arrangements on forests, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the mid-term review in 2024.
 - i. Development of regional action plans for the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy (2022–2025).
7. The report of the 26th Session of the COFO is available on the FAO website.²

B. Intersessional activities

8. During the intersessional period, the COFO Secretariat and the COFO Steering Committee conducted the following activities:

a. Steering Committee meetings

The COFO Steering Committee³ held two virtual meetings, on 16 January 2023 and 16 June 2023, and one hybrid meeting on 15 December 2023 to guide intersessional activities, monitor progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the 26th Session, and to prepare the agenda for the 27th Session of the COFO. The draft provisional agenda for the 27th Session was prepared through a consultative process with contributions from the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs), Steering Committee members, FAO Regional Offices and the Forestry Division, under the overall guidance of the Chairperson of the 27th Session and the Steering Committee. The draft provisional agenda was approved by the FAO Director-General on 21 February 2024 and consulted on with the Chairperson of the 27th Session of the COFO.

b. Briefing sessions for Members

Following the Committee's request to regularly update COFO Members on the development of initiatives in the forest sector in which FAO participates, FAO organized briefing sessions for Members through their permanent representations. On 26 January 2024, an informal briefing was held on the development of the FAO Forestry Roadmap – From Vision to Action 2024–2031. Briefings for FAO regional groups were also held: Africa on 16 November 2023, Europe on 21 February 2024, the Southwest Pacific on 14 March 2024, North America on 25 March 2024, GRULAC on 18 April 2024, and the Near East on 30 April 2024.

c. Linkages between forestry and agriculture and collaboration with the Committee on Agriculture

At its 164th and 165th Sessions, the FAO Council requested that FAO “showcase and promote existing and complementary practices between agriculture activities and the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of forests, avoiding deforestation and maintaining ecosystem services, noting that agriculture and forestry can synergistically support sustainable development.”⁴ It also suggested that COFO “review the drivers of the expansion of agricultural land in the light of sustainable forest management,” and “requested strengthening coordination between COFO and the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) on cross-sectoral matters and recommended that future papers dealing with interrelated issues between agriculture and forests be presented to both the COFO and the COAG.”

Following this recommendation, both TCs addressed agriculture–forestry linkages as a joint item at COFO 26⁵ and COAG 28.⁶ The conclusions of the discussions were presented to the FAO Council at its 171st Session in December 2022, which endorsed them and provided further guidance.⁷

² The COFO 26 Report (COFO/2022/REP) is available on <https://www.fao.org/3/nk728en/nk728en.pdf> and for more information, see <https://www.fao.org/events/detail/cofo-26/en>

³ <https://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsbhome/committee-fo/gsb-cofo-officers/en/>

⁴ CL 165 Report: <https://www.fao.org/3/ne381en/ne381en.pdf>

⁵ COFO 26 Report: <https://www.fao.org/3/nk728en/nk728en.pdf>

⁶ COAG 28 Report: <https://www.fao.org/3/nj925en/nj925en.pdf>

⁷ CL 171 Report: <https://www.fao.org/3/nl148en/nl148en.pdf>

In early 2023, the COAG Bureau and the COFO Steering Committee agreed to an Intersessional Roadmap on Agriculture and Forestry Linkages Towards COFO 27 and COAG 29 (2024)⁸ as part of the COAG–COFO collaboration on agriculture and forestry, which also reflects the joint work conducted by the COAG Sub-Committee on Livestock (COAG-LI) and the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems.⁹

The collaboration led to the organization of a COFO and COAG Special Joint Event¹⁰ on agriculture–forestry linkages at the 174th Session of the FAO Council held on 7 December 2023. This collaboration was underpinned by the participation of the COAG and COFO Chairpersons and Secretaries in the Committee’s other Bureau, sub-Committee and Working Group meetings, and continuous close information exchange.

For the first time, the COFO 27 Steering Committee and the COAG 29 Bureau met on agriculture–forestry linkages and had in-depth discussions on the joint agenda item to be presented to the 27th Session of the COFO and 29th Session of the COAG in 2024. The participants in the meeting received updates on COAG–COFO collaboration on forestry–agriculture linkages, on the implementation of the intersessional roadmap towards COFO 27 and COAG 29 and provided strategic guidance on possible agenda items at the upcoming sessions of the COFO and the COAG.

Based on these recommendations, a further joint item on addressing cross-sectoral and interrelated issues for “Scaling up actions on agriculture and forestry linkages” is presented to COAG 29 and COFO 27, with the aim of highlighting opportunities for closer integration between the agricultural and forest sectors to address global challenges, including ending hunger, halting deforestation, and combating climate change and biodiversity loss.

The scope of this joint item was reviewed by the COAG Bureau and the COFO Steering Committee, including at their joint meeting held on 14 December 2023, in consultation with the Secretariat, and this resulted in a related background document presented to COFO 27 in the document COFO/2024/3.

Furthermore, the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems and the COAG-LI have been jointly promoting agroforestry and silvopastoral systems as a major vehicle for empowering small-scale producers in drylands. At its Third Session, held on 11–13 September 2023 in Amman, Jordan,¹¹ the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems addressed agriculture–forestry linkages and underscored the importance of this joint work in enhancing coordinated responses to Members’ needs for integrated dryland management. Moreover, the Agenda of the Second Session of COAG-LI, to be held from 16 to 18 July 2024, includes the item “Forest and agriculture linkages: A path towards integrating forests, trees and livestock in dryland silvopastoral systems.”

Finally, all FAO RFCs considered forestry and agriculture at their recent sessions and acknowledged the importance of continuing this work further.

d. Collaboration between FAO Technical Committees

Since 2015, the FAO TCs have embarked on strengthening collaboration and coordination to respond to the recommendation of the evaluation of FAO Governing Bodies. This includes discussion of common topics during their respective sessions to enhance collaboration and to provide coordinated inputs to the FAO Council and Conference. On 31 January 2024 and on 30 April 2024, informal meetings of the Chairpersons of the TCs (FAO Committees on Forestry, Agriculture, Fisheries and Commodity Problems) were held and reconfirmed the continuing collaboration among the TCs. Joint meetings of COFO and COAG Chairpersons were held throughout the year to facilitate information sharing on agriculture–forestry linkages. A joint meeting of the Chairperson of the COAG-LI and the Chairperson of the

⁸ The roadmap is available from the Secretariat.

⁹ This Working Group was established by the 23rd Session of the Committee.

¹⁰ <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/agroforestry-is-a-key-climate-solution--director-general-says-at-fao-council-side-event/en>

¹¹ Report of the Third Session of the Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems: <https://www.fao.org/3/cc8197en/cc8197en.pdf>

COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems was held in June 2023, to facilitate information sharing and strengthen collaboration.

e. Input to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

In 2023, the Committee provided input to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) with the theme “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels.”¹² In 2024, the Committee provided input to the HLPF with the theme “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.” The COFO’s inputs were submitted both as part of FAO’s corporate summary report¹³ and the main recommendations from COFO 26,¹⁴ which include the following key messages:

- i. Concerning SDGs 1 and 2, No Poverty and Zero Hunger, the COFO highlighted ways to decouple growth in agricultural production from forest and biodiversity loss, keeping in mind the need to eradicate poverty and combat hunger, as well as the needs of developing countries in terms of financial assistance and capacity building. The Committee invited FAO and FAO Members to work collectively to halt forest loss and degradation, restore degraded lands and drylands, and enhance the sustainable management and use of forest resources, taking into account national priorities and circumstances, and to promote the important role of forests and their social, economic and environmental benefits, including as a contribution to achieving the SDGs and the Global Forest Goals.
- ii. Concerning SDG 13, Climate Action, the COFO recommended that FAO continue its support for strengthening the role of forest ecosystems in global climate policy, and support Members, upon their request, in developing their capacities for forest-related climate action, facilitating access to climate finance, and scaling up action on the ground. The Global Fire Management Hub launched by FAO and partners in 2023 will provide stronger support for the development of regional and national capacities in this area.
- iii. Concerning SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals, the COFO encouraged Members to provide resources to support the conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management of forests, and the development of sustainable forest value chains, particularly in developing countries, to enhance capacity building and technical and scientific cooperation, and recommended that FAO support Members in their efforts to access finance opportunities for forest-related actions. The Committee appreciated the work of FAO and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in supporting the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan on Forests. The partnership is currently comprised of 16 international organizations, institutions and secretariats that have substantial programmes on forests. The COFO further appreciated the work carried out by partners under the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire to reduce the reporting burden, enhance synergies and increase transparency of reporting processes and resulting data.

f. Consultation with the Regional Forestry Commissions

COFO 26 stressed the need for RFCs to have a more policy-relevant role in the FAO Regional Conferences, and invited FAO to support the integration of important regional forest-related matters and further improve the RFCs’ well-established mechanisms for technical and policy dialogues while also strengthening the RFCs’ cross-sectoral work, especially in forestry and agrifood systems. In close collaboration with the Executive Committees of the respective Commissions, FAO held discussions during the Commissions’ sessions and presented relevant

¹² HLPF submission for 2023 (summary of inputs from FAO governing bodies and other intergovernmental bodies and the COFO submission): <https://hlpf.un.org/inputs/food-and-agriculture-organization-of-the-United-Nations>

¹³ HLPF submission 2024 (summary of inputs from FAO governing bodies and other intergovernmental bodies and the COFO submission): <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2024/Inputs%20FAO%202024.pdf>

¹⁴ HLPF COFO 26 submission 2024: <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2024/Inputs%20COFO%202024.pdf>

activities for their consideration. More detailed information is presented in the document COFO/2024/6.5.

C. Advice on global policy and regulatory matters

9. The Committee presented its recommendations from the 26th Session to the FAO Conference in a timely manner. The recommendations were endorsed by the Conference at its 43rd Session held on 1–7 July 2023.

10. Close collaboration with and among the RFCs was maintained through the COFO Steering Committee, which also served as a platform for dialogue among the RFCs' Chairpersons. The Committee continued to provide guidance to the RFCs, including by recommending topics for their consideration and requesting the RFCs' inputs for consideration by the COFO. On this basis, the RFCs considered the following as common items:

- a. Overview of major global processes and initiatives, including the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the United Nations Forum on Forests, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP27, the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15, the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2025, the State of the World's Forests 2024, the XV World Forestry Congress and the Youth Call for Action, and the second World Forum on Urban Forests.
- b. Input to FAO governance, including the COFO, Regional Conferences, and FAO's programme of work in forestry.
- c. FAO forestry strategic planning, in preparation for the development of the FAO Forestry Roadmap – From Vision to Action 2024–2031.

D. Work planning and working methods

11. The Committee and the RFCs continued to maintain close coordination and worked with the Secretariat towards meeting calendars that allowed timely input to all relevant governing bodies.

12. Regular exchanges were held between the COFO secretary and the secretaries of the RFCs to support the development of agendas and documents for the different sessions. When requested, logistical support was provided to organize and conduct the sessions. Regular meetings were held with the secretaries of other TCs to enhance cooperation and coordination, and to further the implementation of the COFO's related recommendations.

III. Multiyear Programme of Work for the Committee on Forestry 2024–2027

A. Overall objectives for the Committee on Forestry for 2024–2027

13. The key functions of the Committee are unchanged: the Committee periodically reviews the situation of forests and forestry worldwide; advises the Council on matters pertaining to the priorities, programmes and budgets of the Organization and the Conference on global policy and regulatory matters; and provides guidance for its Members on promoting the sustainable management of the world's forests. The Committee collaborates closely with the six RFCs to facilitate policy and programme coordination between the global and regional levels, including through developing its agenda in close cooperation with them, and providing a forum for global and regional dialogue at its sessions. The Committee also maintains collaboration and coordinates closely with other TCs and pursues discussion of cross-cutting issues.

14. The Committee continues to increase the efficiency of its work, including through considering methods of operation that enable it to better react to emerging challenges and advise its Members and FAO.

B. Results for 2024–2027

Strategy, priority setting and budget planning

15. Result
 - a. The Committee's recommendations provide a solid basis for the Council's decisions on the Organization's priorities, programmes, general organizational structure and budgets for the forestry programme under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31.
16. Indicators and targets
 - a. Analyses of the global state of forests and forestry (The State of the World's Forests 2024 considered by COFO 27; the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2025 and the State of the World's Forests 2026 to be considered by COFO 28).
 - b. Key global and regional developments identified by the RFCs considered, and appropriate guidance provided.
 - c. Recommendations made in a timely manner to the FAO Council through the Programme and Finance Committees regarding FAO's priorities, programmes, organizational structure and budgets.
 - d. Recommendations relating to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31, the Medium Term Plan and the Programme of Work and Budget reflected in the Council reports.
 - e. Guidance on forestry issues taken up by other relevant bodies, including other TCs, Regional Conferences and RFCs, as well as non-FAO bodies, such as the United Nations Forum on Forests, as appropriate.
17. Output
 - a. Report of the Committee containing clear, precise and consensual recommendations on strategies, priorities, organizational structure, programmes and budgets for Members and Governing Bodies, as appropriate.
18. Activities
 - a. Review the world situation in the Committee's areas of mandate.
 - b. Address issues of high priority and emerging issues identified by the RFCs and the Steering Committee.
 - c. Review decisions and recommendations from other global and regional fora relevant to forests and their implications for Members and FAO.
 - d. Review decisions and recommendations from other FAO Governing and Statutory Bodies and sub-Committees.
 - e. Review the implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget in areas falling within the Committee's competence, with attention to provisions in forest-relevant key FAO strategic documents, including the FAO Forestry Roadmap – From Vision to Action 2024–2031 (under preparation at the time of drafting this document).
 - f. Formulate recommendations and guidance for areas pertinent to forests and forestry on strategies, priorities, organizational structure, programmes and budgets under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31.
19. Working methods
 - a. Close collaboration with the RFCs through their respective Chairpersons and the COFO Steering Committee, supported by the Secretariat.
 - b. Intersessional work of the COFO Steering Committee, review of progress and guidance for the preparation of the Committee's sessions.
 - c. Consideration of the outcomes of the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems.
 - d. Consideration of the outcomes of FAO Statutory Bodies in forestry.

- e. Collaboration with other relevant FAO Governing and Statutory Bodies, in particular with FAO TCs, contribute to formal and informal coordination mechanisms.
- f. Consultations and reporting on intersessional work of the Steering Committee periodically to Rome-based delegations.

Advice on global policy and regulatory matters

- 20. Result
 - a. The Committee's recommendations provide a sound basis for decisions by the FAO Conference on global policy and regulatory matters, as well as for decisions and actions by Members.
- 21. Indicators and targets
 - a. Clear, precise and consensual recommendations made in a timely manner to the Conference regarding global policy and regulatory matters in its areas of mandate.
 - b. Recommendations made on global policy and regulatory matters are reflected in the Conference Report.
 - c. Members and the RFCs benefit from the deliberations of the Committee, using its recommendations in developing national and regional policies.
 - d. Recommendations of the Committee taken up by other international fora, in particular the United Nations Forum on Forests, the Rio Conventions, governing bodies of other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the HLPF, as well as relevant regional processes and instruments, as appropriate.
- 22. Output
 - a. Clear, precise, consensual and actionable recommendations, for decision and appropriate action, for the Conference, for Members on policy and regulatory matters, and for other relevant international processes and instruments on policy measures pertaining to forests and forestry.
- 23. Activities
 - a. Consider the recommendations of RFCs, and other FAO Governing and Statutory Bodies.
 - b. Consider developments in relevant international processes and instruments pertaining to forests and forestry.
 - c. Identify and review new and emerging issues in areas pertaining to forests and forestry.
 - d. Develop recommendations and guidance, for areas falling within the Committee's competence, for the consideration of the Conference.
 - e. Formulate recommendations to support actions by Members and RFCs.
 - f. Provide input to other international processes and instruments, as appropriate.
- 24. Working methods
 - a. Consideration of global and regional trends in sectoral policies and regulations.
 - b. Liaison with FAO Governing Bodies as well as forestry and other relevant Statutory Bodies, and consideration of the outcomes of their deliberations.
 - c. Collaboration with the RFCs.
 - d. Regular contact between the Chairperson of the Committee and the Chairpersons of other relevant bodies, particularly the FAO TCs, as well as FAO Senior Management.
 - e. Activities periodically reported to Rome-based delegations, and intersessional consultations arranged.

Effective work planning

25. Result
 - a. The Committee works effectively and efficiently, in an action-oriented, inclusive way, according to an established workplan and improved working methods.
26. Indicators and targets
 - a. The Committee agendas are focused, and responsive also to emerging needs.
 - b. Agendas are coordinated with other TCs, as appropriate.
 - c. Committee reports are concise and contain specific, action-oriented recommendations to the Council, Conference and Members, as well as to other international processes as appropriate.
 - d. Regular review of progress by the Steering Committee in the intersessional period, and reporting or consulting, or both, with Rome-based delegations, in order to improve inclusiveness.
27. Outputs
 - a. Progress report on implementation at the COFO sessions.
 - b. Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on Forestry, to be adopted in 2024.
 - c. Progress report to the Council at its request and progress report on the Committee's work in 2023 and 2024.
 - d. Reports of Steering Committee meetings and coordination meetings with FAO TCs available to all COFO Members.
28. Activities
 - a. Develop draft agendas for the Committee through a consultative process with input from RFCs, and collaborate closely with other FAO TCs in coordinating agendas.
 - b. Search for new ways and innovative approaches to improve the efficiency of sessions; build strongly on opportunities offered by the World Forest Week to establish a proper balance between policy and technical dialogues.
 - c. Facilitate coordination with other Technical Committees, in particular with the COAG, on matters relating to agriculture–forestry linkages, as well as with the FAO Regional Conferences;
 - d. Regular review (at Committee sessions and during intersessional periods by the Steering Committee) of the status of implementation and assess the impact of the recommendations of the Committee.
 - e. Regular review of working methods, including through indicators and targets specified in the MYPOW.
 - f. Continue intersession coordination and collaboration with other TCs to appraise emerging challenges.

Working methods

29. The Committee shall have two sessions in 2024–2027. The Committee shall consider holding both sessions in conjunction with a World Forest Week. The Committee will continue to develop its working methods, including during intersessional periods, and to consider the role and extent of virtual events in consultation with COFO Members. Based on the positive experiences of recent past sessions, the Committee will continue applying written correspondence procedures to further increase the efficiency of sessions.
30. The Committee shall maintain close coordination with the RFCs, including in aligning agendas, identifying common items and developing meeting calendars to allow for timely input to the FAO Regional Conferences and the Committee.

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31. The Committee shall address the following standing items in its sessions:
- a. Adoption of the agenda.
 - b. Designation of the Drafting Committee.
 - c. The State of the World's Forests.
 - d. Progress in implementing the recommendations of past sessions of the Committee and other FAO Governing Bodies:
 - i. decisions and recommendations of FAO Bodies of interest to the Committee;
 - ii. progress in implementing the recommendations of the XX session of the Committee;
 - iii. Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on Forestry; and
 - iv. dialogue with FAO Statutory Bodies in Forestry.
 - e. FAO's work on forestry under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31.
 - f. Election of officers.
 - g. Date and place of the next session.
 - h. Adoption of the report.
32. Recommendations for specific issues for the agenda of the sessions will be developed by the Steering Committee, in consultation with Members, the RFCs and other TCs, with due consideration to the decisions of FAO Governing Bodies, as well as to developments in relevant international and regional processes and instruments relevant for forests and forestry.