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# INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON POPLARS AND OTHER FAST-GROWING TREES SUSTAINING PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## Twenty-seventh Session

**Bordeaux, 22 - 25 October 2024**

**Updates on the implementation of the IPC Strategy 2022-2032**

### Suggested action by the Commission

1. Building on the knowledge and experience accumulated by the IPC and the opportunities to provide robust contributions to climate change and the sustainable development goals emerging from its new strategy, the Commission may wish to:

- a) encourage the Working Party “Policy and Livelihood” to implement activities focused on streamlining the linkages between IPC and Members’ national governance arrangements to facilitate and strengthen country engagement with the IPC, in collaboration with the IPC Secretariat and the IPC Executive Committee, and report back to the Commission at its twenty-eighth Session;
- b) request all the IPC Working Parties to advance incorporation of fast-growing trees beyond poplars and willows in their activities, including through reaching out to other research networks and task-forces; and
- c) encourage Members to strengthen engagement with the IPC for knowledge exchange, technical collaboration, and policy dialogue, and promote the IPC work in international fora.

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## I. Background

1. The International Commission on Poplars and Other Fast-Growing Trees Sustaining People and the Environment (IPC) was founded in 1947 and established as a statutory body under the provisions of Article XIV of the FAO Constitution in 1967. A revised Convention of the IPC was endorsed by a Special Session of the Commission on 6 February 2019 and approved by the 41st Session of the FAO Conference on 29 June 2019, including the change of its name and mandate, then expanded to cover all fast-growing species. At its 26th Session in June 2021, hosted by Italy and held virtually, the Commission approved the IPC Strategy 2022-2032 with the following objectives:

- a) to foster innovation in land production systems and provide ecosystem services involving fast-growing trees;
- b) to comprehensively assess innovations to establish best practices for the management and utilization of fast-growing trees in rural and urban contexts;
- c) to make recommendations to interested countries, FAO, international initiatives, and working partners so that best practices in managing fast-growing trees achieve scale and effectively contribute to sustainable development; and
- d) to deepen partnerships and cooperation to more effectively achieve Objectives.

## II. Updates on Implementation of the IPC Strategy 2022-2032

2. The IPC has been diligently working to implement its strategy outlined for the period 2022-2032. This strategy aims to guide the commission's efforts in contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Global Forest Goals, the UN Decade of Family Farming, and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Notably, sustainably managed fast-growing trees are highlighted as crucial components in combatting deforestation and enhancing forest benefits.

3. The IPC 52nd Executive Committee meeting yielded several recommendations regarding the structure and governance of Working Parties (WPs). As a result of a consultative process, a new Working Party structure was approved.

4. The Working Party (WP) on “Genetic Resources” merges three previously individual WPs, namely “Taxonomy, nomenclature and registration,” “Domestication and conservation of genetic resources” and “Plant health, resilience to threats and climate change.” A closer cooperation between breeders and the experts in charge of the cultivar registers should ensure better maintenance of the current registers of poplars and willows and possible future registers for other genera. Genetics is also an important instrument to address resistance to biotic and abiotic stress factors, including threats posed by climate change.

5. The WP on “Sustainable livelihoods, land use, products and bioenergy” was partially refocused on “Production systems for the bioeconomy”. The broad range of wood-derived products will be best considered within a Bioeconomy framework that emphasizes the bio-based nature of wood, fibre and their chemical components as renewable materials that may replace many fossil-based industrial products.

6. The WP on “Communication and outreach” (formerly “Policy, communication and outreach”) is a cross-cutting Working Party that facilitates the work of the other WPs in reaching out to a broader

audience, outside the restricted scientific community. It provides the expertise necessary to bridge the communication gap that often exists between scientists and practitioners, an essential function to reach technicians, administrators, advisors, farmers, and possible new IPC members. Thus, Policy moved from the mandate of the previous WP to a new Working Party on “Policy and livelihood” dedicated to the analysis and development of policies favoring the use of fast-growing trees to the benefit of rural communities and the improvement of the integration of National Commissions in the activities of the IPC.

7. Finally, urban forestry was added to the scope of the Working Party on “Environmental and ecosystem services” with no need to modify the denomination of the existing WP that already deals with agroforestry, ecosystem services, bioremediation, among others.

8. The new structure should cater for a stronger role of the IPC mandate in supporting the sustainable provision of wood and ecosystem services and building on the experience and the lessons learned on poplars and willows to advance knowledge and policy on other fast-growing species in forestry and agroforestry systems.

9. The IPC has enhanced its collaboration with other organizations and initiatives while also engaging with countries not yet members of the Commission. In this context, in September 2022, the IPC co-organized with FAO and the TreeDivNet, a global research network on planted forests, the workshop “Management of mixed and pure planted forests: Stock-taking of science and practice” to review the state of the art in the management of mixed and pure planted forests.

10. IPC also collaborated with FAO and other partners to publish the brief “How Can Fast-Growing Trees Optimize Agroforestry Benefits?”, launched in 2023, and contributed to the development of Unasylva #254: Towards more resilient and diverse planted forests, in close collaboration with FAO and a variety of partners, as a contribution to the IUFRO taskforce on resilient planted forests. Furthermore, the IPC participated in international events such as the Latin American Forest Congress (CONFLAT) in Mendoza, Argentina, in February 2023, the International Conference on Planted Forests (ICPF), held in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2023, and hosted the session “Fast growing trees in support of sustainable bioeconomy” during the IUFRO World Congress, in Stockholm, in June 2024.

### **III. Membership and governance**

11. The IPC has thirty-eight member countries, who joined the Commission before the reform of its mandate. As domestic governance for forest and agriculture issues has evolved, some countries have struggled to identify how to comply with the IPC Convention and ensure continuous contribution to the Commission. The Secretariat received consultations on challenges related to issues such as the extinction of the national poplar commissions and decentralization or transfer of IPC-related work to private actors; identification of national focal points; excessive reporting burden and alignment with other global reporting exercises; reduction on termination of national work on poplars, and lack of clarity on the work on other fast-growing species under the Commission.

12. The seventeen countries reporting to the Commission in the context of its twenty-seventh Session provide examples of how to address some of the issues above. Such examples suggest that a systematic assessment and review of these experiences could support the current and future membership of the IPC. Furthermore, assessment of the results of the activities undertaken in collaboration with other international initiatives could shed light on optimal ways to build on the accumulated experience on poplars and willows to consolidate the IPC as a reference to other fast-growing trees.

13. The IPC is the only country-led international platform focused on science and policy for planted forests and trees. However, the number of reporting countries has declined. With the recognition of the pivotal role of fast-growing trees in addressing the climate crisis and accelerating the achievement of sustainable food systems and resilient societies, further clarifying the Commission governance structure and business model can contribute to more active participation of member countries, attraction of new members, support to countries, and collaboration with other platforms and initiatives.