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LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

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GLOBAL POLITICAL PROCESSES: UNITED NATIONS FORUM OF FORESTS, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, AND THE UNITED NATIONAL FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction to the global and regional forest-related policy context

1. A number of global legally binding treaties in force directly and indirectly address forests. The most relevant global legal instruments that have initiated action for forest-related policy-making are: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing serious Drought and /or Desertification, particularly in Africa (UNCCD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), the World Trade Agreement (WTA) with relevant protocols and annexes. They address issues ranging from forest-related trade and protection to biological diversity, climate change and desertification. Among these treaties, CITES and the World Trade Agreement (WTA) provide instruments to ensure that decisions regarding disputes or compliances are enforced in a strict sense through economic and/or political sanctions.

2. Besides legally binding treaties, a number of non-legally binding agreements exist. As early as in 1992 during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) the Forest Principles and the Agenda 21 (Chapter 11, Combating Deforestation) were concluded. Between 1995 and 2000 two intergovernmental forums (Intergovernmental Panel on Forests - IPF, Intergovernmental Forum on Forests - IFF) decided on nearly 300 proposals for forest-related actions to be implemented at the global, regional and local level. Since 2000 the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) negotiated several resolutions on forests, the most comprehensive of these being the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (NLBI), which includes the four Global Objectives on Forests (GoFs) that was finally adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 by. Other initiatives with global impact include the Bonn Challenges, launched by the Government of Germany and the IUCN, as well as the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration.

3. A number of recent global and regional forest-policy processes have been influenced by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the United Nations in September 2000. The most relevant MDGs directly related to forests are Goals 7A and 7B.

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4. Since the deadline for achieving the MDGs has been set for 2015, the discussion on a post-2015 Development Agenda was initiated in 2010. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Summit) in 2012 a process to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, building upon the previous set of MDGs, was launched. The final text of the outcome document for the UN Summit to adopt the post-2015 Development Agenda currently displays 17 goals and 169 related targets.

5. Legal and non-legally binding forest-related instruments and policy fora that are currently in place have created a complex, international forest-related policy landscape. While a number of global and regional organisations and processes make an effort to coordinate their activities, their institutional and process mandates as well as different priorities contribute to a further fragmentation of the policy landscape.

II. Recent global forest policy developments

a) Sustainable Development Goals

6. A universal post-2015 development agenda that integrates SDGs and targets is expected to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during the “UN Summit to adopt the post-2015 Development Agenda” in September 2015. The new goals and targets are then supposed to come into effect on 1 January 2016 and last until 2030. The finalised text of the summit’s outcome document, titled “Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development” includes two SDGs directly relevant to forests. Fifteen other SDGs are relevant to forests indirectly. Besides the goals and targets, the outcome document includes the outline of the new monitoring and review system of SDGs, designed as core of the post-2015 agenda. The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) launched in 2013 will have a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level. It will work coherently with the General Assembly, UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and other relevant organs and fora, in accordance with existing mandates. It will facilitate sharing of experiences, and provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for the follow-up. It will promote system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.

7. The finalised text of the outcome document of the UN Summit foresees three levels of follow-up and review process for the SDGs: global, regional and national. However, how the planned review mechanism of the HLPF will look like in detail is yet to be decided.

8. It can be predicted that inclusive regional review processes will draw on national reviews and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level under the auspices of the HLPF. The Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 agenda “The Road to Dignity by 2030”, issued in December 2014, states that regional reviews would build on the experiences of the United Nations Regional Commissions in existing review mechanisms. The UN Regional Commissions could therefore potentially play a role in this process; would the members States like to identify their executive bodies as relevant regional fora for coordination.

9. The progress towards achievement of goals and targets will be reviewed using a set of global indicators. The finalised text for adoption states that these will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels, which will be developed by member States. The global indicators framework, to be developed by the Inter Agency Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs), will be agreed by the UN Statistical Commission by March 2016. Thereafter, it will be presented for consideration to an intergovernmental consultations process, similar to the one that the sustainable development goals and targets have undergone in 2015. Finally it is expected to be adopted by ECOSOC and the General Assembly in 2016. The future global indicators (including those related to forests) will likely rely on existing definitions and benefit from already collected data. Beyond the indicators agreed on the global level, countries may wish to consider

indicators reflecting the contributions of forests to other SDGs, such as the ones on food security, poverty reduction, etc.

b) 11th Session of United Nations Forum on Forests

10. The UNFF held its eleventh session from 4-15 May 2015 in New York. Its main objective was to assess progress, challenges and the way forward for the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) beyond 2015. In the draft ministerial declaration of the high-level segment “International arrangement on the forests we want: beyond 2015” ministers responsible for forests committed to, *inter alia*, implementing and integrating sustainable forest management (SFM) into poverty reduction strategies and national sustainable development strategies; and strengthening and building a more effective post-2015 arrangement on forests. They also committed themselves to support the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and to improve forest legislation and forest law enforcement as needed. They also invited strengthening coordination and collaboration with relevant forest-related processes.

11. The draft ECOSOC resolution on the “International arrangement on forests beyond 2015” stipulated that the IAF consists of UNFF and its member States, the Forum secretariat, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the Forum Trust Fund. Regional organizations and processes were asked to be involved as partners. Furthermore it was agreed to promote the implementation of SFM, to enhance forests contribution to the post-2015 development agenda, to enhance cooperation, coordination and coherence at all levels, to foster international cooperation, to strengthen forest governance frameworks, means of implementation and long-term political commitment. The Forum decided to develop “a concise strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 to serve as a strategic framework to enhance the coherence of and guide and focus the work of the international arrangement on forests and its components”¹.

12. The draft resolution also recommended to rename the NLBI the “United Nations forest instrument” and to extend the Global Objectives on Forests to 2030.

c) Convention on Biological Diversity

13. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) directs its current work through a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020). The Plan includes the time-bound and measurable Aichi Biodiversity Targets that were agreed at the 10th CBD meeting held in Nagoya, in 2010. In addition, within the CBD, relevant organizations and processes are invited to collaborate on the implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity. The implementation of the Aichi Targets will lead to achieving the ultimate goal of CBD: to halt the biodiversity loss by 2020. The most important forest-related targets are the following:

- i. Target 5: “By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced”
- ii. Target 7: “By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity”.

14. Indirectly relevant forest-related targets are: Target 1 on biodiversity values; Target 4 related to the impact on the use of natural resources; Target 6 that relates to protected areas; Target 11 on trends in pressure; Target 14 on ecosystem provisions and the strategic goal E on participation.

15. The CBD decided at its last meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2012 to further collaborate with the forest sector in terms of biodiversity monitoring, and to cooperate with the UNFF. In addition, it

¹ Document E/2015/42-E/CN.18/2015/14 Report of the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

initiated advice on the use of relevant safeguards to reduce the risks for biodiversity loss in developing countries. Those safeguards have been already introduced by the UNFCCC to encourage developing countries to contribute to forest-related climate mitigation activities.

d) **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

16. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21) will convene in December 2015 in Paris with the aim of achieving a legally binding and universal agreement on climate to keep global warming below 2°C. Forests will have a central role in achieving this ambitious goal. The expected outcome of the negotiations – the so-called “Paris Package” – will consist of a legally binding and universal agreement on climate to take effect in 2020 and a decision on arrangements prior to the agreement’s entry into force. The agreement is expected to adopt a comprehensive approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation (i.e. no sectors excluded from implementation) and to put greater emphasis on adaptation than in the Kyoto Protocol so as to achieve a better balance between mitigation and adaptation. At the time of writing, the negotiation text² explicitly mentions REDD+³ and actions in the land use sector, and also highlights links between mitigation and adaptation, which are particularly strong in the land sectors. Whether or not these references are retained in the final text adopted in Paris, widespread recognition of the importance of forests to climate change mitigation and adaptation will ensure that implementation of the new agreement will entail actions in the forest sector.

III. Implementation of results of global and regional policy processes

a) **Sustainable Development Goals**

17. While the HLPF will have a central role in overseeing a network of monitoring and review processes of the SDGs and targets at the global level, the follow-up and review at the regional level can, as appropriate, provide useful opportunities for peer learning on shared targets among countries from the same region. The finalised text of the outcome document for the post-2015 agenda recognises the importance of building on existing follow-up and review mechanisms at the regional level, for instance those developed by the United Nation Regional Commissions and other organizations. Regional review processes are meant to draw on national-level reviews and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level, including at the HLPF.

18. Follow-up and review at the HLPF will be, based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level. UN system Organizations and United Nations Regional Commissions were invited to contribute to the development of the global indicators framework coordinated by the IAEG-SDGs.

19. The FAO work on collecting statistical information related to forests and sustainable forest management has contributed to the development of an extensive system of monitoring and evaluation of all aspects related to the state of forests, wood resources, forest functions and services, forest products and markets, and sustainable forest management in the region. Currently the reporting covers all pillars of SFM and includes most of SFM indicators.

20. Since September 2014, when the post-2015 process entered in the phase of intergovernmental consultations, the section has continued to monitor the developments of the political agenda on SDGs. It has

² Document FCCC/ADP/2-15/1 <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/adp2/eng/01.pdf>; see also Co-Chairs’ scenario note <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/adp2/eng/4infnot.pdf> (24 July 2015)

³ Reducing deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries

engaged in showcasing its work on regional monitoring and evaluation related to the state of forests and SFM of relevance to the implementation of the future forest related SDGs and targets proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

b) United Nations Forum on Forests

21. During the 11th session of the UNFF, the regional dimension of the UNFF⁴ has experienced a considerable bust and the Forum was asked to strengthen its collaboration with relevant regional institutions, organizations and processes in order to improve the implementation of SFM. The UNFF Secretariat was asked to consult with regional partners on means of improvement of this collaboration including the implementation of the UNFF strategic plan and its quadrennial programmes of work. In addition, regional institutions, organizations and processes were invited to develop or strengthen programmes on SFM and to provide coordinated inputs and recommendations to the Forum's sessions. Finally member States were encouraged to strengthen regional and sub-regional forest policy processes or platforms.

22. In the context of developing a new format for the new cycle of national reporting for the IAF, these streamlining and harmonization efforts in the region could constitute a valuable input to the UNFF work. They could include guidance on shared data collection, monitoring and assessment, carrying out technical and scientific studies, as well as coordinated communication, outreach and capacity building activities. The LACFC can be used for facilitation of the regional discussion and input to IAF reporting.

c) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

23. The new climate agreement and associated climate financing can be expected to stimulate investment in forest-based mitigation and adaptation and to support the sector's contributions to the global move toward a green economy. The Paris agreement will trigger results-based REDD+ payments (the foundation for which is largely set by the COP19 decisions comprising the Warsaw Framework on REDD+) and will reinforce developed country efforts in forest-based mitigation. REDD+ and forest-related adaptation actions in developing countries will be facilitated by financing from the Green Climate Fund and other sources, including Global Environment Fund, the Forest Investment Program under the World Bank and important bilateral support.

24. The challenge for developing countries will be to manage the transition from early action in REDD+ (including the strengthening of national forest monitoring systems; enhancing forest governance, including stakeholder rights and engagement; and establishing systems to ensure social and environmental safeguards are identified and respected) to results-based payments for REDD+. All countries are faced with the need to ensure that their climate change goals and commitments are well articulated with their broader goals for sustainable forest management. REDD+ has so far dominated the dialogue on forests and climate change; it is time to devote greater attention to optimizing forests' contributions to resilience and climate change adaptation.

25. The recent developments in UNFF, the post-2015/SDG process and UNFCCC, makes it imperative and creates unique opportunities for countries to build strong and sustainable forest sectors that meet national objectives and the needs of their diverse stakeholders while contributing to global sustainability goals. This will entail investing in capacity and institutional development, creating an enabling policy environment, and ensuring sustainable forest financing that together will create a robust, self-sustaining forest sector.

⁴ See document E/CN.18/2015/L.2/Rev.1, chapter VIII Regional/subregional involvement, paragraphs 25-28.

IV. Points for consideration

26. The Commission may wish to consider:

- Encouraging countries in the region to actively engage in the implementation of the SDGs as they relate to forests by strengthening the socio-economic contributions of forests and to monitor progress, using the UN Forest Instrument as a framework for implementation;
- Requesting FAO to assist in identifying appropriate indicators for forests' contributions to the SDGs and efficient ways of measuring them, and, jointly with other CPF members, provide support to country implementation of the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda as they relate to forests;
- Encouraging countries to continue efforts to integrate climate change into their national forest programmes and to reflect forests adequately in their climate change strategies and plans, including their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs);
- Requesting FAO to continue to provide support to countries, through providing tools and technical assistance, to integrate climate change into their forest and related sectors, including through, inter alia, its programmes in forest and landscape restoration, mountain development, climate smart agriculture, and policy and institutional support; and to continue to assist in strengthening national forest monitoring systems for climate change mitigation (i.e. REDD+) and adaptation.