



NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

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OUTCOME OF GLOBAL POLICY PROCESSES OF RELEVANCE FOR THE REGIONAL FORESTRY COMMISSIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become the main driver and will continue to dominate the global developmental agenda in the coming years. FAO has aligned its Strategic Objectives with the SDGs, using the SDG indicators for measuring progress towards their achievement. Forests will have an important role to play in achieving the transformational change the 2030 Agenda is calling for, and COFO¹, at its 23rd session in 2016, requested FAO to support countries in strengthening cross-sectoral policy dialogue and promoting the multi-functional role of forests.
2. The Paris Agreement on climate change has wide-ranging implications for forests as a large number of countries have committed themselves to undertake action on sustainable forest management through their "Nationally Determined Contributions" (NDCs). COFO, at its 23rd session in 2016, requested FAO to strengthen partnerships to help countries' access to international climate finance, including from bilateral and multilateral sources such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).
3. 2016 also saw significant decisions on the conservation of biodiversity at the UN Biodiversity Conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which was held in Cancun, Mexico in December. The outcomes are particularly relevant for forestry as forests harbor about 80 percent of terrestrial biodiversity.
4. In line with ECOSOC resolution E/2015/33, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), developed the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF), 2017-2030, as well as the first Quadrennial Programme of Work (4PoW) 2017-2020 for operationalizing the strategic plan. The UNSPF was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in May 2017 and has strong links to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). FAO, as Chair and member organization of the Collaborative

¹ A detailed discussion is presented in COFO/2016/5.1 (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-mq579e.pdf>)

Partnership on Forests (CPF), is expected to contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Furthermore, at its 23rd Session in 2016, COFO invited the UNFF to consider the potential offered by the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions for enhancing regional/sub-regional involvement, including through using the Commissions for regional dialogues related to the UNFF, noting that the respective roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined in collaboration with other relevant regional forest-related bodies and processes.

5. This paper summarizes key outcomes of the three global processes and their implications for forestry globally and in the regions as well as for FAO.

II. KEY OUTCOMES OF GLOBAL PROCESSES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FORESTRY

A. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

6. In 2016 and 2017, the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators continued work on refining the SDG indicators. FAO is custodian for three indicators under SDG 15 on “Life on Land”:

- Forest area as a proportion of total land area (15.1.1)
- Progress towards sustainable forest management (15.2.1)
- Mountain Green Cover Index (15.4.2).

7. Jointly with partners, the Organization has contributed to improving Indicator 15.2.1. As a result, this indicator has been upgraded to “Tier II”, which means it will be measured. In addition, FAO will assist countries in strengthening their capacity to report on the three indicators.

8. The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is overseeing the follow-up and review of the SDG implementation processes at the global level. In 2017, it reviewed progress on three SDGs with direct relevance for forests: SDGs 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). In 2018, the HLPF will review, among others, SDG 15. The 12th Session of UNFF in May 2017 discussed forests’ contributions to SDGs 1, 2 and 5 and provided recommendations to the HLPF. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests is planning to organize an International Conference on Halting Deforestation and Increasing Forest Cover as an input to UNFF13 and the HLPF review of SDG 15 in 2018.

9. While forests are key to achieving SDG15, they also have the potential to significantly contribute to all other SDGs. The 2018 edition of FAO’s State of the World’s Forests (to be launched at COFO 24) will therefore provide a comprehensive analysis of these relationships, placing particular emphasis on the 10 most relevant goals and associated targets. It will illustrate the efficiency of forest pathways to sustainable development, provide best practice examples of mainstreaming forestry into development strategies and propose practical ways forward.

B. 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 22) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

10. The 22nd Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC took place in Marrakech, Morocco from 7 to 18 November 2016. At the meeting, two important partnerships were launched:

- 1) The Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, which aims to support implementation of more climate action, consistent with the achievement of the NDCs, and to foster greater ambition over time on mitigation, adaptation, and the delivery of finance, technology and capacity building to developing countries.
- 2) The NDC Partnership, a coalition spearheaded by Germany and Morocco and hosted by the World Resources Institute, which aims to support countries in turning the political commitments made in their NDCs into action on the ground.

11. One main outcome of COP22, the Marrakech Action Proclamation, builds on the momentum of the Paris agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote adaptation efforts to support the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It calls for the strengthening of efforts to eradicate poverty, ensure food security and take swift action to deal with climate change in agriculture. It also encourages the increase in flow and access to climate finance, and opportunity for development of capacity and technology.

12. COP22 negotiations were focused on matters relating to the broader issues of the entry into force and the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Forests were not discussed under a formal agenda item, however, forests featured in events outside official negotiations and maintained international forest momentum. COP22 reinforced the message that without harnessing the great potential of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, the Paris Agreement imperative to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels..." will be challenging.

13. In parallel to the formal negotiations, the agenda for Global Climate Action (GCA) highlighted the implementation of climate commitments among state and non-state actors by showcasing successes to promote greater ambition. In this context, FAO co-organized or contributed to more than 80 meetings and events with both high-level and technical interventions to demonstrate FAO's contribution to climate actions world wide. On forests, FAO co-led The Forest Action Day and the UN System Side Event on SDG15, and led or participated in numerous side events.

14. The Forest Action Day recognized commitments to reduce and reverse forest degradation and halt deforestation through the SDG targets and the NDCs, and through performance-based emissions reduction agreements under REDD+. It encouraged further actions and scaling up investments in adaptation and resilience of forest ecosystems. The Day further promoted the development and implementation of new technologies, enabling developing nations and forest communities to improve access to financing under performance based emission reduction and removals programmes. It recognized that coordinated actions are required to secure sustainable financing, in particular for adaptation. Furthermore, priorities in the land use sectors should be aligned so that policies in one sector do not undermine policies in the other.

C. UN Biodiversity Conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity

15. The UN Biodiversity Conference was held in Cancun, Mexico on 2-17 December 2016. COP13 welcomed the Cancun Declaration adopted during the High-level Segment, and urged Parties to strengthen their efforts to mainstream the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within and across various sectors, including forestry. Furthermore, it encouraged Parties to create enabling conditions, strengthen the enforcement of laws and regulations, and promote the implementation of sustainable forest management.

16. COP13 also welcomed a proposal by FAO to establish a platform on biodiversity and agricultural sectors for governments, communities of practice and other stakeholders to build bridges between sectors, identify synergies, align goals and develop integrated cross-sectoral approaches to mainstreaming biodiversity in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. In addition, COP13 took note of the global plans of action on plant, animal and forest genetic resources, adopted by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and endorsed by the FAO Conference.

17. FAO and its Committee on Forestry were invited to further support the development and implementation of measures, guidance and tools to promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity in the forest sector and to consider, on a regular basis, ways and means to further enhance contributions to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

18. Concerning the role of international organizations in supporting the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, COP13 invited UNFF to take into account the forest-related Aichi Biodiversity

Targets, and the members of the CPF, to consider ways and means of further enhancing their individual and collective contributions to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

19. In relation to the Paris Agreement COP13 encouraged Parties, when developing and implementing their NDCs, to fully take into account the conservation of biodiversity. It also took note of policy approaches and positive incentives for activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and the role of sustainable forest management in enhancing forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

20. The Conference adopted a short-term action plan on ecosystem restoration as a flexible framework towards achieving relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets and other internationally agreed goals and targets, and urged Parties to promote actions on ecosystem restoration and make use, as appropriate, of the short-term action plan.

21. In the area of wildlife, COP13 encouraged Parties to promote sustainable use of wildlife. It also reaffirmed the role of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management, for which FAO provides the secretariat, in facilitating coordinated work on the sustainable use of wildlife and enhancing synergies among its members.

D. Green Climate Fund

22. At the 14th Board Meeting of the Green Climate Fund in 2016, FAO became a grant-implementing entity for medium-sized projects (USD 50-250 million), as well as a delivery partner for the GCF Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme, where up to USD 1 million per year per country, and up to USD 3 million per country for adaptation, is available in funding to enhance country ownership and access to the funds.

23. The GCF Board's 14th Session also confirmed that countries could use GCF readiness programme to access resources for the development of national REDD+ strategies or action plans and investment plans as well for accessing funds for the earlier phases of REDD+. In addition, the Board requested the GCF Secretariat to develop tools, guidelines and methodologies for countries to access funding for the earlier phases of REDD+ using existing modalities. A working group has been set up to develop the request for proposals for operationalization of results-based payments and guidance for countries to engage with the GCF for early phases of REDD+. FAO has the capacity to assist countries in identifying and mobilizing financial resources to support their work in forest and land use sectors through the Green Climate Fund. This includes the development of project and programme proposals to access the GCF Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme, as well as developing concept notes for full project and programme proposals on forest and other land use initiatives for both adaptation and mitigation. In 2016 and 2017, FAO has worked closely with several countries to develop country-led readiness proposals as well full project/programme concept notes, in support of the implementation of the Great Green Wall Programme, forest landscape restoration, REDD+, as well as other investments in the forest and land use sectors, which support country NDCs and broader development goals.

E. The United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF)

24. The UNSPF, negotiated by UNFF and adopted by the UN General Assembly, includes a vision, mission, trends, challenges and opportunities, six Global Forest Goals and 26 associated targets, as well as implementation and review frameworks and provisions for communication and outreach. The Goals and Targets are fully in line with Global Objectives on Forests, the forest-relevant SDGs, the provisions of the Paris Agreement adopted under the UNFCCC, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the CBD and other relevant global commitments.

25. The Goals are focused on reversing the loss of forest cover, increase the area of forests under sustainable forest management and the share and contribution of products from such forests to

sustainable development and livelihoods, the mobilization of resources, the promotion of governance frameworks and the enhancement of coordination, coherence and synergies. Among the many quantifiable and measurable targets, member States committed to increase forest area by 3 percent worldwide by 2030 against the Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2015 baseline. The UNSPF also offers an opportunity for member States, on a voluntary basis, to determine their contributions towards achieving the global forest goals and targets (voluntary national contributions).

26. The UNSPF is of particular relevance for FAO as a global organization of the UN system dealing with forests and sustainable forest management, food security and livelihoods on a cross sectoral manner, as well as for an Organization which chairs the CPF.

27. The CPF is invited to support the implementation of the UNSPF and to this end develop a work plan aligned with the UNSPF and its 4PoW. CPF is expected to support and streamline reporting on progress, contribute to the functioning of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, support monitoring and assessment with analytical products and contribute to the review of the 2030 Agenda. Special attention is given in the UNSPF to the FRA process as a major information provider and vehicle for collecting and analysing forest-related information.

F. Outcome of the Twelfth Session of UNFF

28. The 12th session of UNFF took place on 1-5 May 2017. This was the first review session established by ECOSOC resolution E/2015/33 focusing on implementation, and as such, experimented with new working modalities. Accordingly, the session consisted of several consecutive panels discussing key components of the UNSPF and the 2030 Agenda, including forests and poverty eradication (SDG1); forests and food security (SDG2); gender equality and empowerment of women (SDG5). The Forum also discussed UN system-wide contribution options to the UNSPF. The conclusion of these discussions are presented for the consideration in the review process by the High-level Political Forum as a Chair's Summary.

29. On SDG1 it proposed, among other things, to strengthen stakeholder dialogue, address data gaps related to the socio-economic functions of forests and to undertake assessments of the contribution of forests to poverty reduction to help develop appropriate measures.

30. Proposals on SDG2 included raising awareness of the key role of forests and trees in food security and nutrition; scaling up integrated and sustainable natural resource management for food production, based on traditional knowledge; promoting landscape approaches to community-based agroforestry practices; and promoting further development of deforestation-free commodity chains.

31. As regards SDG5, suggestions included improving gender considerations in data provision; sharing of best practices on gender equality and women's empowerment; developing gender-friendly financing instruments and encouraging girls to consider careers in forestry.

32. UNFF adopted an omnibus resolution, including the following key elements of particular relevance for FAO:

- An invitation to the CPF to present its proposal for a global set of forest indicators to UNFF at its thirteenth session;
- An invitation to CPF member organizations and regional and subregional organizations and processes, to provide inputs to the UNFF Secretariat on the contribution of forests to the 2018 review of SDGs by the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) by 30 November 2017;
- Welcoming the initiative of the CPF to organize an international conference on halting deforestation and increasing forest area as a contribution to the Forum's deliberations at its thirteenth session and the Forum's input to the HLPF 2018.

III. POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMISSION

33. The Commission may wish to:
- 1) Invite countries to promote and monitor progress on the forest-related indicators and to report on progress during the HLPF review of SDG 15 in 2018.
 - 2) Take note of the forest-related outcomes of COP22 and invite countries to consider the recommendations of the Forest Action Day to foster enabling environments for cooperation among multiple stakeholders; facilitate implementation of open access tools for monitoring forests and land use, such as Collect Earth; and recognize NDCs as an opportunity to mainstream REDD+ into national planning processes.
 - 3) Take note of the forest-related outcomes of the CBD COP 13 and invite countries to continue their efforts in implementing sustainable forest management as the forest sector's contribution to the mainstreaming of biodiversity.
 - 4) Consider ways to facilitate the implementation of the outcome of UNFF12 and provide a regional input to UNFF13 and 14;
 - 5) Recommend COFO to consider, in collaboration with other FAO Technical Committees, addressing the opportunities for translating the outcomes of international negotiations into concrete actions.
34. The Commission may wish to request FAO to:
- 1) Assist countries in strengthening their capacity to monitor forest-related SDG indicators and in strengthening the wider contributions of forests to the SDGs.
 - 2) Continue contributing to the Global Climate Action Agenda and to promote forest related initiatives, projects and programmes at COP23 as well as support countries in the development of their forest and other land use related proposals for the Green Climate Fund;
 - 3) Inform COFO on plans and progress made in establishing the platform on mainstreaming biodiversity, as well as on FAO's work in promoting the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity;
 - 4) Explore ways and means to help further enhance the forest sector's contribution to the mainstreaming of biodiversity.
 - 5) Support the work of UNFF including through analytical work, such as the State of the World's Forests and the Global Forest Resources Assessment.