



COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

5 - 9 October 2020

PREPARATIONS FOR THE XV WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

24 - 28 May 2021, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Building a green, healthy and resilient future with forests

Executive Summary

World Forestry Congresses have been held every six years since 1926 and supported by FAO since 1954. The XV World Forestry Congress will be held on 24-28 May 2021 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. This document provides an update on the status of preparations, presents the Congress' theme and six sub-themes which will frame the discussions during the one week event. It also outlines the expected outcomes of the Congress' deliberations and offers solutions for channelling these to major global forest-related processes and instruments as well as for incorporating them in the strategic priorities and programmes of work of FAO.

Suggested actions by the Committee on Forestry

The Committee may wish to invite members to:

- Support the XV World Forestry Congress through the participation and attendance of high-level government officials and the provision of sponsorship for nationals desirous of attending;
- present proposals for matters of national and global interest that may be covered in the Congress deliberations and outcome documents;
- identify potential target audiences of the Congress outcomes, including global forest-relevant processes and instruments.

The Committee may wish to invite the Republic of Korea, as host country of the Congress and a party to several international instruments and processes, to:

- provide logistical support and guidance for those who have interest in the Congress to be able to participate with a view to the COVID-19 pandemic situation;

- present the Congress' outcomes to those various international instruments and processes, as appropriate.

The Committee may wish to request FAO to:

- align the Congress discussions and subsequent outcomes with global COVID-19 rebuilding efforts as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- present the outcomes of the Congress to the Regional Forestry Commissions and the 26th COFO session, and through it to the FAO Council and Conference, with a view to considering these outcomes in the planning of policies and programmes of the Organization and monitoring progress in implementation;
- collaborate with the Republic of Korea in presenting the Congress' outcomes to various intergovernmental instruments and processes.

Queries on the substantive content of the document can be addressed to:

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I. BACKGROUND

1. World Forestry Congresses have been celebrated since 1926, when the first Congress was held in Rome, Italy. Subsequent Congresses have generally taken place every six years. Since 1954, FAO has been entrusted with supporting the Congress in close cooperation with the host country.

2. The Congress serves as a forum for governments, academia, civil society and the private sector to share experiences and most recent knowledge, and to formulate recommendations to be implemented by various actors and stakeholders. It also provides an opportunity to present an overview of the state of forests and forestry in order to discern trends and raise awareness among decision and policy makers, the public and other stakeholders.

3. The Congress has advisory rather than executive functions and participants attend in their personal capacity. The outcomes are expected to be brought to the attention of the FAO Conference for possible endorsement as well as to other important international fora.

4. The 155th Session of the FAO Council endorsed the offer of the Republic of Korea to host the XV World Forestry Congress, which will take place from 24 to 28 May 2021, in Seoul at the COEX Convention Center.

5. Consultations with FAO Members started in 2019 within the framework of the Regional Forestry Commissions, where countries were invited to propose, based on priority issues in the regions, themes and topics that could form the basis of technical sessions at the Congress; and were invited to support the Congress financially, especially through supporting participants from developing countries.

6. Formal collaboration on the Congress between the Republic of Korea, represented by the Korea Forest Service (KFS), and FAO started in 2020, when both entities created secretariat teams to jointly expedite the preparations.

II. ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAMME OF THE CONGRESS

7. Preparations for the Congress are overseen by the Organizing Committee, established by the host country and chaired by the Minister of KFS, with ample participation of governmental organizations, both federal and provincial, private companies, universities, forest owners and industry associations and other NGOs, and FAO. The Organizing Committee is the governing body of the Congress and provides strategic leadership and governance oversight. It is supported by two sub-committees, the Technical Agenda Committee and the Technical Event Promotion Committee, both composed of representatives of KFS and Korean partner organizations.

8. FAO has created two ad hoc bodies to support the development of the technical programme of the congress. A 24-member Advisory Committee composed of internationally recognized professionals from a range of backgrounds, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, research institutes, academia and the private sector has been established to formally advise FAO. The Advisory Committee will support the preparations of the Congress by providing guidance on the content and structure of the technical programme, and by proposing keynote speakers and authors of special invited papers. It is also expected to encourage wide participation and support promotion of the event. Furthermore, as a new instrument FAO invited the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to establish a Consultative Group, comprising representatives from all members of the CPF. To maximize synergies between the two bodies, the Group is represented in the Advisory Committee by its chair.

9. The theme of the Congress, *Building a green, healthy and resilient future with forests*, reflects the integral role that forests play in ensuring the health, well-being and stability of the planet and its people. The theme is therefore timely and it will frame the discussions of the global forestry community to consider the state and future of world forestry, particularly in the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, while at the same time striving to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. The programme will address six sub-themes that address the most important current issues concerning forests and the products and services they provide. The sub-themes also guide the review of progress in implementing the recommendations of previous congresses, especially the Durban Declaration, and the advances being made towards a sustainable and resilient future. The sub-themes are:

- i) Turning the tide: reversing deforestation and forest degradation
- ii) Nature-based solutions for climate-change adaptation and mitigation and biodiversity conservation
- iii) The green pathway to growth and sustainability
- iv) Forests and human health: revisiting the connections
- v) Managing and communicating forest information and knowledge
- vi) Forests without boundaries: enhancing management and cooperation

11. Internationally renowned speakers will be called on, representing academic and scientific organizations, the private sector, civil society, indigenous and rural communities, and public institutions connected with the forest sector, with the aim of fostering comprehensive, dynamic, interactive and technically innovative discussions on topics of direct relevance to the theme and sub-themes. Prominent invited speakers will treat conceptual aspects in plenary sessions and high-level special events. Experts from around the world and across all sectors will have an opportunity to present the selected voluntary papers and discuss them in simultaneous technical sessions. There will also be ample space dedicated to the presentation of posters and videos.

12. The programme of activities of the XV World Forestry Congress will encompass a week of plenary sessions; technical sessions with thematic sub-theme discussions; special events that focus on

specific thematic areas; side and partner events that provide an opportunity for sharing expertise, best practices and innovations; and poster sessions, publicizing research carried out around the world.

13. There will also be a grand Exhibition featuring products, technologies, and services available to the forestry sector and field trips to sites of interest in the Republic of Korea. Time has been built into the programme to ensure that participants will have the opportunity to network and informally share ideas and experiences.

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

14. The XV World Forestry Congress will seek to ensure that forests are an integral part of discussions and decisions on sustainable development because of their importance for the health, well-being and stability of the planet and its peoples. This will require:

- renewed commitment to halt deforestation, prevent forest degradation and increase forest area through increased investment in forests and forestry-related activities;
- enhanced appreciation for the critical role that forests, trees, forest products and services play in a green, healthy and resilient future of the planet;
- acknowledgement of the role of forests and forestry in sustainable development and specifically in the efforts to build back better post COVID-19.

15. These key aspects are suggested to form part of the Congress outcomes that will be formulated through a consultative process involving forest-sector stakeholders at the global, regional and national levels, FAO's regional forestry commissions, officials in the host country, and FAO staff, as well as the Advisory Committee for the XV World Forestry Congress.

16. All Congress participants will be able to engage in the process to develop the vision document by making their voices heard at plenary sessions, sub-theme sessions and special events, and through other means that will be publicized during the Congress. The inputs of Congress participants will be used to build the outcome document that will be presented to FAO governing bodies and potentially to the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the 26th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the next session of the UN Forum on Forests.

17. Since the Congress is not an intergovernmental meeting, it has no formal constituencies nor country delegations. The implementation of recommendations is a matter for those to whom these are addressed – stakeholders including governments, international organizations, scientific bodies, forest owners, local communities, youth etc. - in the light of their own particular circumstances. The relevance of the Congress outcomes stems from the commitment of stakeholders, and it is imperative that key stakeholder groups such as governments duly consider these outcomes including in the bodies and processes mentioned above, and beyond.

18. The Committee will have an excellent opportunity to review the outcomes of the Congress at its 26th session and make recommendations, in line with its Multi-year Programme of Work, to Member Nations as well as to the Council and Conference to include these in the Organization's Medium Term Plan and in the Programmes of Work and Budget.