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COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

5 - 9 October 2020

FAO's PROGRAMME OF WORK IN FORESTRY UNDER THE REVIEWED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of FAO's achievements in the areas of forestry in the 2018-19 biennium, analyses major trends and emerging issues that will influence FAO's future work and activities in forestry, and lays out proposed priority areas of FAO's work in these domains for the review of the Strategic Framework and the preparation of the Medium Term Plan 2022-2025.

Suggested action by the Committee on Forestry

- Take note of the accomplishments in FAO's work in forestry in the 2018-19 biennium including the alignment with the SDGs;
- Provide guidance on the main priorities for FAO's work in forestry to be taken into account in the review of the Strategic Framework and the preparation of the Medium Term Plan 2022-2025;
- Review and advise on the global developments and their implications for the forest sector.

Draft Advice

The Committee:

- a) Welcomed the accomplishments in FAO's work in forestry in the 2018-19 biennium including the alignment with the SDGs, the Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and the guidance provided by the 24th session of COFO;
- b) Encouraged FAO to continue to support Members in their efforts to protect, restore and sustainably manage forests, including through halting deforestation; restoring degraded forest ecosystems and promoting the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources, and requested FAO to ensure that the new strategic framework adequately reflect FAO's role as the leading UN system organization on forest matters;

- c) Requested countries to ensure that post COVID-19 recovery plans and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework integrate government priorities in forestry.

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

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2018–21 (reviewed) and Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2020–21 were approved by the FAO Conference at its 41st Session in June 2019. The MTP sets out the Strategic Objectives and Outcomes for achievement by Members and the international community with support from FAO, in accordance with the reviewed Strategic Framework, approved by the FAO Conference in July 2017¹. The Conference appreciated the close alignment of the FAO Strategic Objectives with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and highlighted the importance of the contribution of FAO to the full implementation of the repositioning of the United Nations Development System².

2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development defines the context in which FAO and its Members will be working toward reaching the SDGs and achieving country specific targets. As food and agriculture hold the key to realizing the 2030 Agenda, FAO is well-positioned to act as a facilitator to assist all countries in realizing the goals of the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDG 1 (eradicate poverty) and SDG 2 (end hunger and all forms of malnutrition) through food systems transformations, that embody the dynamic links across sectors, actors and countries pertaining to the sustainable use of natural resources, agriculture, food, nutrition and resilience.

3. FAO has launched the “Hand-in-Hand Initiative”, an evidence-based, country-led and country-owned initiative to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development to eradicate poverty (SDG 1) and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG 2). In so doing, it contributes to the attainment of all the other Sustainable Development Goals. The initiative adopts a robust match-making approach that proactively brings together target countries with donors, the private sector, international financial institutions, academia and civil society to mobilize means of implementation that support accelerated actions. Accelerating and scaling up innovation is fundamental for achieving the SDGs and leveraging emerging opportunities for reaching a world free from hunger, poverty and malnutrition. In order to facilitate the adoption of innovative approaches, the use of modern science and technologies including digital solutions, FAO established a new Office for Innovation. The Office for Innovation will further consolidate and strengthen FAO’s innovative spirit, including innovation of mindset, innovation of cooperation models, and innovation of application by digitalization.

¹ C 2017/7

² CL 163/4, Information Note 2, November 2019 provides further information on FAO’s engagement with the UN Development System repositioning.

4. The Strategic Framework is reviewed every four years.³ As such, the review for the next Strategic Framework will start in 2020 with the final document to be presented to the 42nd session of the FAO Conference in 2021⁴. As inputs from Technical Committees represent an important step in the schedule of Governing Body input and oversight, this Technical Committee is requested to provide guidance on areas of technical priority with the view to guide future work and in the context of developing the new Strategic Framework.

5. Areas of focus in reviewing the Strategic Framework will include aligning the results framework with the Agenda 2030, strengthening strategic synergies and partnerships through mechanisms such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, and elaborating technical priority areas. The results framework will also integrate FAO country level results, balancing member-specific priorities and the FAO corporate priorities and in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), the most important instrument for planning and implementation of UN development activities in each country.

6. In this context, the present document first provides a brief overview of FAO's achievements in forestry in the 2018-19 biennium. It then outlines key global and sector-specific developments and trends, which will influence FAO's future work in forestry. Taking into account these and the specific recommendations from the Regional Forestry Commissions the last section lays out the priority areas of FAO's work in forestry.

II. ACHIEVEMENTS IN FAO'W WORK IN FORESTRY IN 2018-2019

7. In the 2018-19 biennium, FAO continued to conduct its work on forests in line with the organization's Strategic Objectives and to the SDGs, taking into account the recommendations of the 24th Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) to focus on eight priority thematic areas. The following table shows how these priority thematic areas link to FAO's Strategic Objectives and to existing internationally agreed forest-related commitments.

| Thematic priority area | Strategic Objective | GFG | SDG | Paris Agreement | ABT ⁵ |
|--|---------------------|---------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Halting deforestation globally, particularly from agriculture | SO2 | 1, 3 | 13, 15 | ✓ | 5 |
| 2. Addressing forest degradation and promoting SFM | SO2 | 1, 2 | 6, 12, 13 14, 15 | ✓ | 7, 8, 9 11, 15 |
| 3. Increasing forest cover through restoration, reforestation and afforestation | SO2 | 1, 3 | 6, 13 | ✓ | 14, 15 |
| 4. Improving forest-based livelihoods, prosperity and human well-being | SO1, SO3, SO4 | 2 | 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12 | | 4, 14 16, 18 |
| 5. Mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and strengthening resilience of ecosystems and communities to climate change through forests | SO2, SO5 | 1 | 1, 13, 15 | ✓ | 5, 7, 15 |
| 6. Mainstreaming forests and trees through cross-sectoral and inter-agency approaches at all levels | SO1-SO5 | 2, 5, 6 | 2, 3, 5 17 | ✓ | 2, 3 |
| 7. Increasing means of implementation from all sources | SO1-SO5 | 4 | 12, 17 | ✓ | 20 |
| 8. Strengthening governance frameworks at all levels | SO2 | 5, 6 | 1, 5, 16 | ✓ | 18 |

³ Basic Texts Volume II, Section F. "Implementation of the IPA regarding the reform of the Programming, budgeting and results-based monitoring system" para. 1.a)

⁴ CL 163/4, Information Note 1, November 2019, provides detail on the process for consultation on the development of the new Strategic Framework.

⁵ ABT=Aichi Biodiversity Targets

8. A detailed description of the achievements of FAO's work in forestry in the 2018-19 biennium is presented in document COFO/2020/8.2, complemented by the FAO report *Moving Forward: Selected achievements of the FAO Forestry Programme 2018-19*. Some key achievements are highlighted below.

9. FAO support to *halting deforestation globally, particularly from agriculture* included the organization, together with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), of an international conference entitled "Working across Sectors to Halt Deforestation and Increase Forest Area – from Aspiration to Action" in February 2018 and work under the UN-REDD Programme operating in over 20 countries in the reporting period, helping them develop and implement national strategies to reduce rates of deforestation. FAO, together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was tasked by the UN Secretary-General with leading efforts to "turn the tide on deforestation" in October 2019. An internal cross-sectoral initiative on "Transforming food systems to feed the planet without deforestation" is currently under development within FAO.

10. To help *address forest degradation and promote SFM*, FAO continued to raise awareness and provide evidence of the benefits of SFM and the impacts and causes of forest degradation and advocated ways to address both. For example, FAO continued to promote and improve the development of the Sustainable Forest Management Toolbox, a knowledge platform to support SFM implementation and released two publications on forest concessions approaches in the tropics. *The State of the World's Forests 2020: Forests, Biodiversity and People* (elaborated in 2019, but published in 2020) provided new insights on forest degradation in terms of fragmentation and on impacts of forest cover loss and unsustainable hunting on forest vertebrate populations. It also provided case studies illustrating how sustainable forest management can provide positive outcomes for people and biodiversity. The Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme was launched during this biennium and aims to improve the regulation of wildlife hunting, strengthen wildlife management, increase the supply of sustainably produced meat products and farmed fish, and reduce the demand for wild meat.

11. To support *the expansion of forest cover through restoration, reforestation and afforestation*, FAO has up-scaled the work of the Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) Mechanism as well as its support to the Great Green Wall Initiative in Africa, which has resulted in some 50 000 hectares being restored since 2016. FAO is also providing support to the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100) and has produced several technical guidance on forest restoration, reforestation and afforestation in the context of landscape restoration efforts. In March 2019, FAO and UNEP were tasked with implementing the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (See COFO/2020/7.2). The mandate of the International Poplar Commission was expanded to include all fast-growing tree species and its name changed to the International Commission on Poplars and Other Fast-Growing Trees Sustaining People and the Environment. This decision, adopted by the 41st Session of FAO's Conference in June 2019, will enable the Commission to operate outside of the temperate and boreal zones.

12. *Improving forest-based livelihoods, prosperity and human well-being* is the aim of the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) through which FAO works with forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs), increasing their access to financial services and integration into value chains and markets. Phase II of the FFF began in July 2018 in nine countries and with three regional and one global producer organizations. Since then the programme has provided resources directly to 350 FFPOs, reaching indirectly 25 million members in 30 countries offering a range of capacity development services, including advocacy, business incubation, market analysis and development, access to financing, links to social services, and information sharing through regional exchanges and knowledge generation.

13. *Mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and strengthening resilience of ecosystems and communities to climate change through forests* continued to be a strong focus area of FAO's work in forestry. In addition to FAO's work on REDD+ (see above), FAO supports countries address issues related to forest pests and diseases and forest fire. About 60 countries benefited from expert

workshops conducted in 2018-19 on topics such as the implementation of phytosanitary standards to prevent the spread of forest pests in trade, and classical biological control techniques to manage insect pests. Workshops also offered training in detection, diagnosis, control and management of forest pests and diseases. FAO completed its Fire Management Strategy⁶ in this biennium. Guidance on FAO's systematic approach to risk reduction for forest fires through cross-sectoral integrated fire management has been provided to eight countries and in the context of fires in the Amazon Region.

14. *Mainstreaming forests and trees into cross-sectoral and inter-agency approaches at all levels* leads to policies that create opportunities for mutual benefit across sectors and promotes integrated production systems that can be implemented at scale. FAO's 2018 edition of *The State of the World's Forests* (SOFO 2018) provided concrete evidence of the multiple contributions of forests to achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighted the interlinkages and outlined a way forward to strengthening these. The *Third Asia-Pacific Forest Sector Outlook Study* was published focusing on sustainable pathways for forests, landscapes and people in the Asia-Pacific region. Building on the momentum generated on urban forestry in 2018, especially through the Global Forum on Urban Forests in November 2018, a new initiative entitled Great Green Wall of Cities was launched in 2019.

15. *Increasing means of implementation from all sources* implies not only financial resources but includes also human resource capacity. On finance, FAO has worked closely with countries and with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Notable successes include the allocation of USD 63 million to Chile under the Results-based payments scheme under the Green Climate Fund and USD 40 million to Nepal for ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation. FAO was also selected to lead the GEF-7 SFM Impact Programme on Drylands. Capacity development included the work to strengthen forest education at all levels and two new forest education projects were initiated in 2018.

16. Under *strengthening governance frameworks at all levels* the EU FAO FLEGT Programme has continued its focus on promoting legality of private sector operations in forestry, including support to small enterprises and forest producers. FAO has also continued supporting countries in forest tenure reform and published a forest tenure assessment framework⁷.

III. GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR FAO'S WORK ON FORESTS

17. A number of global developments have direct significance for forests and will continue to influence FAO's future work in forestry. These include the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF), the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the development of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, the proclamation of the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028) and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) and the decision to convene a UN Food Systems Summit in 2021. It also includes the outbreak and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is worthwhile to recall that items 5, 6, 7.2, 8.2 and 9.1 of the draft agenda of the 25th Session discuss several of these developments in detail and could provide substantive input to the Committee's considerations.

a) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Although there has been some progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, overall, action to meet the Goals is not yet advancing at the speed or scale required. In September 2019, the UN Secretary-General therefore called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a decade of action on three

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/forestry/firemanagement/strategy/en/>

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/forestry/tenure/en/>

levels: global action to secure greater leadership, more resources and smarter solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals; local action embedding the needed transitions in the policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks of governments, cities and local authorities; and people action, including by youth, civil society, the media, the private sector, unions, academia and other stakeholders, to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformations.

b) Paris Agreement and COP26

18. Under Article 4 of the Paris Agreement, each party commits, inter alia, to prepare, communicate and maintain successive “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs) that it intends to achieve to help advance the goals of the Agreement, including “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees C above pre-industrial levels”. Parties are to communicate their first NDCs (or updated and enhanced NDCs) to the UNFCCC Secretariat by 2020 and a global stocktaking is expected in 2023.

19. Many countries have already identified forest-related actions in their NDCs. Increasing ambition therefore also means that more ambitious forest-related actions, including domestic mitigation measures, will need to feature prominently in future NDCs if the aims of the Agreement are to be met.

20. The 2020 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP26, has been postponed and is now scheduled to be held in Glasgow, from 1 to 12 November 2021 under the presidency of the Government of the United Kingdom.

c) UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030

21. The UN Strategic Plan for Forests has grown increasingly influential in shaping the work of the Organization since its inception. The 24th session of the Committee requested FAO to “promote the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 - including by incorporating it within its Medium-Term Plan and Programme of Work and Budget - and support countries in monitoring progress”⁸. To create clear linkages between actions and the Global Forest Goals and related targets, starting 2019, recommendations of the Regional Forestry Commissions are aligned with both the FAO Strategic Framework and the Global Forest Goals.

22. At present no complete picture of progress towards the Global Forest Goals is available. The most recent review⁹ is based on reports from 50 Members and the first comprehensive report is expected to be elaborated by UNFF in 2021. However up-to-date global information is available on several indicators of the Global core set of forest-related indicators, most of them provided by FAO’s Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020. The information suggests that progress needs to be accelerated to reach the Goals by 2030.

d) Aichi Biodiversity Targets and post-2020 global biodiversity framework

23. The next UN Biodiversity Conference will take place in Kunming, China in 2021. The expected outcome of this conference is the adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, essentially the successor to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (2010-2020). The negotiations of the post-2020 framework will be held in the context of an open-ended intersessional Working Group. The first meeting of the Working Group took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 27-30 August 2019, the second meeting took place in Rome, Italy from 24-28 February 2020. The third meeting of the Working Group is expected to convene in early 2021.

⁸ COFO/24/REP paragraph 9. c) (iii)

⁹ See: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/041/02/PDF/N2004102.pdf?OpenElement>

24. A key focus of the new framework is expected to be mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors (agricultural sectors including forestry, energy, mining, health, etc.). This could help stimulate enhanced cross-sectoral actions which foster the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity while achieving other sector goals. The post-2020 framework also provides an opportunity to more closely align the forest-related Aichi Biodiversity Targets with targets under SDG15 and the Global Forest Goals.

e) The Bonn Challenge and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

25. The Bonn Challenge¹⁰ commits to bring 150 million ha of deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030. To date, 61 countries have pledged to restore 170 million hectares of degraded forest lands, but progress in implementation is slow.

26. In March 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring 2021–2030 the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and requested UNEP and FAO to lead its implementation in collaboration with other UN entities. The Forestry Division and the Land and Water Division co-lead this effort within FAO in close collaboration with all other technical units and Decentralised Offices. (See COFO/2020/7.2).

f) Turning the tide on deforestation

27. At the Climate Action Summit in September 2019, the Secretary-General of the UN called for scaling up action on “Turning the tide on deforestation”, stating that “we must halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and change the way we farm”. At a subsequent meeting of the UN Executive Committee in October 2019 the Secretary-General requested that UNEP and FAO, in collaboration with other relevant entities, form a small working group to follow up on a set of recommendations aimed at scaling up action to halt deforestation by the UN system as a whole. A set of common messages about the extent and drivers of deforestation and how to address these are currently being crafted and will be shared with all UN country teams and at relevant fora.

28. Efforts are also underway to develop a cross-sectoral FAO initiative on “Transforming food systems to feed the planet without deforestation” and a related roadmap, based on FAO’s mandate and using existing mechanisms and platforms to scale up country action to achieve significant reductions in deforestation rates while enhancing agricultural productivity and incomes (see FO:COFO/2020/7.1).

e) Big data and technological innovations

29. FAO is taking advantage of recent developments related to the availability of high-resolution and near real-time satellite imagery and is providing support and cutting-edge technology and tools to help countries to better monitor their forest cover and changes over time through our National Forest Monitoring Programme. The use of big data is likely to open up new opportunities to fill important knowledge gaps and improve the timeliness of information. The Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2020 has carried out capacity development workshops and data collection for the FRA Remote Sensing Survey that will be published in 2021 (see FO:COFO/2020/4.2).

f) The COVID-19 pandemic

30. The global COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis following in its wake have already had significant impact on the forest sector and forest-dependent people and will continue to impact the sector – and hence FAO’s work – in the foreseeable future. The outbreak has focused attention on zoonotic diseases and on the interactions between people, wildlife and livestock and the effects of human population growth, habitat loss and the trade and consumption of wildlife. FAO has organized

¹⁰ See: <https://www.bonnchallenge.org/>

a COVID-19 Forestry Webinar Week in June 2020, which assessed impacts and possible responses that help mitigate impacts on people and forests with a view to address the situation in the short term while at the same time contributing to building a more resilient and sustainable future (see also COFO/2020/Inf.5).

IV. PRIORITY AREAS OF FAO'S WORK IN FORESTRY UNDER THE NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND THE MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2022–2025.

31. To help respond to the challenges outlined above, the Forestry Division is building on existing programmes, including those listed above, and on established strategic partnerships with other forest-related organizations. In keeping with the SDGs, the Global Forest Goals, the Paris Agreement, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and guidance provided by COFO, activities to promote the sustainable management of the world's forests and trees are clustered around three key areas of work and related means of implementation: halting deforestation and forest degradation; the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources to enhance forest-based livelihoods; and forest restoration, reforestation and afforestation. These are underpinned by work on data and statistics on the status and trends in forests, forest products and forest-related livelihoods contributions, including support provided to countries to put in place national forest monitoring systems.

32. FAO support to *halting deforestation and forest degradation* will build on the experiences of the UN-REDD Programme and include stronger collaboration among UN agencies and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests e.g. through the UN System-wide Working Group to Turn the Tide on Deforestation. It will also include stronger collaboration across agricultural sectors through the FAO initiative entitled “Transforming Food Systems to Feed the Planet without Deforestation”. A third pillar will be closer liaison with the private sector in support of deforestation-free commodities and inclusive and sustainable value chains in agriculture and forestry. The work on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade also falls under this cluster, as does support to countries on prevention of forest fires and on addressing forest pests and diseases, including the establishment of fire management networks at global and regional levels to support the exchange and cooperation to address wildfires.

33. Actions on *forest restoration, reforestation and afforestation* will include focus on promoting a global restoration movement under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, led by FAO and UNEP. The scaling up of work on forest and landscape restoration on the ground will e.g. build on the existing work of the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism, the Action Against Desertification project and the GEF-funded The Restoration Initiative. A new UN-system wide initiative in support of the Great Green Wall will be initiated as recently agreed at a meeting hosted by UNEP, the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and FAO. Work includes support to the promotion of agrosilvopastoral systems in the context of transforming agriculture and food systems.

34. *The conservation and sustainable use of forest resources to enhance forest-based livelihoods* will include the scaling up of the work of the Forest and Farm Facility with forest and farm producer organizations, and the Sustainable Wildlife Management programme, but also through work on community-based forest management and support to small and medium-sized enterprises including through the Mountain Partnership Products initiative. The “Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World” initiative will focus on strengthening the contributions of sustainable wood value chains to sustainable development, climate change mitigation and circular economies, in collaboration with international partners. Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into forest management will be a key focus after the adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. A new initiative on Forest Foods will promote plant-based food products from forests and trees. A stronger focus will be placed on promoting the role of forests and trees in “building back better” in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, through the creation of awareness of the opportunity for the forest sector to generate green

jobs and additional livelihoods while at the same time help conserve biodiversity and mitigate and adapt to climate change.