Progress towards an IPC Implementation Strategy

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BACKGROUND

After more than seventy years focusing on improving productivity, restoring forests and protecting landscapes, soil and water through the use of tree species from the poplars and willows, the IPC undertook an institutional reform process that started in 2012. The reform envisaged an expansion to new regions and countries by enlarging the geographic, biological and technical scope of the IPC. In 2019 the IPC Convention was revised to include work with other fast-growing tree species with similar functions as the poplars and willows.

In 2020, with the support of the IPC Executive Committee, the IPC Secretariat retained the services of a consultant to develop the elements for an implementation strategy for the IPC and suggest concrete actions that the IPC could take over the next ten years. This briefing summarizes the consultant's report, and provides points for the IPC Executive Committee's consideration prepared by the Secretariat. Selected elements of the consultant's report are provided in annexure.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE IPC IDENTIFIED BY THE CONSULTANCY

On the basis of a desk review and discussions with current and former FAO staff, IPC Executive Committee members, and certain outside organizations, the consultant identified key niches and gave pragmatic organizational suggestions to strengthen the IPC:

- ***The IPC can support key international political initiatives*** (Including principally the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and UN Decade of Family Farming, but also global forest goals, see Table 1). Fast growing trees are useful because they can quickly yield forest goods and services in highly disturbed or degraded sites, or in agroforestry systems. The IPC can become a dynamic network of technical partners to support these policy initiatives.

- **The IPC could be *an efficient and effective network for the transfer of science-based knowledge to implementation in the field*** by fostering the sustainable management of fast-growing trees in rural, urban, and peri-urban landscapes worldwide. The IPC can become a technical leader and facilitator of knowledge transfer on poplars and willows in temperate zones, and eventually to expand into work in new geographies (see Figure 1).

- **The consultant identified the *Working Parties and the Executive Committee as well as the IPC Secretariat* as the driving force within the IPC.** The consultant suggests re-orienting their work to align with FAO's projects and technical foci, external partners, and global initiatives. He also suggests certain pragmatic steps to overcome barriers for new members to join the IPC, such as allowing FAO members to participate as partner countries before joining IPC as Members.

CHALLENGES FOR THE IPC IDENTIFIED BY THE CONSULTANCY

The consultant identified barriers that must be overcome in order to realize these opportunities.

- **The institution of the IPC at the national level is sometimes disconnected from international forest policy and governance.** Originally the vehicle of the IPC at the national level was the National Commissions, and they were well connected to the government institutions involved in international cooperation. Currently National Commissions of the IPC may or may not be active and sometimes are not well connected to those national institutions involved in international forest policy. This means that while the current constituency of the IPC has excellent technical and academic qualifications in forestry, experience and networks in international cooperation are more limited.

- **Resources to support the expansion of the IPC:** The **IPC is an Article XIV body**, i.e. an independent treaty brought to FAO in 1959 which came into force in 1961. As an Article XIV body, the IPC is not a FAO body, but one of shared responsibility between its Members and FAO (its Director General). At the vote to amend the IPC Convention, IPC Members made clear that there was to be no additional allocation from FAO's regular budget to the IPC tied to the change in the IPC scope. Hence, if additional resources are required for effective functioning of the IPC based on the vote of IPC Members, it is at least equally a responsibility of IPC Members to ensure these resources are provided or mobilized through trust funds or other means.

- **Insufficient visibility and recognition of the IPC as a thought leader or knowledge broker outside the poplars and willow expert community**: This hampers its current potential to act as broker of knowledge and expertise on all fast-growing trees, and to attract new funds.

SYNTHESIS OF THE CONSULTANT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to avail new opportunities for the IPC while addressing the constraints it faces, the following are concrete strategic actions the IPC could take under its new mandate:

1. Support projects working on restoration through technical assistance in geographies where poplar and willow can grow. The IPC is an acknowledged expert in poplars and willows. These species remain relevant for agriculture and international development, and even are generating renewed interest in projects in eastern Europe. The IPC should actively engage in this space for projects developed by and for multilateral and bilateral donors.

2. Build its reputation and thought leadership in other fast-growing tree species by:
    a. actively recruiting expertise in other fast-growing tree species to the Executive Committee;
    b. exploring secondment of faculty on sabbatical to FAO in support of the IPC secretariat, for development of outreach or project activities, or new knowledge products;
    c. developing partnerships with other institutions like ICRAF, CIFOR, and ITTO.
    d. establishing leadership and expertise on the topic of fast-growing trees through communication, outreach, and presentations at meetings.

3. Influence policy by providing evidence on the risks and benefits of certain management systems of fast-growing trees to major international initiatives like the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, UN Decade of Family Farming, and UN Decade of Action for the

Sustainable Development Goals. To do this, the IPC should actively seek secondment of staff from an IPC Member or Members to support communication of that information to the IPC Members and to the DG FAO; and, pursue opportunities for country-to-country exchanges and broader communication of the evidence on fast growing trees.

POINTS FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S CONSIDERATION

The Executive Committee may wish to:

- appoint some Members from the Executive Committee with the Secretariat as a task force for the finalization of the IPC Implementation Strategy, developing it for presentation and consideration for adoption at the 26th IPC Session;
- meet again on this matter in full Committee to review the Strategy before the 26th Session;
- actively update National Commissions on the possibilities identified in the Synthesis and explore possibilities for action.

ANNEXURE: SELECTED ELEMENTS FROM THE CONSULTANCY REPORT

Potential contributions of the IPC to Global Forest Goals

Table 1 Opportunities for the IPC to contribute to global forest goals[1]

Global Forest Goals	Potential contribution through the IPC network	Weight*
1. Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change.	Fast-growing trees have the potential to produce, within a few years, valuable products, goods and services useful for society. It is an effective way in forest-poor areas to combine trees and woodlots in agricultural landscapes to reduce pressure on forests and to protect landscapes from the effects of climate change.	++
2. Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people.	Poplar, willow and other fast-growing trees can be widely used in predominately forest-poor developing /transitional countries to improve livelihoods, food security, protect soil and water, and serve as a basis for long-term economic security.	+++
3. Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.	FGT can be used as a buffer for protected areas, an alternative source for fuelwood and timber for local livelihoods and a sustainable source of raw material wood	++
4. Mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation and partnerships.	The IPC network is a unique scientific and technical network advising developmental work through solid knowledge. This information base on tree breeding, genetics, and health will rapidly vanish if not properly used over the coming years.	+
5. Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the UN Forest Instrument, and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda.	Few direct links to governance and policy. IPC works as a technical advisory body to support implementation of tree growing on the ground. FGT, however, when properly introduced support the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda.	+
6. Enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels, including within the UN System and across Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations, as well as across sectors and relevant stakeholders.	IPC is uniquely positioned to support a broader agenda of overlapping land uses, forest and agricultural landscapes. FGT on agricultural landscapes and farm forestry help support cross-sectoral approaches	+++

[1] United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 | Global Forest Goals and Targets https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Global-Forest-Goals-booklet-Apr-2019.pdf

Summary Strategy proposed in the consultant's background document

The new IPC Convention articulated additional **functions** of the IPC that relate to a set of new areas of work as outlined below. The new **vision** of IPC of March 2020 identified three fields of actions where the IPC should develop further: (i) expand the geography of IPC on poplar, willow and other fast-growing tree species from a similar ecological range; (ii) develop the knowledge base of fast-growing tree species in farms and woodlots in all biomes of the world; and (iii) focus on developing tree-based approaches that support local livelihoods and protect the environment.

Based on the defined IPC **Mission** statement "*to improve livelihoods and facilitates production of ecosystem goods and services by fostering the sustainable management of fast-growing trees* worldwide, the **IPC strategy** could be built around **three technical themes**: (i) tree breeding, genetics and health; (ii) bioeconomy; and (iii) resilient landscapes and ecosystem services; and **two cross-cutting themes**: (iv) improved livelihoods; and (v) appropriate dissemination and outreach.

Areas of work

The IPC is a **knowledge and capacity building network and functions as a science-policy-implementation platform**, meaning converting science-based approaches into practice. Based on this general working approach, three overall areas of potential work are identified for IPC in the future:

(1) to foster innovation in land production systems and provide ecosystem services involving fast-growing trees;
(2) to comprehensively assess innovations to establish best management practices of fast-growing trees in rural (forest, agriculture and mosaic landscapes) and urban contexts and to supply markets/developing value chains for wood and non-wood forest industries production and trade; and;
(3) to make recommendations to interested countries, FAO, other CPF members, international initiatives and working partners so that those good practices in managing fast-growing trees achieve scale and effectively contribute to sustainable development.

Practical measures

For its geographic expansion, the IPC first builds its expertise from a base in existing member countries with a large latitudinal range, or in countries where other fast-growing trees are already utilized. Here the IPC has a foundation in its member countries to build from and may, to a certain extent, attract expertise from its network, e.g. the IPC National Commissions, councils or associations.

From this foundation, and considering the wealth of experience, the IPC should expand stepwise. The IPC can firstly expand to interested countries already working with poplars and willows but not being currently associated to the IPC. The expanded network would take advantage of the existing knowledge by IPC member countries and a new exchange mechanism would be established, in particular between IPC member countries that are members of the OECD and members and partner countries that are classified as developing or transitional countries.

Secondly, the IPC should define its overall institutional niche in which it can contribute to the larger development agenda. In this regard, while it is known to support planted forests with FGTs, it could further expand its focus on an approach that favours "**trees outside forests**". This implies regreening and restoring degraded landscapes, farm forestry, and the integration of trees in landscapes, the role of trees in wider mosaic landscapes and the role of fast-growing trees in urban contexts.

IPC should explicitly align with and contribute to key development agendas, in the framework of the SDGs and those identified to respond to major development aims, such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the UN Decade on Family Farming and the Paris Agreement. The IPC adds value to these processes through its existing strong network and its status as a treaty-based

organization within FAO with a proven track record in its field of expertise; its global network of member countries and institutions; its active and dedicated contributing senior scientists, practitioners, farmers and administrators; and its successful record of development actions with fast-growing trees to improve rural livelihoods, contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the sustainable management of ecosystem services.

Strategic Goals

After IPC Members endorsed its mandate's expansion in 2019, the IPC has a unique opportunity to contribute to broader international agendas important to FAO Members.

The **first** and most ambitious strategic goal in the first phase is to expand the knowledge of the IPC to those countries that use poplar and other fast-growing tree species for regreening rural and urban spaces. This relates in particular to those countries that do not directly benefit from the IPC as they are not members. The focus includes using the readily available scientific knowledge for capacity-building and knowledge transfer.

The opening-up to other geographies and biomes is a **second** strategic goal envisaged for the next 4 years. This implies establishing close links and coordination with other programmes of FAO and other institutions, at the global level and also nationally. Such work also implies some policy level discussion, e.g. in COFO and beyond, to develop the role of IPC to become a caretaker of a specific segment of forest and tree development relating to the use of fast-growing tree species in forest and land restoration.

The **third** strategic goal relates to communication and outreach. The wealth of information, knowledge and applied research outcomes on forest-growing species is unique and essential to be taken into account in investments in fast-growing trees, in forest and landscape planning in rural and urban contexts, and in the framework of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Taking into account the wider analysis of the possibilities, the potentials and the limitations of the IPC in the current context, **three strategic goals** are proposed for a period of 4-8 years to respond to the vision, mission and the proposed overall areas of work of the IPC:

(1) An ambitious improvement in the quality of creating and managing of fast-growing poplar, willow and other fast-growing species with focus on forest-poor countries.
In a first step, over the coming four years, expand the work to capitalize IPC experience and knowledge to developing countries and countries in transition, situated in poplar and willow biomes: Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, North and South-east African countries; capitalize on IPC's network and knowledge through major development initiatives conducted under the umbrella of SDGs, and the decade of ecosystem restoration, respectively family farming;
In a second step, based on the widened network of IPC, develop in close cooperation with major development programmes, the role of fast-growing species "outside forests" as a promising scenario for forests and landscape restoration globally, such as forest plantations, woodlots, planned fallows, regreening and agroforestry (with a focus on dry and humid tropics).

(2) Science-informed knowledge generated on fast-growing trees to enhance their role to create resilient landscapes, to contribute to bioeconomy and to improve local livelihoods.
IPC managing a global, applied science-based knowledge hub on fast-growing species, jointly with selected partner organizations and interested IPC member and partner countries.
Focus: Linking science-based knowledge generated by IPC members and partners and developing science-based knowledge packages of fast-growing-tree species globally. Develop a global compendium for policy makers on the use of fast-growing tree species for sustainable development in rural and urban spaces.

(3) **Disseminator of information on the role of fast-growing tree species in sustainable development by pro-actively bringing relevant information to the attention of key development processes or stakeholder groups, beyond academia.**
Recognized as a trusted source of information for policymakers on the role and management of fast-growing trees in rural and urban landscapes worldwide and "a place to go" when support is requested to develop and implement projects and programmes involving FGTs.
Focus: donor and recipient countries, investors, farmers associations, "global" society

Figure 1 summarizes the Strategic Elements of the expanded IPC. The IPC is a network with an operational objective to support major initiatives through operational and scientific work in defined themes with a focus on the use of fast-growing trees outside forests.

Link between strategic goals and partnership arrangements

Table 2 Link between strategic goals and partnership arrangements

Strategic goals 2021-2025	Partners	Rationale
(1) An ambitious expansion of the area of poplar, willow and other fast-growing species in forest-poor countries in temperate/dry continental biomes	In-country financing partners from major development programmes; e.g. Intern. Dev. Cooperation, WB/ProGreen, GEF and GCF projects. GCF SAPs etc; private sector financing, Development banks	IPC has a vast information and knowledge base on poplars and willows, which can be used for promoting FGTs in developing countries and countries in transition. Such transfer of knowledge and capacity building can be financially supported by larger multi- and bilateral development programmes that focus on forest and landscape restoration, green growth and agroecology
(2) Science-informed knowledge generated on fast-growing trees to enhance their role to create resilient landscapes, to contribute to bioeconomy and to improve local livelihoods	ICRAF/CIFOR, IUFRO/GFIS, CGIAR, UNFFD (FAO/IFAD), GPFLR, IUCN, WWF and others	Through partnership arrangements with relevant institutions (e.g. ICRAF, NGP, IUFRO), develop a comprehensive knowledge base to inform policy makers on the use of FGTs worldwide
(3) Awareness-raising in society on the role resilient and healthy plantings of fast-growing tree species that support sustainable development	ICRAF, GPFLR, NGP/FF, specialized communication channels, Green cities program	Information sharing and exchange platforms to inform policy makers and society on the use of FGTs for society and sustainable development Funding source: IPC trust fund or similar, TPP funding, funding packages through international partnership platforms

A stepwise approach towards an expanded work programme

There is a need for a stepwise approach to go from the existing IPC scope to the new wider genera, geographic and ecological scope and new member countries. With existing IPC resources, an expansion that goes too far and too fast would result in a failure.

Step 1 (next 4 years)

- **Strategic goal 1: operational activities in member and partner countries of the IPC**
  - Explore interest of IPC member countries and their respective NCs to contribute with their technical and scientific knowledge to development activities in developing /transitional countries
  - Define, in collaboration with interested partners (FAO regional commissions, National Commissions) those countries that could have immediate interest on technical support services from the NPC, in particular countries in Central Asia.
  - Develop revised TOR's of Working Parties; identify interested members to support the operational programme through the Working Parties
  - Develop with interested member and partner countries a concept to develop on the broader role of fast-growing tree species at country level
- **Strategic goal 2: Science/Policy Platform, developing a compendium on FGTs globally**
  - Identify within the existing network of the IPC those scientists, experts and practitioners who have significant experience of fast growing trees from other genera than *Populus* and *Salix*. Update the list of experts and propose enlarged Working Parties to include such enlarged expertise
  - Further develop the idea to team up with ICRAF/CIFOR to other interested partners the development of a compendium on fast growing trees globally
  - Develop further on the concept of promoting trees outside forests as one of the major overall approaches of the IPC
- **Strategic goal 3: Outreach and communication**
  - Actively engage the wider NPC network in developing partnerships with international development initiatives and national development programmes
  - Tap into the potential offered by ICRAF/CIFOR on the possibility to contribute to the platforms on Agroecology and Restoration; by WWF/NGP to become an active partner of its new Forest Forward Program and by the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration to explore the potential to contribute to the Partnership. Involve, besides the IPC Secretariat, senior members of the Working Parties willing to contribute to such tasks
  - Organize side events and presentations at major international events on forestry and other relevant topics

Step 2 (year 4-8)

- Evaluate the IPC as a network: did it respond to the demands of the vision formulated?
- Decide on the future of the IPC
- Based on the results of the evaluation:
  - Develop further the strategy into an Action Plan, based on the exchanges made with new international development partners and potential partner countries of the IPC and clearly define the niche of the expanded IPC in the international framework

- In respect to operational work (Strategic Goal 1) maintain the focus on capitalization of IPC's specific knowledge on FGTs in temperate and subtropical climate and expand carefully the work beyond temperate, dry-continental and boreal biomes
- Expand the knowledge and communication part on fast-growing tree species globally and make an "advocacy" free, scientific advice on the use of fast-growing tree species globally.

- Develop partnerships to prepare a flagship publication on fast-growing trees globally (Globally used species), including endemic and native species (National Commissions).

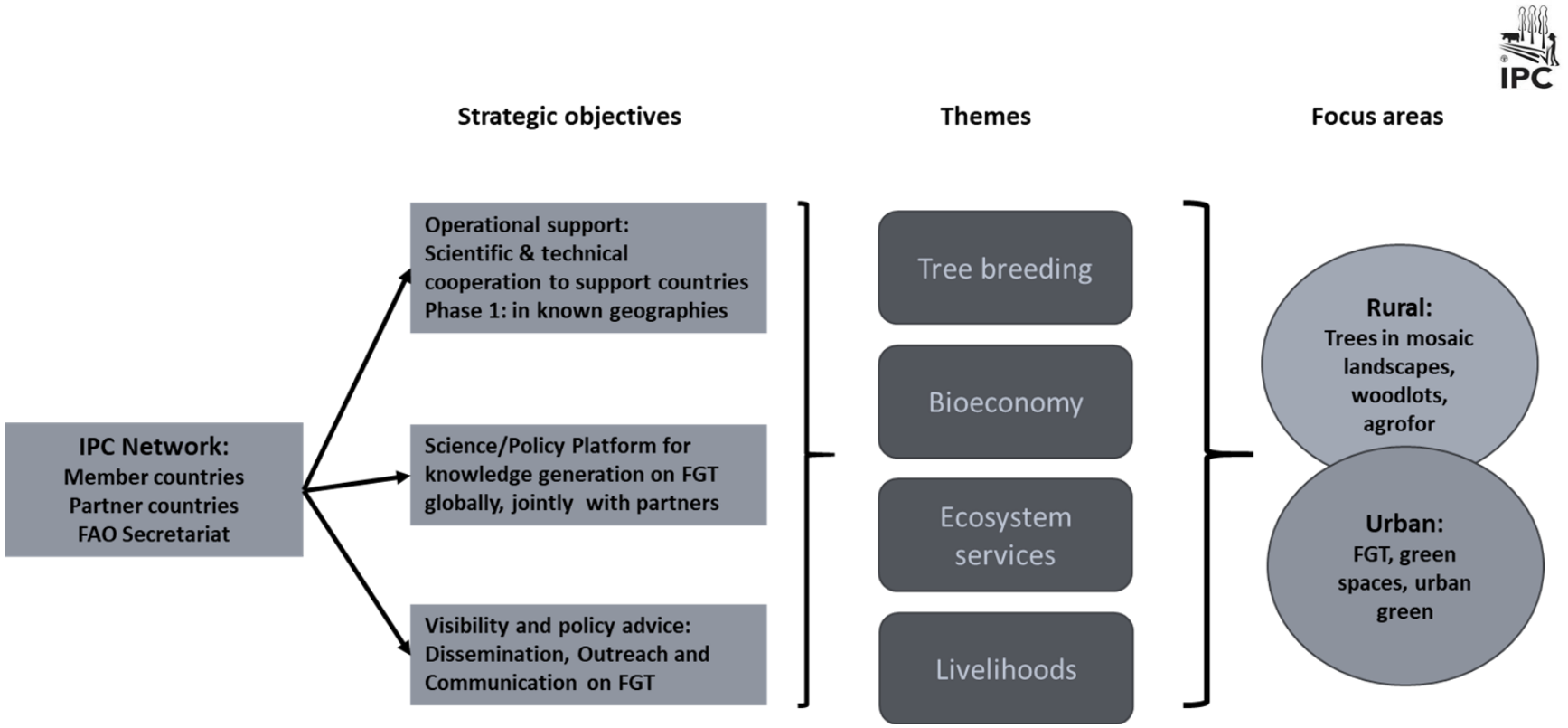

Figure 1 Overview of the strategic elements of the expanded IPC suggested by the consultancy report. The IPC network works in fast growing tree species to provide scientific and technical cooperation, functions as a policy form or platform for knowledge generation with partners, and communicates out information based practical experience and policy discussion. Key themes are of current and lasting relevance for fast-growing trees, and are applied in both rural mosaic landscape settings and in urban environments.