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Item 5(j) of the provisional agenda

**FAO European Forestry Commission matters: Preparations
for RCE 32 and COFO 25 and for the XV World Forestry
Congress (FAO governance)**

Food and Agriculture Organization European Forestry Commission

Fortieth session

Geneva, 4-7 November 2019

Preparations for the thirty-second Session of the Regional Conference for Europe, the twenty-fifth Session of the Committee on Forestry and the XV World Forestry Congress

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The paper facilitates members' recommendations for the thirty-second session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (RCE), the twenty-fifth session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) in 2020 and for the FAO Forestry programme. The paper also provides information and updates about preparations for the XV World Forestry Congress.

I. Preparations for the twenty-fifth session of COFO

A. Input to the agenda

1. Increased efficiency has been a key objective of recent governance reforms in FAO. This led to the strengthening of cross-sectoral collaboration including through the revised Strategic Framework, and of the regional-global interaction both in governance and implementation. Having a complete network of regional technical commissions and a global technical committee, forestry could quickly adapt to the new governance by strengthening the role of the Regional Forestry Commissions in shaping the global agenda and enhancing coordination between the Committee on Forestry (COFO) and the Commissions.

2. This coordination is a major element of the Multi-year Programme of Work of COFO which enables aligning agendas, identifying common items and developing meeting calendars to allow for timely input to the Regional Conferences and to COFO in strategy and priority setting, budgetary planning, and in developing advice on global policy and regulatory matters.

3. Furthermore, to facilitate the Commissions' input to global discussions, their agenda regularly includes the consideration of relevant global developments such as those under the Rio Conventions and the United Nations Forum on Forests and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. Also, recent COFO sessions included dialogues with chairpersons of the Commissions, where major regional issues and challenges as well as their potential implications for the global level were discussed.

4. As a result, COFO's agenda is strongly built on the Commissions' recommendations, these being one of the three main elements influencing the agenda, together with COFO's related decisions as well as the coordination with other governing bodies, including the technical committees. In this context the Commission may wish to recall COFO's request to FAO to "Develop a biodiversity strategy which will include a plan to mainstream biodiversity in the forest sector, and bring to COFO's consideration"¹ and note that the Committee on Agriculture made a similar recommendation. Document FO:EFC/2019/19 provides further details on the subject.

B. Input to the FAO Regional Conferences

5. In FAO's renewed governance structure Regional Conferences play an extremely important role in determining operational priorities for the Organization. Two of FAO's main delivery mechanisms, the Regional Initiatives and the Country Programming Frameworks are very strongly influenced by the discussions and decisions of the Regional Conferences.

6. For this reason, it is extremely important that forest issues are also discussed at the regional level. More so since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals therein, since their achievement requires stronger than ever collaboration and cross-sectoral coordination. According to the State of the World's Forests 2018 "It is time to recognize that food security, agriculture and forestry can no longer be treated in isolation"², and Regional Conferences can play a key role in eliminating sectoral approaches and isolation.

7. As experiences show, still major differences exist among regions. Some conferences are briefed only through the reports of their regional technical commissions, others are regularly having substantive forestry items on the agenda, and unfortunately there are examples where Regional Conferences have not had any forest-related discussions through several sessions.

¹ COFO/2018/REP paragraph 14. d) (iv)

² State of the World's Forests 2018, page xvi, <http://www.fao.org/3/I9535EN/i9535en.pdf>

8. The twenty-fourth session of COFO gave very clear guidance in this regard requesting “to explore options for linking the work of the regional forestry commissions to other policy areas and working groups, in order to increase relevance and effectiveness, create synergies, and strengthen attention to forest issues in FAO Regional Conferences”³.

9. The Commissions may wish to consider multiple approaches to achieve this. Identification of forest-related topics with strong cross-sectoral dimension is key to encouraging other sectors’ involvement in the related discussions. Office holders, with support from the secretariat, could play a proactive role in working with the secretariat of the Regional Conferences and by providing their input to the agenda.

10. In regions where several technical commissions exist, collaboration should be strengthened, and attempts should be made to identify synergies and possible common items to be recommended for consideration by the Regional Conference.

11. Executive Committees and secretariats should continue to pay attention to the timing of the sessions, so that there is sufficient time for channelling the outcome of the Regional Forestry Commissions to the Conferences.

C. Input to FAO’s programme of work in Forestry

12. Being the main instrument of connection between national and global levels, Regional Forestry Commissions play an important role in defining operational priorities and shaping biennial programmes of work in forestry through their related input to COFO.

13. For a realistic work programme, which continues to remain aligned with the Organization’s budget, it is extremely important that the Commission clearly identifies priorities, indicating also where priorities should change. While identification of new priorities has proven very efficient and well-coordinated, there is room for further improvement in identifying areas of de-emphasis, especially when earlier work has achieved the expected objectives and should be terminated or continue as lower priority.

14. To support the Commission’s thinking in this regard, the secretariat should report by providing an evaluation of progress against the mandate, indicating when and where further work is needed.

D. Format of the input

15. The Commission may wish to formulate its recommendations using the following templates:

- RFC recommendations for the attention of COFO (Annex I)

16. The Commission may wish to identify the topic, the suggested action by COFO and, to the extent possible, the follow-up action recommended for the Committee and/or FAO. Making reference to recommendations of other Commissions is strongly encouraged to increase coherence:

- RFC recommendations for the attention of the RC (Annex II)

17. The Commission may wish to identify priority issues for the consideration of the Regional Conference taking into account the discussion under the section “Input to the Regional Conferences” above:

- RFC recommendations for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry related to the agenda of the current session (Annex III)

18. The secretariat, under the guidance of the Executive Committee, should regularly translate the outcome of the discussions on the different agenda items into possible actions and present these for the Commission’s consideration. Whenever possible, reference should be made to FAO’s Strategic Objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals, and, as an

³ COFO/2018/REP paragraph 26. b)

attempt to strengthen linkages, to the Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forest. The secretariat should facilitate the introduction of these references during the session or subsequently.

19. In order for the Commission to be able to build more strongly on synergies, the set of recommendations made by other Commissions will be made available as miscellaneous documents prior to the session.

II. Preparations for the XV World Forestry Congress

A. Introduction

20. The XV World Forestry Congress is planned to be held in Seoul, Republic of Korea from 24 to 28 May 2021.

21. The Congress serves as a unique opportunity for people from all countries, regions and sectors – public, private, NGO, academia and research – to exchange ideas and their experience about the key policy and technical issues that affect forests and the people who depend on forests. The Congress organizers would benefit from input with respect to priority themes to be addressed from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. FAO Regional Forestry Commissions are invited to participate in this process to ensure that the Congress addresses the priority concerns of each region of the world.

22. The World Forestry Congress is held approximately once every six years. The first Congress was held in Italy in 1926. FAO has helped host countries organize the Congress since 1954. Responsibility for the organization and financing of each Congress lies with the host government, with FAO playing an advisory role and providing administrative and technical support, in addition to preparing the Technical Programme of the Congress and convening an external Advisory Committee.

23. The Congress is a forum for the exchange of views and experiences on all aspects of forests and forestry, which may lead to the formulation of broad recommendations applicable at national, regional and global levels. The Congress also provides a periodical opportunity for the sector to produce an overview of the state of forests and forestry, in order to discern trends, adapt policies, create awareness in decision-makers, and influence public opinion. Given the high number of participants (several thousands in each conference), it is a valuable forum for strengthening the role of forests and forestry in general as well as in the context of critical environmental, economic and social issues and taking into account the developments in the global sustainable development agenda.

24. 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 like governments, international organizations, scientific bodies, forest owners, etc. - in the light of their own particular circumstances. The outcome of the Congress (usually a resolution or declaration) may be brought to the attention of the Committee on Forestry and the FAO Council or Conference. The outcome⁴ of the XIV World Forestry Congress was brought to the attention of the FAO Council that, at its 153rd Session held in Rome on 30 November – 4 December 2015, welcomed the outcome documents and in particular “welcomed the 2050 Vision for Forests and Forestry as a milestone to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and a sustainable future to 2050 and beyond”.

25. The value and utility of each congress rest also in the opportunity offered to the world’s foresters, stakeholders and decisions-makers to analyse and expose their technical convictions and experiences, to discuss and exchange ideas and thinking, and to broaden their perspectives by sharing their common as well as diverse problems and solutions. The XV Congress will continue to recognize that forestry has become a topic with international linkages and implications, as well as multi-sectoral dimensions and implications and that

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/world-forestry-congress/outcome/en/>

forests and forestry play a significant role in national and international efforts to progress towards sustainable development.

26. Exchanges of knowledge within the forest sector, and between the forest sector and other sectors, benefit all countries. The diffusion of scientific and technical advances as well as the human contacts promoted by these congresses contribute to a better global understanding of forests and forestry.

B. Congress Organization and Format

27. The Korean Forest Service is the lead government organization and will appoint the Secretary-General and support staff who have lead responsibility for organizing and operating the XV World Forestry Congress. The FAO Director-General will appoint the Associate Secretary-General and support staff for FAO's preparations of the Congress.

28. The World Forestry Congress is a high level gathering that is addressed by the Head of State of the host country and the FAO Director-General. Invited speakers are acknowledged leaders, senior experts and advocates in their respective fields. Topics addressed during the Congress cover a wide range of interests from field level concerns to national, regional and global policies. At the XIV World Forestry Congress, two high-level events were organized. The high-level dialogue on the global forest agenda gathered 14 ministers and several other senior officials, and the high-level dialogue of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), with several heads of CPF member organizations, discussed the future of forests in the context of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

29. Financing a successful World Forestry Congress requires collaboration and commitment from the host country, FAO, and all participating countries and organizations. A trust fund has been established to help support broad geographic participation, in particular to pay for travel expenses for participants from developing countries, students, and other groups.

C. Points for Consideration

30. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Develop its recommendations for the Regional Conference for Europe, COFO and the programme priorities and request the secretariat to share them with other Commissions as well as the secretariats of the Regional Conference and COFO;

(b) Invite the Chairperson of the Regional Conference for Europe to give adequate attention to the recommendations of the Commission in the agenda of the Conference.

31. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Invite countries to support the XV World Forestry Congress and to encourage the widest possible attendance and participation from all sectors within the Region;

(b) Based on priority issues in the Region, propose themes and topics that could form the basis of technical sessions at the Congress;

(c) Encourage members, if appropriate, to support the Congress financially, especially participation from developing countries.

Annex I**RFC recommendations for the attention of COFO (issues to be considered for inclusion in the agenda)**

<i>Priority issues for COFO to consider</i>	<i>Expected outcome (information/discussion/decision)</i>	<i>Possible follow-up activities for COFO and FAO</i>	<i>Reference to other RFC recommendation</i>
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Annex II

RFC recommendations for the attention of the RC

Priority issues for the RC to consider

Expected outcome (information/discussion/decision)

Possible follow-up activities for FAO

The Executive Committee may wish to prepare a recommendation based on the results of the intersessional work and on collaboration with the RC bureau. The recommendation should be amended in light of the discussions during the session.

Annex III

RFC recommendations for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry related to the agenda of the current session

<i>Area/action for FAO programme of work</i>	<i>Priority (High, Medium, Low, Deemphasis)</i>	<i>Type (new, continued)</i>	<i>Level of action (sub-regional/regional/global)</i>	<i>Strategic Objective</i>	<i>Global Forest Goals of UNSPF</i>
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This table is expected to be pre-filled during the session by the secretariat. It should summarize actions recommended by the Commission in discussing the various agenda items