

ISBN: 978-958-8370-55-2



Summary report Forum on Forests and Peace building

• *A Post-conflict Opportunity* •



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Suggested reference: Foro bosques y construcción de paz, una oportunidad para el posconflicto. Bogotá, 2015.

ISBN: 978-958-8370-55-2

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This publication seeks to gather together the discussions held by various interest groups taking part in the Forum on Forests and Peace-building: a Post-conflict Opportunity. The forum was the outcome of the combined efforts of the Colombian Government, CARDER and the European Union, with the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation, the National Planning Department, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, the Colombian Institute of Rural Development, the Humboldt Institute, the Amazonian Scientific Research Institute and the Bogotá Botanical Gardens as institutional partners. Partners from civil society and associations were the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), El Espectador's Forest Goods and Services (Bibo) Campaign, Fondo Acción, FEDEMADERAS and ONF Andina. International partners were the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Embassy of Finland, Respira Paz (UN), the European Forest Institute (EFI), the EU-FAO FLEGT Programme and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). The meeting took place in Bogotá on 20 August 2015.

The bodies organizing the forum are not responsible for the content of this document, nor does it necessarily reflect the position of the organizers. The forum was held and this document produced with the financial aid of the European Union, CARDER, EFI and the EU-FAO FLEGT Programme.



Summary report:

Forum on Forests and Peace-building: a Post-conflict Opportunity

20 August 2015
Bogotá, Colombia

Initiative:



Partners:

Institutional partners:



Partners from civil society and associations



International partners:





INTRODUCTION

The **Forum on Forests and Peace-building: a Post-conflict Opportunity** was held in Bogotá on 20 August 2015 under the leadership of the Delegation of the European Union in Colombia, the Government of Colombia and the Risaralda Autonomous Regional Corporation (CARDER), with 300 people taking part.

Participants included the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Office of the Minister-Advisor for Post-conflict, Security and Human Rights, the National Planning Department, the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation, the Colombian Institute of Rural Development, bodies belonging to the National Environmental System (including various autonomous regional corporations, national nature reserves, research institutes such as the Humboldt Institute, the Amazonian Scientific Research Institute and the Bogotá Botanical Gardens), the private sector represented by FEDEMADERAS, civil society organizations such as WWF, ONF Andina and Fondo Acción, international bodies such as UNDP, FAO in the framework of the EU-FAO FLEGT Programme, GIZ and EFI, and various EU member states such as Finland, Germany and Sweden. The meeting was also attended by representatives of local communities (indigenous, afrodescendent and campesino) involved in forest activities, independent professionals, members of the academic world, university students and citizens concerned over this subject. Representatives of Guatemala and El Salvador also attended and provided information on their experience in similar peace-building processes.

The event had the aim of placing the subject of forests and their role in local peace-building firmly on the table for decision-makers and the country's public opinion. An "encounter" rather than "debate" approach was adopted for the meeting. A range of bodies was involved in its organization, contributing in their various capacities to a roughly two-month preparatory process, pooling their efforts and achieving a critical mass large enough to help place forests within a peace-building setting. *El Espectador* newspaper's Forest Goods and Services Campaign took charge of dissemination in the media and also of logistical organization.

This was one of the first events to be held in the country which sought to generate spaces for dialogue about forests as a setting for implementation of a peace process. It was held in the face of current uncertainty about the consolidation of peace, particularly in local areas, and about the role that forests can play in the process. While it is true the first item on the agenda in the Havana talks is entitled "Towards a new Colombian countryside: comprehensive rural reform" and forest land is clearly to be included in such rural reform, its specific role still has yet to be defined. As part of the peace-building process, Colombian society must analyse the mechanisms to be implemented to ensure that the owners of natural forests (indigenous, afrodescendent and campesino communities) can improve their quality of life on the basis of managing the social and environmental goods and services provided by forests.

The issues addressed during the meeting were divided into four broad subjects according to those involved: (i) international cooperation and forest management; (ii) national public policy; (iii) forests, rural areas and towns; and (iv) private sector and civil society.

It should be noted that the programme Sustainable Local Development in Marginal Zones of Colombia – part of the EU’s 2014-2018 programme for bilateral cooperation with the Colombian Government – was launched during the event. This initiative provides an opportunity for the dialogue on forests to be continued in a post-conflict context during the forthcoming four years, with sustainable management and conservation of these ecosystems being seen as a fundamental part of the lives of many communities and as a means of improving their livelihoods. The actions to be taken will be set within the “public policy dialogue”, which requires this budgetary support. One of the priorities of this dialogue with the government is to retain the interest of sectors other than the environment (especially trade, industry and tourism, and rural development).

SUMMARY

This report seeks to summarize the main ideas of the four discussion groups held during the forum, editing them in the form of key messages. It should be pointed out that these messages do not represent the consensus of the members of the discussion groups, nor of others attending the event, but are simply a summary of the various positions, ideas and viewpoints expressed in the course of the meeting.

The final section of the report presents the conclusions and some key points from the meeting, drawn up on the basis of the various views expressed by participants and discussion group members.

This document is intended for decision-makers in the public sector, private sector, civil society and international cooperation, those living in and/or dependent on forests, and the general public.

The following are the key messages summarizing the main ideas expressed in the four discussion groups:

1. incorporate forests into the new integrated rural development strategy;
2. include those living in forests in the peace-building process;
3. revise forest policy and legislation to facilitate their implementation at the local level;
4. break away from the fixed idea that forests cannot be used;
5. change the approach to forest management: a challenge for autonomous regional corporations;
6. work collaboratively in forest areas to consolidate peace;
7. ensure that international cooperation is better coordinated and more effective.



KEY MESSAGES

1

Incorporate forests into the new integrated rural development strategy

Natural forest covers 52 percent of Colombia's land area, while 280 municipalities have a high potential for commercial reforestation. One question that decision-makers in the various sectors must consider is what the country wants to do to achieve sustainability for its forests and how the services of their ecosystems (including those of supplying wood and non-wood forest products, climate regulation and carbon fixation) are to be used for long-term economic development and the benefit not only of communities but also of people who have been involved in the war for many decades.

In pursuit of these aims, it is worth taking account of the experience of other countries such as France and Finland, where forests generate development, jobs and wealth. In France, for example, 14 million cubic metres of wood are produced each year from 5 million hectares of forest, following sustainable forest management principles. In Finland, forests and particularly the timber industry account for 20 percent of all exports and approximately 15 percent of the country's industrial employment. In Colombia, the furniture value chain generates roughly 200 000 jobs, and although the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism has already identified various mini-forest value chains, practical working strategies need to be established as part of a long-term plan.



Where agriculture and livestock production are concerned, a major boost is needed for such mechanisms as a Certificate of Forest Incentive (CIF) in order to promote reforestation and take advantage of the fact that 70 percent of Colombia's land area has forest potential. Synergy between the forest and livestock sectors must also be boosted, since livestock farming is one of the main causes of deforestation in the country. Such action should include the promotion of silvopastoral systems that allow optimization of land use in livestock production and the implementation of such mechanisms as payment for environmental services linked to sustainable livestock production. Moreover, the programmes of the ministries responsible for agriculture and the environment need to be better coordinated in order to slow the advance of the agricultural frontier in a post-conflict context. This will require joint approaches to land-use planning and productive activities, together with the consolidation of strategies to promote production systems in keeping with the environmental features of the various areas.

In this context, it should not be forgotten that the Agricultural and Livestock Census revealed that 44 percent of the rural population is affected by multidimensional poverty, while there are major conflicts between potential and actual land uses.

2

Include those living in forests in the peace-building process

Priority zones for the implementation of peace-building actions in Colombia are those with particular environmental importance and sensitivity. According to the United Nations¹, more than 90 percent of municipalities with a priority for peace-building² correspond to those where economies linked to illegal activities (including illicit crops) have historically predominated, where poverty is prevalent and where there is some type of protection or regulation of forest use, some with up to 100 percent of their area under such protection or regulation. These areas encompass collective territories made up of indigenous reservations (30 percent of the country's land area) and afrodescendent territories (5.5 percent of the country), which are in turn areas of significant ecosystem value, but with poverty indices far higher than the national average. The foregoing is particularly important when the following factors are taken into consideration:



- According to national data, forestry and timber extraction represent 0.2 percent of GDP³ and 1.2 percent of agricultural, forestry, hunting and fishery GDP. More than 470 species of timber are traded in Colombia and it is also estimated that large numbers of people depend financially on the use of non-wood forest products.

¹ United Nations, 2015.

² Cauca (20 municipalities), Antioquia (15 municipalities), Caquetá (14 municipalities), Chocó and Nariño (12 municipalities each), Norte de Santander, Putumayo and Meta (8 municipalities each), Valle (6 municipalities), Tolima (5 municipalities), Arauca and Huila (4 municipalities each), Bolívar, Casanare, Córdoba and Guaviare (2 municipalities each) and La Guajira (1 municipality). It should be noted that the municipalities where the peace process is to be consolidated have not yet been defined, inasmuch as this is one of the points of discussion at the Havana talks.

³ It should be noted that these figures correspond to the formal sector in the country's accounts and that when the forest sector is able to reduce illegal activities (which stand at about 42 percent according to official figures) and informal activities, these figures will increase significantly.

- Fishing is one of the main sources of food and income for scattered rural inhabitants, and about 180 000 people are directly involved in this activity.

On the other hand, the renewable natural resources found in protected areas are major generators of the ecosystem services essential for human well-being in Colombia:

- Twenty-seven percent of municipalities that overlap with national nature reserves correspond to those with unsatisfied basic needs indices of over 52 percent (in rural areas), in other words, the country's poorest municipalities (the higher the percentage, the greater the needs, whereas the national average is 38 percent).
- Sixty percent of protected areas are under pressure from the land use and ownership claims of the roughly 15 000 campesino families who occupy them and use their natural resources illegally, thus generating conflicts over the use of these areas, which in turn give rise to social exclusion and negative environmental impacts.
- These areas have a large presence of illicit crops (3 791 hectares according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014) and high deforestation rates (25 258 hectares per year).

Peace-building thus requires the promotion of alternatives of sustainable local development based on the use of biodiversity.

The country clearly needs to make an effort to incorporate these zones into the collective imagination of what Colombia is as a whole. The post-conflict era offers a unique opportunity to promote them as viable, visible and socially, economically and environmentally relevant areas. Environmental and peace processes carried out in other countries in the region can be taken as examples here. Sound, interculturality-based knowledge management is also needed from the outset.

Communities must also be supported in sustainable forest management, starting with the acceptance that there are people living in the forests. Action must be initiated in regions that have been most seriously affected by the armed conflict and that have forests, identifying areas with a history of forest use and extraction (both legal and more informal). This information will enable a technical support programme to be designed and implemented to boost the communities' technical capacities regarding knowledge of forest dynamics and extraction and marketing processes, with such processes to be included in plans for green trade at the local level.

This strategy of organizing communities for forest management will require technical support and the development of legal instruments that take account of the situation in each zone where this approach is adopted.





Momentos del foro Bosques y Construcción de Paz, una Oportunidad para el Posconflicto. Agosto 20 del 2015. Imagen, campaña Bibo de El Espectador.

3

Revise forest policy and legislation to facilitate their implementation at the local level

Colombia's forest legislation must be updated in view of current situations. Signature of a peace accord for the country will very probably trigger updating, modernization and revision processes in various sectors, including that of forests.

It is urgent for forest legislation to take account of the fact that most forest extraction and other uses in the country are carried out by small-scale producers, and that the majority of forests are owned by indigenous and afrodescendent communities. This fact means that the revision of forest legislation should include an analysis of how alternative forms of legal access to forest use by these communities should be promoted, without jeopardizing their already acquired rights.

Similarly, legal instruments should be explored enabling communities to join forces so that they can achieve appropriate management of forest areas and thus ensure the sustainability of these ecosystems. Economic mechanisms should also be set up to support the management of natural forests (**for example, the creation of an incentive for natural forest management**), together with instruments providing access to resources for the acquisition of machinery that will facilitate the generation of added value for timber. Support is also needed for marketing the wood and non-wood products obtained from such operations.

This updating of the legislation must be creative enough to incorporate the new mechanisms for legal access to forests, forest monitoring and surveillance, timber traceability systems and of course recognition of the environmental services provided by forests as strategic ecosystems for Colombia.

Monitoring and sanction actions without long-term economic alternatives are not viable in the new context of a country at peace, so that funds must be set up to support local communities and new forest inhabitants (displaced people returning to their lands or rehabilitated people who decide to live in these areas) in order to generate sufficient income to maintain forest resources in the long term. This will in turn require a comprehensive approach that encompasses such aspects as housing support, the establishment of farming loan facilities and the promotion of socio-economic development in general.

All this must be backed up by the creation of economic tools that offer clear alternatives to current illegal activities such as mining and felling, specifying the creation of social niches and connections in the context of new concepts of the relationship between institutional framework and society.

4

Break away from the fixed idea that forests cannot be used



An analysis of the current situation in the country's forest sector will be needed, encompassing both natural and planted forests. At the same time, environmental awareness needs to be created within society in order to ensure that whenever forests are used, it is always done appropriately. Combined with the revision of financial mechanisms and international cooperation, this can generate better rates of return for those wishing to invest in the forest trade.

Here, the private sector becomes a fundamental partner in the peace-building process and in sustainable forest management, inasmuch as the country's national timber market is for the most part informal and/or illegal. It is also important to ensure a stronger private forest sector, with stakeholders in the value chain speaking the same

language, and to generate conditions allowing forest trade to be carried out according to sustainability and legality principles based on the boosting of local, regional and national forest governance structures.

5

Change the approach to forest management: a challenge for autonomous regional corporations

The autonomous regional corporations are obviously the state bodies with the greatest presence and mobility in the regions and this very important factor entails a heavy responsibility, which is linked to the form in which they will play the role of over-all environmental authority in this new context. They must, therefore, have a leading role in the peace-building process.

If the role of the autonomous regional corporations is confined to ensuring compliance with environmental legislation, many communities that have not had the benefit of technical support in the use of natural resources (in this case forests) will be adversely affected by this approach – which may be valid, but which would work to the detriment of marginalized rural inhabitants, since they would face administrative proceedings over the irregular use of these resources.

The autonomous regional corporations could provide these communities (grass-roots communities that have been the victims of the armed conflict and are seeking to manage forests in order to improve their quality of life)



Momentos del foro Bosques y Construcción de Paz, una Oportunidad para el Posconflicto, Agosto 20 del 2015. Imagen, campaña Bibo de El Espectador.

with technical support focusing on strengthening understanding of forest legislation and on the provision of training and technical assistance for forest management. This challenge for the corporations will entail training and refresher courses for their staff so that they can subsequently provide appropriate technical support.

In a context of peace-building, the autonomous regional corporations face the major challenge of **thinking differently**, in other words, changing their forest and environmental administrative approaches from those which focus exclusively on ensuring compliance with environmental legislation, to approaches promoting sustainable development. Their field staff therefore need to be boosted with interdisciplinary professionals with a grasp of the rigorous demands of sustainable forest management, the working of markets and other technical aspects, so that they can support and advise the communities to remain on their lands, on the basis of conservation and sustainable management of the natural resources at their disposal.

In addition, **the capacities of subnational bodies such as municipal and governorate authorities need to be built up**, since they too have to prepare to face the new challenges of supporting productive processes in peace-building zones.

The process of building the institutional capacity of these bodies must involve various local-level stakeholders. A consensus must be established among the various representatives of the public sector, the private sector and civil society heading indigenous, afrodescendent and campesino communities. Such action will allow better governance, practical productive economic strategies and intervention approaches in which the conservation of forest resources is an essential part of the process.



6

Work collaboratively in forest areas to consolidate peace

In a new departure in Colombia's history, the 2014-2018 "All for a New Country" National Development Plan contains a chapter with regionalized aims and strategies. This is the main tool at the government's disposal to achieve regional equality and overcome disparities in development (and poverty) between town and country. Moreover, the government's idea of building "local peace" will be a vital aspect of implementation of the peace accord, particularly points 1 (integrated agrarian reform) and 3 (the war on drug trafficking, including alternative development) of the talks currently taking place.

In addition, with regard to forest areas seen from the viewpoint of the various government ministries, there are further opportunities for peace-building, such as integrated rural development focusing on the local level, and on social and productive land-use planning, including for forest zones, as part of the "countryside transformation" sectoral re-engineering strategy being pursued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Similarly, concepts such as that of "regional competitiveness" are being included as part of the business development and diversification efforts of the Ministry of Trade, while the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development is joining forces with the National Nature Reserve Unit to pursue actions in forest reserves and protected areas as specific zones indispensable for the supply of key environmental goods and services for the country's development.

The issue of forest areas can be seen from two perspectives:

- Local development and/or local peace-building of necessity involve recognizing and using the comparative and competitive advantages of local zones. Moreover, this approach must be participatory and inclusive (a bottom-up approach), comprehensive and integrated (multisectoral), and differentiated (inasmuch as it depends on the social, economic, environmental and political features of each local area). It must also be based on economic development initiatives linked to specific markets. The forest sector must therefore be seen as extending beyond the timber sector and encompassing new income-generating alternatives for local communities, based also on non-wood forest products and the ecosystem services provided by forests (ecotourism, payment for water and climate regulation services etc.).

- The intersectoral nature of local development must be taken on board if forests are to be treated in an integrated manner, and this finds its practical expression in local areas. Synergy and coordination can be generated at the regional and local levels, thus implementing the national-level approach. In addition, the contribution and commitment of local stakeholders are vital in order to achieve the empowerment needed to carry out development initiatives. This will require capacity-building for both local authorities and communities, and coordination between the development aims of the regions and the country.

7

Ensure that international cooperation is better coordinated and more effective

In a peace-building context, international aid connected with forest governance, management and conservation needs to be more effective, which will require better coordination among the various initiatives of the cooperation agencies active in the country.

Mechanisms must be sought to ensure that the benefits of such aid reach communities as directly as possible. These mechanisms should include ensuring that communities participate from the very start of the various processes.



CONCLUSIONS

In the face of the opportunity provided by the signing of the peace accord, Colombia will have to revise a large part of its current legislation, as well as the economic mechanisms providing support to rural areas (incentives) and the strategy of support to rural producers. In this context, the forest sector must seize the opportunity to generate working spaces for a rapid updating of the forest policy, the national forest development plan and forest legislation.

The process of revising the mechanisms mentioned above must guarantee the broad participation of forest owners and other stakeholders in these ecosystems. This updating task should enable Colombia to include issues not currently considered, such as forest governance, a monitoring and surveillance system that should include timber traceability, the establishment and operation of forest production units run by rural communities, and the development of a forest extension system.

Efforts must also be pooled and coordinated to develop a forest communication and visibility programme, with the main thrust of establishing forests as spaces for peace-building and as income-generators for the whole of Colombian society.

The following aspects should be highlighted:

1. The forum was attended by 300 people who stayed for the entire event, surpassing expectations regarding participation numbers. There was maximum press coverage, since the El Espectador newspaper's Forest Goods and Services Campaign worked with WWF Colombia and managed to assemble the country's main television, press and social network media. These efforts achieved the aim of making Colombian citizens aware of forests within a peace-building context, popularizing the subject.
2. Social networks received 80 000 hits during the three weeks following the event and there were television and radio programmes and articles in the national and local press. There were also many enquiries and expressions of interest in the subject addressed to the bodies heading the forum.
3. Organization of this event enabled the conceptual foundations to be laid for the "Forests, Space for Empowerment for Peace-building" event and the establishment of a working network with more than 15 public, civil society and international cooperation bodies.
4. When addressing the issue of forests, their ownership systems must be borne in mind and they must be used or harvested in the first place by their owners, since the latter are the primary producers, and it is they who must supply the raw material allowing the country's forest industry to develop. This was the position of FEDEMADERAS in this regard.
5. Indigenous, afrodescendent and campesino communities expressed their view that forests could be laboratories for peace and that their use should be pursued in peaceful coexistence –with the clear proviso that a peace process must not infringe on acquired rights over these areas or their ecosystems.
6. Peace talks in the country have received the support of preparation by every branch of government, as can be seen in the cases of the Ministries of the Environment, Agriculture and Trade and the National Planning Department. Specific initiatives are planned with regard to the peace-building process and these are contained within the current National Development Plan entitled "**All for a New Country**".
7. The possibility that in a context of peace, forests can generate a better quality of life for the communities living in and depending on these ecosystems will, in the short term, require the establishment and consolidation of systems of intelligent forest governance. And this will be the challenge for forest management for Colombia.



Momentos del foro Bosques y Construcción de Paz, una Oportunidad para el Posconflicto. Agosto 20 del 2015. Imagen, campaña Bibo de El Espectador.

ACRONYMS

CARDER	Risaralda Autonomous Regional Corporation
EFI	European Forest Institute
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEDEMADERAS	Colombian National Timber Federation
FLEGT	Forest Law, Enforcement, Governance and Trade
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
ONF Andina	French National Forest Office
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature



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