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للأمم المتحدة

# COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

## TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

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## GENDER AND FORESTRY

### I. Introduction

1. Forests and trees are a direct source of food, income and a range of subsistence benefits for millions of people worldwide. These resources are often used differently by men and women. Understanding and taking into account the differences in use and interaction with the forest by women and men is not only an essential condition for achieving sustainable management of forests and trees, but also vital for enhancing the contribution of forests to food security and sustainable livelihoods and for agricultural development in general.
2. Generally, gender is considered as only concerning women and therefore not an important aspect of forest management. Gender analysis regards gender as being a culturally specific and socially conditioned identity of men and women. Hence, gender issues concern both men and women as well as their relations.
3. The gender-related differences in knowledge, capacities and needs are often overlooked in programmes and management approaches within the forest sector. However, improper management and potential loss of essential ecosystems will have a different impact on women and men. Consequently, in order to ensure the sustainable management of forests, the voices of both women and men must be included in decision making.
4. In 2015, the UN Commission on the Status of Women will assess progress made on the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, 20 years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The objective of the Platform for Action is the empowerment of all women, aiming to remove all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. "Beijing +20" will address current challenges affecting the implementation of the Platform for Action, as well as opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda. The ongoing process of the Open Working Group (OWG) for the Development of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has identified gender equality and women's empowerment as one of the focus areas. Sustainable forest management (SFM) is based on the same three pillars as sustainable development, i.e. it needs to balance social, economic and environmental aspects. Gender equality in forest management and forest policy decisions is an important element of the social dimension and therefore for achieving SFM. In view of Beijing +20 and the SDG process, it is therefore timely to identify the challenges and opportunities for improving gender equality in forestry and actions to be taken by countries to strengthen their efforts in this respect.

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## II. The roles of men and women in forest management

5. Men and women often play different roles in planting, protecting or caring for seedlings and small trees, as well as in planting and maintaining homestead woodlots and plantations on public lands. Although these roles are changing, men tend to play a greater role than women in extracting timber and non-wood forest products for commercial purposes. Women typically gather forest products for fuel, fencing, food for the family, fodder for livestock and raw materials to produce natural medicines.

6. While women's activities generally revolve around the nutritional and subsistence needs of their households, frequently women also make important contributions to the household's cash income. This often occurs through involvement in forest-based income earning activities, such as collection, processing and sale of non-wood forest products. This is typically done while still tending to all the other subsistence needs of the household, namely provision of food and child care. Processing of forest products for later sale on local markets or for their own use can be done near the home, thus allowing women to combine income earning activities with household chores. Income generated through these activities can often make a significant contribution to food security and rural livelihoods.

7. Economic, social, cultural, political and legal environments affect the rights of women and men to control forest resources and own land. Even where women have ownership rights to land, their access to forest products and opportunities for forest-generated income may not be assured. Different members of the community may have established informal rights to use different parts of the forest or individual trees – in most cases women have access to the non-wood forest products but not to the timber. This differentiation by gender has major implications for the ownership and usufruct rights to the forest and its products and for the management of the forest.

8. According to FAO's *State of the World's Forests 2014*, globally, eighty percent of the unpaid fuelwood collection is done by women and girls. In areas where there are no forests nearby or where forests have been degraded, women's household responsibilities, such as gathering wood and forest products for fuel and food become very time consuming, reducing the time available for other household or community activities.

## III. Closing the gender gap

9. In many parts of the world, women and men are facing new challenges in adapting to changing roles and responsibilities in forest resource management. These challenges are mostly related to climate change, food and energy security and demographic transition. In response to these challenges, rural men often migrate to urban areas seeking for alternative income opportunities to support their families. Women, who stay behind with their families, are in many cases confronted with an increased work load, additional responsibilities to run the family farm or carry out forest related activities. In this context, ensuring better access to resources and services, and ensuring also gender equality and women's empowerment in policy formulation and implementation will contribute to sustainable forest management and agricultural development in general.

10. The inclusion of both women and men in the planning, designing, implementing and decision making processes will provide the bases to ensure that benefits from forest enterprises and forest protection initiatives (e.g. REDD+) are distributed equitably. Additionally, these initiatives will benefit to take into account and build on the great array and wealth of knowledge, practices, special skills and ethics that women bring as users of forests and managers of non-wood forest products for regeneration, conservation, and sustainability.

11. Incorporating a gender perspective in forest management and decision making processes can enhance sustainable forest management by:

- increasing awareness among men and women of the value of forests and trees, and the different roles of women and men in the sustainable management of these resources;

- avoiding potential conflicts among competing uses of forests and their products, and ensuring that women's and men's traditional and indigenous rights to forest use are maintained and enhanced;
- promoting equal tenure rights and access to land of women and to other resources necessary for effective socio-economic participation (e.g. capital, technical assistance, new and improved technology, tools, equipment, markets and time) by implementing the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Lands, Fisheries and Forests;
- training both women and men in methods to increase productivity through the use of new and improved forestry technologies;
- incorporating gender disaggregated data into forest information systems.

#### **IV. FAO's Approach to mainstreaming gender in forestry**

12. FAO has a long history of integrating gender issues into its programmes and project work on forestry. Over the years, FAO's community forestry work in particular has successfully mainstreamed gender concerns to increase participation of women in decision-making and the formation of businesses in low-income communities. As a result of such early experiences, a series of training materials was developed to mainstream gender considerations in forestry work around the world.

13. Achieving gender equality is an important means to achieve FAO's three global goals of eliminating hunger, reducing poverty and achieving sustainable management of natural resources. To this end, at the corporate level, FAO has significantly strengthened its support to promoting gender equality in recent years. In 2012, FAO's Policy on Gender Equality was finalized, providing FAO with a framework to guide and assess its efforts to achieve gender equality in all areas of its technical work in pursuit of its overarching goals.

14. Moreover, gender has been elevated within FAO's new Strategic Framework for 2010-19 to a cross-cutting theme mainstreamed across all five of the new Strategic Objectives and the sixth technical objective. Gender-related issues are incorporated and mainstreamed in results frameworks, work plans and resource allocations of all objectives. The MTP/PWB expected outcome for cross-cutting work on gender is: "strengthened capacities of member countries to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate policies, strategies, programmes and investments that provide equal opportunities for women and men in agriculture and food security." Key areas of work to address this outcome have been identified under each Strategic Objective, and are being implemented in the current biennium. FAO will periodically monitor the implementation of these activities and the objectives outlined in FAO's Gender Equality Policy. Gender is also mainstreamed in the Country Programming Framework (CPF) and projects/programmes as a defining factor of sustainability along with the other UN common programming principles.

15. In addition to these initiatives, the important linkages of gender and forestry to food security in all stages of the food chain were highlighted at the first International Conference on Forests for Food Security and Nutrition held in 2013 at FAO headquarters. The conference recommended, among others, striving for gender equality in food security, nutrition and poverty-alleviation policies and investment strategies.

16. In view of Beijing+20 and the global discussion on the sustainable development goals, FAO is committed to broadening the potential role of women in agricultural development and food security and to strengthening support to countries in their efforts to achieve gender equality in forestry.

#### **V. Points for consideration**

17. The Committee may wish to invite countries to:
- increase efforts, including national coordination related to the OWG and the UN General Assembly, to ensure adequate consideration of:
    - gender issues in forestry in the deliberations of the UN Commission on the Status of Women at "Beijing +20";
    - gender equality in the post-2015 development agenda;

- mainstream gender in national forestry policies, programmes and institutions and reorient these policies and programmes towards priorities and needs of forest users, especially the poorer majority of rural producers, with a clear focus on women and girls as producers and users of forests;
- increase the availability, access and use of gender-disaggregated data specifically in the forest sector to ensure that women's contributions are adequately recognized and reported;
- promote national networks of women in forestry;
- make provisions for gender-specific research within the forest sector.

18. The Committee may wish to recommend that FAO support countries by:

- strengthening capacity and providing technical support for gender mainstreaming and the collection of gender-disaggregated data in the forest sector;
- supporting the economic empowerment of women in the forestry value chain through enterprise development;
- promoting collaboration among local, national, regional and international women networks and assisting in the establishment of new networks, where necessary.