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# COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

## TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

Rome, Italy, 23-27 June 2014

### REDUCING EMISSIONS FROM DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION, AND THE CLIMATE SUMMIT 2014

#### I. BACKGROUND

1. Forests continue to be a key sector in the climate change arena. Recent international developments include consolidation of the framework for forest mitigation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), preparations for the launching of forest-related initiatives at a high-level climate summit to be convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UNSG) in September 2014, and the release of new forest-related information in the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2014).
2. The IPCC AR5 underlined the importance of forests in the global carbon cycle and the significant impacts that climate change is having on forests. The agriculture, forest and land use (AFOLU) sector is responsible for an estimated 25 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, which is significant although slightly lower than the IPCC AR4's estimate of a combined total of 30 percent for the forestry and agriculture sectors. Deforestation and forest degradation continue to be major, although decreasing, sources of emissions. AR5 calculates that there is high potential for cost-efficient mitigation action in the forest sector. AR5 reports that impacts of climate change on forests are evident in all regions, with major impacts in most regions. Drought and heat-induced tree mortality is particularly strong in North America as well as along the northern coast of the Mediterranean. Given the significant impacts already being felt by forests, urgent action is needed in adaptation. Forest mitigation and adaptation measures are mutually-reinforcing and synergistic with development needs.
3. The policy framework for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) under UNFCCC has been substantially strengthened. Seven decisions on REDD+ were adopted at the nineteenth Conference of the Parties (COP19) of UNFCCC in November 2013. The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ Actions consists of decisions related to REDD+ finance, institutional arrangements and methodological guidance to help make REDD+ under the UNFCCC fully functional. Overall, this package is an achievement that will help to scale up and enhance work on REDD+ under the convention. REDD+ issues still under discussion by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of UNFCCC in its June 2014 meeting are non-market-based approaches (i.e. joint mitigation and adaptation actions) and non-carbon benefits of REDD+ actions. In June, SBSTA will also address issues related to agriculture, following up on the earlier discussions by SBSTA in December 2013.

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4. Negotiations of a new climate change agreement are due to be completed at UNFCCC's COP21 in Paris in December 2015. In order to generate momentum and high level political commitment for an ambitious 2015 agreement, the UNSG is convening a Climate Summit at UN Headquarters on 23 September 2014.
5. A high-level meeting was held in Abu Dhabi on 4 and 5 May to lay the foundation for the Climate Summit. At the Abu Dhabi Ascent, governments and other stakeholders discussed nine initiatives on climate change that are expected to be launched at the UNSG's Climate Summit. One of the nine climate initiatives is on forests. The proposed initiative seeks to reduce deforestation and increase forest restoration. Foreseen actions include the following: countries to set ambitious deforestation reduction or forest restoration targets under the post-2020 climate agreement; developed countries to increase commitment for REDD+ demand in the post-2020 climate agreement; private companies and the public sector to make commitments to deforestation-free commodity supply chains or operations; and tropical forest countries to advance sustainable land-use strategies. This initiative will be aligned with the achievement of the Bonn Challenge (i.e. to restore 150 million hectares of degraded land by 2020 through forest landscape restoration) and the related Aichi Target 15 (i.e. to restore 15 percent of degraded ecosystems by 2020) of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
6. Another proposed initiative involving forests and trees proposed for the Climate Summit is the Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) Alliance. The Alliance is a multi-stakeholder coalition to support knowledge, investment and enabling environments to increase food security, enhance resilience of agricultural sectors (including crop, livestock, forest and fisheries sectors) and reduce the agriculture sectors' impact on climate change.

## **II. KEY AREAS OF WORK OF FAO TO SUPPORT MEMBER COUNTRY EFFORTS IN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION**

7. Climate change is a cross-cutting area in the new FAO Strategic Framework, relevant to all strategic objectives but with action most concentrated in SO2 (Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner) and SO5 (Increase the resilience of livelihoods to disasters). Various inter-departmental coordination mechanisms have been set up to ensure coordinated action in climate change.
8. FAO has a number of programmes working to strengthen countries' capacities in forest monitoring and resource assessment as a basis for sound decision making on climate change mitigation and adaptation.
9. The UN-REDD Programme is providing support to 51 countries; 18 countries are receiving support for the development and implementation of the elements required to access REDD+ performance-based payments as reflected in the provisions of the Cancun Agreements on REDD+ (i.e. a national forest monitoring system, a forest reference level or forest emission reference level, a national REDD+ strategy and a system for informing how safeguards are being addressed), and another 33 countries are receiving targeted support for certain REDD+ readiness activities, such as the ones indicated above and in the areas of governance, legal preparedness and land tenure issues. Currently FAO, through the UN-REDD programme and two projects funded by the Governments of Finland and Germany respectively, is providing assistance to 38 countries to strengthen their forest monitoring systems. The Voluntary Guidelines on National Forest Monitoring, now under preparation (see COFO document 6. 3), will be a major instrument for better articulating knowledge and support on forest monitoring systems in member countries.
10. FAO is actively supporting country cooperation in climate change mitigation. These include south-south cooperation of the COMIFAC countries with Brazil in the area of forest monitoring, which has materialized as a cooperation project through the Amazon Fund to improve infrastructure and capacities on forest monitoring, and the efforts of Mexico to enhance south-south cooperation on monitoring, reporting and verification in Mesoamerica. FAO is also implementing the project "Maximize the production of goods and services of Mediterranean forest ecosystems in the context of

global changes”, which supports intra and inter-regional cooperation in climate change mitigation. It is funded by the Government of France and is carried out in conjunction with *Silva Mediterranea*.

11. FAO is working to facilitate regional and sub-regional collaboration on forests and climate change adaptation through a number of projects and initiatives. FAO leads the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forest (CPMF), which is promoting adaptation of Mediterranean forests in the context of a regional platform involving Algeria, Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia and Turkey. FAO is also facilitating sub-regional cooperation in Southern Africa, Central Europe, the Nile Basin and the Caribbean. Following up on workshops held in 2013 and early 2014, FAO is working with interested countries to develop proposals and seek financing for sub-regional cooperation projects in forest and climate change adaptation.

12. The Climate Change Guidelines for Forest Managers (FAO, 2013) were used in Kenya, Nepal and Peru to stimulate national stakeholder discussions and local level consultations leading to the development of action plans to facilitate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures by forest managers. The plan is currently being implemented in Kenya.

13. FAO is contributing to develop the forest initiative to be launched at the Summit in September and is fully committed to subsequently supporting member countries in the implementation of the initiative. FAO’s “Zero illegal deforestation challenge” and FAO’s Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism are key means to support the implementation of the forest climate initiative.

14. FAO is working within the voluntary core group of partners to facilitate the development of the CSA Alliance, which will be a partnership of countries, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. The FAO Forestry Department is working to ensure forest issues are well integrated into the CSA Alliance and to support sound land use decisions and coordinated action across the agriculture and forest sectors.

### III. THE WAY FORWARD

15. Forests will continue to be an important option for cost-effective mitigation actions, which at the same time have significant potential to provide socio-economic and environmental benefits, including improved food security, poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. Conversely, adaptation actions in the forest sector, for example forest restoration, will often result in mitigation benefits. UNFCCC is addressing mitigation-adaptation links in the discussion of non-market-based approaches in REDD+. Along with the development of policy framework and incentives at national and international levels to maximize the synergies between forest-based adaptation and mitigation, methods and tools to facilitate an assessment of the synergies and trade-offs and documentation, compilation and sharing of country experiences would be useful for decision-making on forestry policy, planning and implementation.

16. Intersectoral coordination, particularly between forestry and agriculture but also between forestry and energy, is essential for a coherent approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Some countries are supporting a land-based approach to climate change accounting in the 2015 climate change agreement, and agriculture issues are being discussed by UNFCCC’s SBSTA. Addressing linkages between agriculture and forestry at international climate change policy level, at national policy level and on the ground at landscape level will require reliable information, effective coordination mechanisms and inclusive stakeholder processes.

17. Forests’ and trees’ contributions to food security (while addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation) should be considered as important components of climate smart agriculture strategies and programmes. Clear and widespread understanding of the roles of forests and trees in CSA would facilitate the development of comprehensive CSA strategies and programmes that maximize synergies and reconcile trade-offs between the sectors.

#### IV. POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

18. The Committee may wish to request countries to:
- Support the forest initiative that will be launched at the UNSG Climate Summit in September 2014, including through indications of heightened commitments for reducing deforestation and forest degradation and for increasing forest restoration and restoring degraded forests, as consistent with the Bonn Challenge and Aichi Target 15 while ensuring that FAO's role is commensurate with its mandate, expertise, resources and leading role in global forest issues.
  - Consider synergies and trade-offs between climate change mitigation and adaptation in their forest sector strategies and plans and reflect this in their national climate change strategies (including National Adaptation Plans, REDD+ strategies) and related forestry strategies.
  - Strengthen mechanisms for intersectoral coordination and stakeholder consultation for improved land use policies and plans, including addressing drivers of deforestation, that optimize linkages between agriculture and forestry, their contributions to climate change adaptation and mitigation.
19. The Committee may wish to recognize FAO's active and varied support to countries on forests and climate change mitigation and adaptation to date and request FAO to:
- Continue to provide assistance to countries for undertaking forest and climate change adaptation and mitigation actions and for establishing and strengthening national forest monitoring systems to provide needed data and information for policy formulation, planning purposes and international reporting.
  - Provide support to countries to integrate forests and trees into their National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions.
  - Take a leading role and work in partnership with other organizations to support countries in the implementation of the forest initiative scheduled to be launched at the UNSG's Climate Summit consistent with the Zero illegal deforestation challenge, as well as the different activities conducted in this area (REDD+, National Forest Monitoring, Forest Management, Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism, etc.).
  - Increase the level of FAO's support to countries for implementation of their REDD+ strategies and forest adaptation efforts, both through its regular programme activities in sustainable forest management and expanded efforts made possible through mobilization of additional financial resources.
  - Clarify and demonstrate the role of forests and trees as well as rural land use planning in the CSA Alliance and assist countries to develop strong links between CSA and REDD+ initiatives at policy and field level.