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Продовольственная и  
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Organización  
de las  
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para la  
Alimentación y la  
Agricultura

## ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY COMMISSION

### TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

**Clark Freeport Zone, Pampanga, Philippines, 22-26 February 2016**

**Beyond Paris: What next for forests and forestry in Asia-Pacific?**

### SECRETARIAT NOTE

#### Introduction

1. On 12 December 2015 in Paris, the 21st Conference of the Parties<sup>1</sup> (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded negotiations on a landmark agreement to limit global average temperature raise to below 2°C. The forest and land-use sectors featured prominently in the discussions at COP21 and the final Paris Agreement text<sup>2</sup>. This note provides an overview of the key features of the Paris Agreement and potential implications for forests and forestry in Asia and the Pacific.

#### The Paris Agreement – An overview from the forestry perspective

2. Following many years of work by UNFCCC Parties to develop a universal, legally binding global instrument to replace the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement is being heralded as a significant step forward in efforts to tackle the impacts and drivers of climate change. It establishes a collective commitment by the Parties to the UNFCCC to take action to limit the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue further efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C. The Agreement will enter into force when it is ratified by at least 55 Parties that in aggregate account for at least 55 percent of total global emissions. The commitment period will commence in 2020 following the close of the extension period for the Kyoto Protocol and remain in effect at least until 2030.

3. To achieve the 2°C target the Parties aim to reach a peak in global emissions as soon as possible, while recognizing that peaking will take longer for developing countries. Further, once a peak in emissions is reached Parties have agreed to undertake rapid reductions in accordance with available knowledge and with the goal of achieving balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and

<sup>1</sup> The 195 countries that have ratified the UNFCCC are called Parties to the Convention.

<sup>2</sup> Full decision and agreement text available at: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/109r01.pdf>

removals by sinks in the second half of the century. In support of this goal, the Agreement makes reference to the importance of conserving and enhancing carbon sinks and reservoirs and highlights the special role of forests in this regard. In particular, under Article 5 of the Agreement Parties are encouraged to implement and support policy approaches and positive incentives for activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+). Parties are also encouraged to implement and support alternative approaches such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the sustainable management of forests, while reaffirming the importance of incentivizing non-carbon benefits associated with such approaches.

4. Actions under the Agreement will be based upon Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Following the outcome of the Lima Call for Action the majority of Parties developed Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) in the lead up to COP21 to facilitate the negotiations and serve as a basis for the Agreement. INDCs<sup>3</sup> outline country plans to tackle climate change in the lead up to and during the commitment period. These documents generally include “business as usual” or baseline scenarios; target conditional and unconditional commitments for emissions reductions using a range of acceptable methods and benchmarks; policies or mechanisms to meet the targets; priority areas for adaptation and climate resilience; and implementation requirements covering financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity-building.

5. As of early January 2016, 160 Parties had provided INDC submissions to the UNFCCC. Of these, 36 INDC submissions were by Parties from Asia and the Pacific. Parties that have not yet submitted an INDC have been invited to submit an INDC in advance of the next COP in November 2016. Forestry features prominently in the mitigation actions identified by countries. Many countries including a number from the region reaffirmed existing plans for action on REDD+. A number of countries also made commitments to achieve specific forest cover levels through afforestation and reforestation.

6. Adaptation is a key element of the Paris Agreement and was a central element of most of the INDCs submitted by Parties. The agreement establishes a global goal for adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate response to climate threats resulting from warmer global temperatures. In support of this goal, Parties are encouraged under the Agreement to engage in national adaptation planning and implementation processes. Countries in Asia and the Pacific highlighted a range of strategies to enhance adaptation in the forest sector and strengthen the resilience of forest-dependent communities in their INDCs. Specific measures included community-based forest resource management, mangrove rehabilitation and strengthening forest policies and institutions and enhancing capacity towards sustainable forest management.

7. Despite the strong commitment to reduce emissions embodied in the INDCs, a synthesis report prepared by the UNFCCC Secretariat in advance of COP21 found that on aggregate the emissions reductions incorporated into the INDCs will not be sufficient to achieve the goal of limiting average global temperatures to well below 2°C. To encourage further efforts to achieve the 2°C target and address the impacts of climate change, the Agreement sets in place a process to communicate and update Parties’ INDCs. Parties are expected to communicate or update their NDC again before the commencement of the Agreement commitment period in 2020 and repeat this process every five years, with an expectation that the contributions will progressively grow in ambition.

8. As implementation of the Agreement has largely been delegated to individual Parties through the NDCs, the establishment of a mechanism to ensure the transparency of progress reporting is another key

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<sup>3</sup> The term INDC refers to the national determined contributions developed by Parties and submitted to the UNFCCC in advance of COP21 and, as per the invitation to Parties in paragraph 13 of the decision to adopt the Paris Agreement, any nationally determined contributions developed by Parties after COP21 and submitted to the UNFCCC in advance of COP22.

feature of the Agreement. The Agreement establishes a transparency framework with flexibility to take account of Parties' different capacities. The specific details of the framework are yet to be decided. However, Parties will be required to provide a regular national inventory of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks and information necessary to track progress made in implementing and achieving the INDCs.

9. Financing to support implementation of the Agreement was a key issue during the COP21 negotiations. The preamble of the Agreement makes reference to the goal set in the Copenhagen Accord to reach US\$100 billion of annual funding for climate action by 2020 and embeds a commitment to revisit the adequacy of this pledge in 2025. Article 9 of the Agreement calls for scaled-up financial resources to support climate action.

10. During COP21 a number of public and private funding commitments were made – some specifically to support Parties' commitments on REDD+. Norway, Germany and the United Kingdom jointly pledged US\$5 billion by 2020 for REDD+ and an additional US\$1 billion per year thereafter<sup>4</sup>. This will build on the US\$10 billion that has been pledged for work on REDD+ to date. In addition, new pledges to strengthen UNFCCC financing mechanisms such as the Adaptation Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) totaled more than US\$1.5 billion. Further, pledges by multilateral development banks and a number of developed countries will result in additional finance of more than US\$30 billion and US\$ 18 billion per year, respectively, to support climate action and NDC implementation by 2020. Finally, private sector banks and investors have also pledged to expand investment in renewable and clean energy, green bonds, low-emission transport and agriculture.

### **Implications of the Paris Agreement for forests and forestry in Asia and the Pacific**

11. The Paris Agreement will have a range of implications for forests and forestry in the region. The most important new development is that the INDC will likely become a key planning and guidance document for future climate change adaptation and mitigation actions including REDD+ and sustainable forest management. The process to develop the INDCs differed across countries in the region and in some cases may not have involved the extensive sector consultation usually required of other economy-wide development planning processes. If Ministries and Departments of Forestry have not been closely involved in formulating country INDCs, this situation should be addressed in future efforts to review, formulate and revise NDC commitments as required by the Paris Agreement.

12. Where countries have made strong commitments for action in the forest sectors, work will now be required to assess the specific requirements of these actions including the adequacy of enabling policy and institutional frameworks, technical capacity, technology and finance. Due to countries' existing efforts to prepare for and implement REDD+ measures in cooperation with UN-REDD and other similar initiatives and the significant financial pledges to support action on REDD+ that have accompanied the Paris Agreement, the national forestry sectors will be in a good position to undertake effective action in support of NDC commitments and leverage additional support.

13. One area that may benefit from additional support in the region under REDD+ is action to address emissions from tropical peatlands, which are characterized by high carbon concentrations. The region has been experiencing significant conversion of peatlands to agriculture and more severe and frequent peat forest fires. Reducing the draining and burning of peatlands is one of the most cost-effective mitigation options according to the IPCC 4th Assessment Report. The wider health and socio-economic costs of peatland fires are also significant problems and expected to increase with the effects of climate change, especially in peak years exacerbated by low rainfall in El Niño cycles. The emissions

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<sup>4</sup> Announcement available at: <http://standwithforests.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015-GNU-Joint-Statement-on-REDD-for-COP-21-FINAL.pdf>

from tropical peatland fires often coincide with deforestation hotspots. Countries in the region could look to reviewing their INDCs with a view to accelerate actions to address these and other pressing forestry issues at the country level.

14. The Paris Agreement encourages Parties to support the existing REDD+ mechanisms set by previous COPs, in particular the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ and results-based payments. As a result, countries in the region are already making progress in the forest sector towards meeting the Paris Agreement's requirements for transparency. Efforts to meet the Framework's core Measuring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) requirements relating to results-based payments including the establishment of forest reference emission levels (FREL) and/or forest reference levels (FRL) are underway. As countries develop experience with the requirements of the Warsaw Framework, forest sector stakeholders from around the region should look to inform the global process to develop the transparency framework for implementation of the Paris Agreement.

15. The prominence afforded to adaptation by Parties through their INDCs and in the Paris Agreement text also opens up opportunities to enhance country and regional-level efforts to strengthen the resilience of forest ecosystems and forest-dependent communities. The Agreement acknowledges clear links between mitigation and adaptation and encourages action that leads to non-carbon benefits. While these benefits are not defined in the context of the Agreement, they can refer to a range of additional co-benefits arising from sustainable adaptation and mitigation actions including enhanced biodiversity and ecosystem services, strengthened livelihoods, poverty alleviation and improved food security.

16. Forest sector stakeholders will need to engage with national adaptation planning processes to ensure that the forestry issues are appropriately addressed and build upon sector specific priorities in previous, ongoing and planned activities. The Agreement also encourages Parties to share information and experiences with adaptation, and countries should assess how existing regional networks such as APFC can enhance collective efforts with effective adaptation planning and implementation in the forestry sector, in the context of broader national adaptation planning processes.

### **What next and the role of FAO in supporting implementation of the Paris Agreement**

17. In follow-up to COP21 countries will need to begin preparing to implement and monitor their NDCs in a manner consistent with the Paris Agreement and its associated compliance mechanisms. In the four years leading up to the start of the commitment period countries will be required to assess and, where desired, update their INDCs based on an inclusive process of consultation. Countries in the region who have not submitted an INDC have an opportunity to finalize one and submit it in advance of the next COP - preferably before the 9 April 2016 deadline for inclusion in the second INDC synthesis report.

18. As part of the INDC review, Ministries and Departments of forestry will need to identify actions to address needs and gaps for technical assistance, technology and finance for planning, implementing, and communicating their priority mitigation and adaptation actions. Forest sector stakeholders will also need to discuss and develop implementation plans and timelines for implementation of forestry sector NDC actions. In developing implementation plans, countries may want to consider links and synergies with country-level REDD+ programs and activities in support of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+. Additionally, countries may also want to consider, in the context of their national forest programmes or forest policy frameworks, the links between their NDC commitments and planned actions in support of the recently agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – particularly SDG13 on combating climate change and SDG15 on life on land – and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

19. FAO is prepared to support countries review and prepare plans for NDC implementation and engage more effectively in global processes to support the Paris Agreement. Based on extensive experience at the country-level with national and field-level programs on forest governance, sustainable

forest management, community forestry, REDD+ and climate change adaptation, FAO is able to assist countries assess INDC mitigation and adaptation commitments and support the development of policies and programs to facilitate implementation. FAO is also ready to work with countries at the regional level to consolidate experiences with REDD+ and MRV to support and enrich future discussions and deliberations regarding development of the Paris Agreement transparency framework.

20. In addition to country-level preparations for NDC implementation, Parties have been invited to provide inputs to a number of global processes to support further development of the provisions contained in the Paris Agreement and associated UNFCCC mechanisms. Specifically, technical workshops being organized by the 44th meeting of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA44) in May 2016 will provide countries with an opportunity to raise issues related to adaptation in agriculture and land-use sectors, including forestry. The SBSTA44 workshops may provide an opportunity to highlight technical challenges and opportunities associated with outstanding issues with respect to REDD+ concerning guidance on safeguard information systems, non-market mechanisms and forests and non-carbon benefits.

21. The outcomes of the SBSTA44 will be consolidated into advice to future COPs on how to incorporate these issues into future negotiations, which could potentially influence the future direction of mechanisms to be developed in support of the Paris Agreement. Countries can be involved in the SBSTA process by making formal submissions by 9 March 2016 and/or by sending country delegations to attend the meetings. FAO is assisting countries prepare submissions and negotiators for engagement in the SBSTA44 meeting and workshops. Where requested, FAO also assist eligible, regional organizations in the preparation of submissions for the SBSTA44 meeting and workshops.

### **Points for consideration**

22. Commission members may wish to consider the following questions in their discussions:

- The INDCs outline an ambitious set of country-level commitments to expand action to address the drivers and impacts of climate change. What forms of technical support do countries require to plan, implement and monitor the core forestry-related mitigation and adaptation activities identified in their respective INDCs? Inter-disciplinary and integrated approaches are being increasingly highlighted as priorities for bilateral donors, multilateral banks and UNFCCC funding mechanisms such as Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund. How can forest sector programs better create synergies with agriculture and deliver a range of development benefits such as food security, resilience and emissions reductions? Are there examples of successful integrated forestry initiatives that could be used as best practice cases to guide development of future integrated programs at national and regional levels?
- Based on country experience with MRV under REDD+, what are the lessons learned from this region that should be taken account of in the development of the Paris Agreement transparency framework?
- Given the potential for the SBSTA44 meetings and workshops in 2016 to influence future COP negotiations, how could forest sector stakeholders best ensure that forest sector issues are reflected in the SBSTA discussions? Are Commission members already working with their national SBSTA delegations to prepare for these meetings and workshops? Is there any advice or lessons learned that may be of interest to other Commission members looking to engage with the SBSTA processes?

23. The Commission may wish to consider the following recommendations for follow-up action:

- The Commission may wish to suggest that member countries with the assistance of FAO identify, prioritize and develop integrated forest-sector projects and programmes that will assist countries to prepare for and implement NDC commitments to climate change mitigation and

adaptation, while also delivering development co-benefits such as food security, poverty reduction and resilience..

- The Commission may wish to request that FAO, in connection with the UN-REDD Programme, consolidate lessons learned from experiences with MRV under REDD+ to inform and enrich future discussions to shape and define the Paris Agreement transparency framework.
- Commission may wish to suggest that member countries conduct consultations with their respective UNFCCC country focal points and negotiating teams in advance of SBSTA44 to ensure that forestry issues are properly reflected in country submissions and negotiating positions.