

REPORT

**Quito,
Ecuador,
29 September - 3 October,
2008**

Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission

Twenty-fifth Session



**Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación**

PREVIOUS SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION

1st Session	Río de Janeiro, Brasil	23 May 1949
2nd Session	Lima, Peru	14 November 1949
3rd Session	Santiago, Chile	11 December 1950
4th Session	Buenos Aires, Argentina	16-23 June 1952
5th Session	Caracas, Venezuela	4-15 October 1955
6th Session	Antigua, Guatemala	4-15 November 1958
7th Session	Mexico City, Mexico	3-6 August 1960
8th Session	Santiago, Chile	13-19 November 1962
9th Session	Curitiba, Brazil	5-12 November 1964
10th Session	Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago	4-9 December 1967
11th Session	Quito, Ecuador	11-21 November 1970
12th Session	Havana, Cuba	2-7 February 1976
13th Session	Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, Mexico	18-22 February 1980
14th Session	Lima, Peru	15-18 November 1982
15th Session	San José, Costa Rica	6-10 October 1986
16th Session	Kingston, Jamaica	18-22 April 1988
17th Session	Ciudad Guayana, Venezuela	18-22 February 1991
18th Session	Maldonado, Uruguay	6-10 December 1993
19th Session	Ciudad de Panama, Panama	17-21 June 1996
20th Session	Havana, Cuba	10-14 September 1998
21st Session	Santa Fe de Bogota, Colombia	4-8 September 2000
22nd Session	Buenos Aires, Argentina	7-11 October 2002
23rd Session	San José, Costa Rica	18-22 October 2004
24th Session	Santo Domingo, Dominican Rep.	26-30 June 2006

REPORT

of the

TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

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LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUESTS

For the attention of the FAO Forestry Department

1. The Commission underlined with deep concern the devastating impact of recent hurricanes on Cuba and Haiti. The Commission expressed its solidarity with those countries, which had been seriously affected by the events that had caused social, economic and environmental emergencies, and recommended that the governments of the Region and FAO provide maximum support to those countries to mitigate the negative effects and to permit the restoration of forest cover and the rebuilding of appropriate living conditions for the affected communities. (para. 17).
2. The Commission stressed that deforestation had a complex matrix of causes, including sectoral, economic and social interests that needed to be addressed beyond the forest sector. The Commission therefore recommended that COFO look into ways of providing greater support to countries in their efforts to reverse the loss of forest cover and forest degradation. (para. 19).
3. The Commission requested that FAO provide greater support in facilitating dialogue between countries to identify new mechanisms that would enhance the valuation, in the national accounts, of environmental goods and services generated by forest activities. (para. 27).
4. Some delegates expressed their concern about mechanisms that could be established to support countries in reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, in the sense that these could be difficult to access and thus cause frustration, as in the case of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) for forest projects. In view of this, the Commission requested that FAO contribute to discussions in order to open simple routes to such mechanisms and to facilitate the access of countries to new resources made available by donor countries to finance the REDD. (para. 34).
5. The Commission requested that FAO set up a training programme on topics conducive to sustainable forest management and its relationship with climate change. (para. 36).
6. Commending the presentation of the theme, the Commission asked that FAO, in collaboration with the other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), help the countries of the Region by facilitating access to funding for their forest programmes. (para. 43).
7. The Commission listened with interest to the conclusions and recommendations of the IV CONFLAT and recommended that closer links be established between the LACFC and CONFLAT, along the lines of those that existed between the FAO Forestry Department and the World Forestry Congress. (para. 58).

For the attention of Governments

8. The Commission urged governments, and in particular ministries responsible for forest programmes, to bear in mind the content of this report of the 25th Session of the LACFC when implementing their forest policies and programmes, in accordance with national considerations, needs and capacities (para. 67).

INTRODUCTION

1. The Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission (LACFC) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held its 25th session from 29 September to 3 October 2008 in Quito, Ecuador, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Ecuador. The session was attended by delegates from 24 member countries and representatives of 38 organizations, including agencies of the United Nations system and international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as observers. The agenda is provided in *Appendix A*, the list of participants in *Appendix B* and the list of documents submitted for consideration of the Commission in *Appendix C*.

2. Mr Bernabé Mañon Rossi, Under-Secretary of Forest Resources of the Secretariat of State for Environment and Forest Resources of the Dominican Republic and serving Chair of the LACFC presided over the opening session. Mr Jan Heino, Assistant Director-General of the FAO Forestry Department, welcomed participants on behalf of the Director-General of FAO. Ambassador Federico Meneses, Director of External Relations of the Ministry of the Environment, presented an analysis of the main problems affecting forests in the Region and wished the participants a successful meeting. Mrs Marcela Aguiñaga, Minister for the Environment, gave the welcoming address, in which she outlined the state of forests and forestry in Ecuador before declaring the session open. Also present was Mr Walter Poveda Ricaurte, Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries.

3. Mr Heino thanked the Government of the Republic of Ecuador for the excellent organization of the session. He also thanked the members of the LACFC Executive Committee for their efficient preparatory work. He stated that the LACFC was an important forum in which member countries could strengthen regional dialogue. Its recommendations helped FAO shape its programme of work and implement its new forestry strategy, which was in its final phase of formulation and would be discussed at the next session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO), in which the Forestry Commissions played an important role. He stated that FAO was concerned about the level of deforestation in the Region and that the LACFC provided an opportunity to analyze the causes and seek possible solutions, when discussing its agenda items on forest institutions and sustainable forest management. He mentioned that other issues of concern to the international forest community were those relating to climate change and the possible impact of forest fires, which were in turn linked to the higher level of deforestation of natural forests. He concluded by inviting all delegates and observers to attend the XIII World Forestry Congress that would be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in October 2009.

4. Ambassador Federico Meneses addressed the participants on behalf of the Ministry of External Relations, Trade and Integration and welcomed them to Ecuador. He indicated that Ecuador was party to several international environmental instruments and played an active role in enhancing the incorporation and delivery of commitments assumed in the negotiation processes. Particularly important were the forest-related commitments undertaken at the United Nations Forum on Forests. For Ecuador, this LACFC session would be addressing key issues, including forest institutions, legislation and its appropriate enactment, that were central to the strengthening of mechanisms of promotion and control of forest management. Another important issue was climate change and its association with forests.

5. Mrs Marcela Aguiñaga welcomed the delegates and observers to the session. She referred to important processes that Ecuador had initiated to achieve sustainable forest development, mentioning the Sustainable Forest Development Strategy which proposed a new forest sustainability policy that viewed natural forests as more than a source of timber. She also referred to the National Forest Stewardship System that helped ensure forest products came from areas under sustainable forest management. She mentioned the start of the first National Forest

Assessment in 2009, the establishment of the National Forest Rangers charged with controlling the ground movement of forest products, the introduction of the National Afforestation and Reforestation Plan, and the launching of the Forest Partnership Plan which provided incentives to small farmers and local communities to engage voluntarily in the conservation of their forests. She concluded by thanking various national and international bodies and institutions for their help in organizing the LACFC session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Item 1)

6. The agenda was adopted with the inclusion of the outcome of the pre-Commission Workshops “Support facilities for National Forest Programmes” as Item 4.4, and “Mechanisms for the reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD): outlook for Latin America” as Item 4.5.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Item 2)

7. In accordance with Articles II-1 and II-5 of its Rules of Procedure, the Commission elected a Chair, three Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur. The following members of the Commission were unanimously elected:

Chair: Camilo González (Ecuador), Amazon Subregional Group
Vice-Chairs: Marilyn Headley (Jamaica), Caribbean Subregional Group
Luis Gustavo Torales (Paraguay), Southern Cone Subregional Group
William Schwartz (Nicaragua), Mesoamerica Subregional Group
Rapporteur: Jorge L. Menéndez (Argentina)

8. Mr Carlos Marx R. Carneiro, Senior Forestry Officer at the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, acted as Secretary.

STATE OF FORESTRY IN THE REGION AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 24TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (Item 3)

9. The Secretariat introduced document FO:LACFC/2008/3 “State of forestry in the Region and follow-up to the recommendations of the 24th Session of the Commission”.

10. The Secretariat referred to the established tradition of opening LACFC discussions with the presentation of a Secretariat Note on intersessional changes and initiatives in the Region.

11. The Commission noted that the 2005 Global Forest Resources Assessment, prepared by FAO and member countries, gave the Region a total natural and plantation forest area of 924 million hectares, equivalent to 45.7 percent of its land area and to 23.4 percent of the world forest area. The Commission also noted with concern that the Region had lost an annual 4.7 million hectares of forest during the period 2000-2005, accounting for 65 percent of annual global forest loss.

12. La Commission was informed that during the period 2006-2008, the countries of the Region had continued to implement, review and formulate their forest policies according to the guidelines

for the formulation of national forest programmes that had been drawn up on the basis of agreements between countries, and to substantially build their institutions.

13. The Commission was also informed of the increase in forest production and exports in the period 2006-2008 in the Region, and the consequent increase in employment in the sector. The Commission took note of the significant increase in protected areas.

14. The Commission noted that progress had been made but that the Region continued to face two major challenges, namely overcoming restrictions and introducing better sustainable forest management procedures for natural forests and strengthening the prevention, control and fighting of forest fires.

15. The Commission was informed of the impact of deforestation of natural forests and forest fires on climate change.

16. The Commission thanked FAO for its presentation of the Secretariat Note.

17. The Commission underlined with deep concern the devastating impact of recent hurricanes on Cuba and Haiti. The Commission expressed its solidarity with those countries which had been seriously affected by the events, that had caused social, economic and environmental emergencies, and recommended that the governments of the Region and FAO provide maximum support to those countries to help mitigate the negative effects and to permit the restoration of forest cover and the rebuilding of appropriate living conditions for the affected communities.

18. Mexico offered its post-hurricane experience based on its actions in the states of Quintana Roo and Campeche whose forest resources had suffered extensive damage from a hurricane in 2007. Chile indicated its willingness to support and cooperate with both Cuba and Haiti to mitigate the damage caused to forest stands by natural phenomena. It also expressed its willingness to cooperate with other interested countries.

19. The Commission stressed that deforestation had a complex matrix of causes, including sectoral, economic and social interests that needed to be addressed beyond the forest sector. The Commission therefore recommended that COFO look into ways of providing greater support to countries in their efforts to reverse the loss of forest cover and forest degradation. (para. 19).

20. Brazil expressed its opposition to illegal forest felling being addressed in international fora. It felt that this was a topic that needed to be discussed at national level.

MAIN THEMES FOR DISCUSSION (Item 4)

4.1 Forest institutions and legislation

21. The Secretariat introduced document FO:LACFC/2008/4.1 "Forest institutions and legislation".

22. The Commission was informed of major developments in forest legislation, institutions and management and the main challenges that faced the forest sector as it sought to improve governance. It also considered a number of topics presented for discussion. The Secretariat's introduction was complemented by presentations from the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO).

23. The Commission expressed its satisfaction with the presentation of the Secretariat Note and several countries recounted their progress in the field of forest institutions and legislation.
24. The Commission stressed the importance of addressing forest development at both regional and national level. Important at national level were the national forest programmes.
25. With regard to the issues suggested for consideration by the Commission in the Secretariat Note, the Commission stated that some of those issues had been addressed during the pre-Commission Workshop on “Support facilities for the National Forest Programmes” (see Item 4.4).
26. The Commission highlighted the importance of the National Forest Programme Facility in supporting the participation of local communities, indigenous peoples and other stakeholder groups in processes related to national forest plans.
27. The Commission requested that FAO provide greater support in facilitating dialogue between countries to identify new mechanisms that would enhance the valuation, in the national accounts, of environmental goods and services generated by forest activities. (para. 27).
28. The Commission agreed with the importance of the process of decentralization of bodies responsible for forest activity. But it also stressed that the process needed to be gradual, transparent and responsible; it underscored the importance of preparing the local authorities for the functions that they were to assume, providing them with appropriate capacity, equipment and support.

4.2 Forests and Climate Change

29. The Secretariat introduced the document FO:LACFC/2008/4.2 “Forests and climate change”.
30. The Commission noted with interest the information given on recent global discussions on the role of forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change, which provided the forest sector with both challenges and opportunities. The Commission was informed of major initiatives to support efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD).
31. The Commission acknowledged that climate change was an opportunity to demonstrate to society that forests were part of the solution to the problem. However, given the present state of understanding and uncertainty about the effects of climate change, the forest sector would need to have reliable information to contribute effectively to discussion of the issue.
32. The Commission stated that information on climate change was generally sourced outside the forest sector and generated confusion and myths on the response of forests to climate change. Many delegates agreed that there was a need to step up scientific and technological research in areas relating to forests, with a focus on how climate change affects forest health, vitality and distribution.
33. Several countries of the Region, with extensive forest cover and no major problems of deforestation, requested FAO support so that deliberations on the second commitment period of the UNFCCC mechanism could consider forms of compensation for the maintenance of their forests.

34. Some delegates expressed their concern about mechanisms that could be established to support countries in reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, in the sense that these could be difficult to access and thus cause frustration, as in the case of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) for forest projects. In view of this, the Commission requested that FAO contribute to discussions in order to open simple routes to such mechanisms and to facilitate the access of countries to new resources made available by donor countries to finance the REDD.

35. In some countries the forest sector was under a different public administration to that covering the environment and climate change, which could hamper coordinated action.

36. The Commission requested that FAO set up a training programme on topics conducive to sustainable forest management and its relationship with climate change.

4.3 Sustainable forest management

37. The Secretariat introduced document FO:LACFC/2008/4.3 “Sustainable forest management”.

38. The Commission noted that very often the overall contribution of forests to combating poverty and aiding economic development was underestimated, or not estimated at all, because single contributions were recorded separately and posted under different entries in national accounts. The situation was compounded by an inadequate valuation of the environmental goods and services that forests provided to society.

39. The Secretariat emphasized the need for countries to promote the involvement of local communities and indigenous populations in the processes of development and implementation of national forest programmes and to create appropriate conditions for active participation of the private sector.

40. The Commission was informed of progress in the Study “Exemplary cases of sustainable forest management in Latin America and the Caribbean” that it had requested at its 24th session and the major challenge of financing sustainable forest management.

41. The Commission noted the findings of a study on the experiences of 19 countries of the Region in financing sustainable forest management and other related aspects.

42. The Secretariat highlighted a number of salient features of forest areas, such as the persistently worrying level of deforestation and forest degradation. It highlighted the impact of natural phenomena and evidence of an increase in pests and diseases affecting the Region’s forests. It drew attention to the Region’s significant expansion of protected areas, amounting to almost 400 million hectares, and the need for those areas to have funding for their administration and sustainable management. The Commission stressed that such expansion should seek to include conservation areas that the countries had identified as priorities.

43. Commending the presentation of the theme, the Commission asked that FAO, in collaboration with the other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), help the countries of the Region by facilitating access to funding for their forest programmes.

44. The Commission noted the current availability of funds, but agreed that the challenge lay in delivering those funds to sustainable forest management programmes in the countries of the Region.

45. The Commission agreed that there was a need to explore new sources and mechanisms of funding for the forest sector, including payment for environmental services and incorporation into market mechanisms (stock exchange).

4.4 Pre-Commission Workshop “Support facilities for national forest programmes”

46. During discussion of Item 4.1, the Commission analysed the merit of including the presentation and discussion of the major findings of the pre-Commission workshops in the agenda of the session. The Commission agreed to include the findings of the above workshop in the agenda.

47. Some delegates stated that this new modality should affect the organization of the next LACFC session it carried higher participation costs. It also meant that failure to attend the pre-Commission workshops made it difficult to validate their conclusions and recommendations. Delegates from English-speaking countries stated that if the pre-Commission workshops were to be included in the LACFC agenda, they should have interpretation and documentation in English.

48. This pre-Commission workshop held on 28 September 2008 was attended by 11 Commission delegates and 46 observers.

49. The Commission agreed to include in the report of the session the workshop’s considerations which were presented to the Commission and which are transcribed in paragraph 50 below.

50. Brazil expressed its opposition to the inclusion of items 4.4 and 4.5 in the report of the session.

Introduction

The Twenty-fifth session of the LACFC will consider issues relating to forest institutions and legislation in the Region and will therefore focus on the development of national forest programmes (NFPs). Because of its heavy agenda, the LACFC will have relatively little time to discuss this important topic and how the NFPs can be supported to enhance their development; hence the precaution of organizing prior discussion to produce concrete inputs for the work of the LACFC.

The workshop findings are presented as a contribution to discussions and recommendations of the Commission, especially in dealing with items 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3., and as assistance to the LACFC Subregional Groups in determining their workplans for 2008-2010.

Suggestions:

a. General suggestions for the national forest programmes and the National Forest Programme Facility

National forest programmes

In many countries, sustainable forest development is under the twin authority of forest conservation and forest production. The problems arising from the lack of harmonization between these authorities need to be analysed and resolved by the highest national authorities so that the forest sector, alone and with other sectors, can better contribute to national development.

The sustainable development of forest resources requires interaction between the forest and other sectors. Such interaction would be better supported by FAO if the Organization were to enhance the integration of the programmes of its different departments.

Many countries are vigorously updating their forest policies, legislation and institutions, and including mechanisms of dialogue and coordination. Special attention should be paid to creating and developing

related bodies, and to enhancing the dissemination of policies and regulations among national populations.

The National Forest Programme Facility

The scope of this facility in the Region should be expanded given its galvanizing impact. At the same time, applying the Human Development Index (HDI) as the parameter for determining country eligibility for support is preventing the forest areas of countries with a high HDI, which are generally the most depressed areas, from benefiting from the facility. Its steering committee should review this criterion and consider the real level of development of forest areas using the Unsatisfied Basic Needs indicator.

Many countries of the Region have recently issued or are planning to issue amendments to their forest legislation and regulations and to their forest development plans. Several countries are also in the process of restructuring their national forest authorities. Facility support is in high demand for cooperation along these lines. In the case of partner countries, it is the facility national committees that determine priority in fund allocation, while non-partner countries must first apply for partnership in order to receive support.

The facility has supported three subregional processes in the Region (CCAD, ACICAFOC and CANARI). The demonstrated results and potential for further action in support of the NFPs argue in favour of the facility broadening such cooperation, with priority to the establishment of information exchange networks.

b. Suggestions on the Puenbo Initiative

The Puenbo Initiative, as an informal platform for the management and exchange of information, has permitted significant achievements in forest dialogue in the Region. The 10 suggested priorities for a shared agenda that come from the Initiative (formulated from findings of cross-cutting analyses and topic identification relating to governance, valorization and financing, intersectorality and national-international linkage) are starting to be included in the programme of work of the Commission and its subregions, a development that will undoubtedly be accentuated in the future.

It is also expected to contribute substantively towards systematically strengthening intersectoral dialogue on forest policy, integrating representatives of other sectors. Their participation in discussion forums will help foster convergence between different NFP support agencies and mechanisms, thereby enhancing complementarity between them and with government programmes. It could also play a useful role in fostering a seamless exchange of information and knowledge between subregions, countries and levels (national, subregional, region, international).

c. Suggestions on the National Strategies for Forest Financing (NSFF)

Valorization of forests and the forest sector.

The many benefits that society and other sectors gain from forests need to be evidenced, valued and included in the national accounts. Greater efforts should be made to profile the forest sector as an opportunity and not as a problem (enhance its image).

National Strategies for Forest Financing

The NSFF need to be formulated in an integrated manner, taking into account the differences that exist within and between countries, considering all types of forest and identifying stakeholders (government, cooperation agencies, private sector, NGOs and local groups) and their roles. An enabling environment needs to be created to apply mechanisms of investment and of payment for goods and services. The relationship between forest and financial sectors should be strengthened within the NSFF, and guarantee and insurance mechanisms established.

Training for successful valorization and the NSFF

Training and exchange of knowledge are key instruments for the formulation and implementation of the NSFF, in other words building capacity for development of financial mechanisms and exchange of information between and within sectors, countries and regions. The NSFF need to be strengthened through training and in-depth studies and evaluation of existing traditional and innovative mechanisms.

4.5 Pre-Commission Workshop “Mechanisms to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD): outlook for Latin America”

51. The Commission also agreed to include this workshop in the agenda and its deliberations in the body of the report, which are transcribed below as a contribution to LACFC discussions on “Forests and climatic change”.

Introduction and background

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change recognized reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) as a mechanism of climate change mitigation for the second commitment period of the UNFCCC mechanism. Current debate centres on how the REDD mechanisms can respond to objectives relating to climate change, forest conservation and poverty alleviation.

A pre-LACFC workshop was held on Saturday 27 September 2008 to examine the progress of REDD in Latin America from the perspective of different stakeholder groups in the Region and addressing the technical and policy aspects. The workshop was attended by 11 delegates of the Commission¹ and 41 observers.

REDD challenges and opportunities for the forest sector

Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation is an option for conserving forests and their biodiversity, by reducing deforestation. However, REDD also poses challenges for governments and countries.

Opportunities

- Different funds and mechanisms exist to support country preparation for REDD.
- Latin America is the region with the most tropical forests and the highest levels of deforestation, which makes it a suitable region for the development of REDD mechanisms.
- It will help clarify land tenure and property rights, and forest use.
- New sources of financing will be created from the carbon market (not grants) for forest management and conservation.

Challenges

- There is a need to create technical capabilities (to develop methodologies, baseline, etc.) and human and institutional capacity in each country.
- The benefits will need to be distributed equitably, with the inclusion of indigenous peoples and local communities.
- The causes of deforestation need to be understood, so that they can be addressed.
- Countries need to determine consensual positions which could favour the participation of countries with small forests areas.

¹ Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Santa Lucia and Venezuela.

INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMISSION BY FAO (ITEM 5)

52. The Secretariat introduced document FO:LACFC/2008/5.1 “Information items: FAO’s Forestry Strategy; Global Forest Resources Assessment; World Forestry Congress; Global situation of forest genetic resources” and document FO:LACFC/2008/5.2 “Information items: progress in the Regional Technical Cooperation Networks”.

53. The Secretariat briefed delegates on the FAO Forestry Strategy which was being formulated in response to global changes that impacted on the forest sector, including economic globalization and accelerated climate change. The delegates also listened with interest to information on: the Global Forest Resources Assessment-2010; the publication of the FAO “State of the World’s Forests-2009”; the state of the world’s forest genetic resources; the XIII World Forestry Congress; the Strategic Framework on Forests and Climate Change of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; and the next International Years on forest-related themes declared by the United Nations General Assembly. The Secretariat then introduced document FO:LACFC/2008/5.2 summarizing the activities carried out by the technical cooperation networks under the auspices of the FAO Regional Office.

54. With regard to the activities of the regional technical cooperation networks, the Commission suggested that there should be greater coordination in addressing common issues in order to avoid duplication of effort. The Secretariat for its part, when presenting its document, highlighted the importance of achieving more active participation of member countries of the Commission in the activities of the regional networks.

55. The Commission was informed of the parallel events to its session in Quito: the Workshop on Forest Education in Latin America in support of the Latin American Network on Forest Education (RELAFOR) and the Seminar on Payment for Environmental Services in Protected Areas, in the framework of REDPARQUES.

56. The Commission was informed of the creation of RELAFOR at the IV Latin American Forestry Congress (CONFLAT), held in April 2008 in Merida, Venezuela.

57. Various delegates expressed their concern about forest education in the Region. The delegate of Venezuela recommended that the Secretariat submit for consideration by the LACFC Executive Committee the proposal that RELAFOR be considered as a subsidiary body of the Commission.

58. The Commission listened with interest to the conclusions and recommendations of the IV CONFLAT and recommended that closer links be established between the LACFC and CONFLAT, along the lines of those that existed between the FAO Forestry Department and the World Forestry Congress.

FOREST ACTIVITIES OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REGION (ITEM 6)

59. The Commission listened with interest to the presentations of the following bodies on their international or regional forest activities: the Secretariats of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the Netherlands Development Cooperation, and the Latin American Forestry Congress (CONFLAT). The UNFF and the CBD distributed information sheets to delegates.

ACTIVITIES OF THE SUBREGIONAL GROUPS OF THE COMMISSION (ITEM 7)

60. Under this Item, the outgoing Vice-Chairs of the Subregional Groups of the Commission reported at length on the activities that had been undertaken under the Workplan 2006-2008, while the incoming Vice-Chairs presented the Workplans for 2008-2010. The Subregional Group proposals are given in *Appendix D*.

REGIONAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMISSION FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY (COFO) (ITEM 8)

61. The Commission stressed with deep concern the devastating impact of recent hurricanes in Cuba and Haiti. The Commission expressed its solidarity with these countries which had been seriously affected by the events, that had caused social, economic and environmental emergencies, and recommended that the governments of the Region and FAO provide maximum support to those countries to mitigate the negative effects and to permit the restoration of forest cover and the rebuilding of appropriate living conditions in the affected communities.

62. The Commission stressed that deforestation responded to a complex model of causality involving sectoral, economic and social interests that needed to be addressed beyond the forest sector. The Commission therefore recommended that COFO examine ways of providing greater support to countries in their national efforts to reverse the loss of forest cover and forest degradation.

63. The Commission requested that FAO provide greater support in facilitating dialogue between countries to identify new mechanisms that would serve to enhance the valuation, in national accounts, of environmental goods and services that forests and forest activities generate.

64. Some delegates expressed their concern about the mechanisms that could be established to support countries in reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation, in the sense that they could be complicated to access and thus cause frustration, as in the case of the Clean Development Mechanism (CMD) for forest projects. In view of this, the Commission requested that FAO help open simple access routes to such mechanisms and facilitate the access of countries to new resources made available by donor countries to finance the REDD.

65. The Commission requested that FAO establish a training programme on topics that would promote sustainable forest management and its relationship with climate change.

66. Commending the presentation of the item, the Commission asked that FAO, together with the other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), assist the countries of the Region by facilitating access to funding for their forest programmes.

OTHER BUSINESS (ITEM 9)

67. The Commission urged governments, and in particular ministries responsible for forest programmes, to bear in mind the content of this report of the 25th Session of the LACFC when implementing their forest policies and programmes, in accordance with national considerations, needs and capacities.

68. The Assistant Director-General of the FAO Forestry Department again invited delegates to attend the 19th Session of the Forestry Committee. The week of the COFO meeting in March

2009 would be much more than a COFO meeting, as the Steering Committee had recommended turning the week into the World Forest Week, with COFO featuring as the main event.

69. There were three reasons for this decision: first, as a logical step after the reform of COFO which had permitted broader participation; second, to increase the visibility of the forestry sector; and third, to further strengthen relations with countries and with Regional Forestry Commissions and COFO.

70. Two principal themes had been selected for the week: "Adapting forest policies and institutions to change" and "Sustainable forest management and climate change".

71. During the week, participants would be able to meet leaders of member countries of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and colleagues from Argentina and FAO would brief them on the World Forestry Congress.

72. The Commission expressed its great interest in participating actively in the World Forest Week.

73. The delegation of the United States of America referred to a proposal that it had made, together with Mexico and Chile, and invited the LACFC member countries to conduct an analysis of the vulnerability of Latin America and Caribbean forests to climate change and, on the basis of that analysis, to suggest mitigation strategies and specific research priorities for each forest region of the Region. The proposal would last two years, one to gather information and another to analyse the results and draft the report. The findings would be presented at the next session of the LACFC.

74. Many delegates welcomed this proposal and, speaking on behalf of their respective countries, expressed their desire to participate.

75. In response to the Commission's concern about the need to reformulate the structure of its sessions, the LACFC Secretariat referred to a proposal for change that the LACFC Executive Committee had put forward at its last meeting in Quito, Ecuador, in July 2007. However, because of a series of impediments to its implementation reported by the Secretariat, the Commission agreed that the next meeting of the Executive Committee would finalize the proposal in close collaboration with the LACFC member countries. In any case, it was agreed that the next session should be organized according to the new format.

76. Many delegates expressed their views for consideration by the Executive Committee when reformulating the LACFC sessions.

PLACE AND DATE OF THE NEXT SESSION (ITEM 10)

77. The delegate of Guatemala offered to host the Twenty-sixth Session of the LACFC in 2010. The delegation of Mexico supported the offer and stated the importance of holding a session or a study tour in conjunction with the North American Forestry Commission (NAFC), whose Twenty-fifth Session would be held in Mexico in 2010 and therefore in a city close to Guatemala.

78. The Commission welcomed the offer of the delegations of Guatemala and Mexico.

79. As a result of the restructuring under way in FAO, COFO sessions would be held in October from 2010, so the sessions of the regional forestry commissions would have to be held in the first half of the year.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT AND CLOSURE OF THE SESSION (ITEM 11)

80. The Session was closed by Messrs Jan Heino, Carlos Marx Carneiro and José Antonio Prado, on behalf of FAO, and by Mr Camilo González on behalf of the Republic of Ecuador.

APPENDIX A**AGENDA**

1. Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda.
2. Election of officers.
3. State of forestry in the Region and follow-up to the recommendations of the 24th Session of the Commission.
4. Main themes for discussion:
 - 4.1 *Forest institutions and legislation*
 - 4.2 *Forests and climate change*
 - 4.3 *Sustainable forest management*
 - 4.4 *Pre-Commission Workshop: "Support facilities for national forest programmes"*
 - 4.5 *Pre-Commission Workshop "Mechanisms to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD): outlook for Latin America"*
5. Information items brought to the attention of the Commission by FAO.
6. Forest activities of other organizations in the Region.
7. Activities of the subregional groups of the Commission.
8. Regional issues identified by the Commission for the attention of the Committee on Forestry (COFO).
9. Other business.
10. Place and date of the next session.
11. Adoption of the report and closing of the session.

Pre-Commission Workshop: Forestry education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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William Schwartz (Nicaragua)

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APPENDIX C**LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

Agenda item	Code	Title
1	FO:LACFC/2008/1	Provisional agenda
3	FO:LACFC/2008/3	State of forestry in the Region and follow-up to the recommendations of the 24 th Session of the Commission
4	FO:LACFC/2008/4.1	Forest institutions and legislation
4	FO:LACFC/2008/4.2	Forests and climate change
4	FO:LACFC/2008/4.3	Sustainable forest management
5	FO:LACFC/2008/5.1	Information items: FAO's Forestry Strategy; Global Forest Resources Assessment; World Forestry Congress; global situation of forest genetics resources
5	FO:LACFC/2008/5.2	Information items: Progress report of the regional technical cooperation networks

Information documents

FO:LACFC/2008/Inf.1	Information note for participants
FO:LACFC/2008/Inf.2	Provisional timetable
FO:LACFC/2008/Inf.3	List of documents

APPENDIX D**WORKPLANS OF THE SUBREGIONAL GROUPS FOR 2008-2010*****WORKPLAN OF THE CARIBBEAN SUBREGIONAL GROUP***

Countries present: Cuba, Dominican Republic, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Suriname and United States.

It was confirmed to continue with the current practice of partly implementing the work of the Caribbean Subgroup in small regional working groups. The purpose of the smaller working groups is that the cooperation will be more focused if it concentrates on countries with similar ecological and social background.

Presently three working groups are established:

1. Small and medium English-speaking island states: Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados.
2. Spanish and French speaking islands: Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico – (USA), Haiti
3. Countries with extensive forest cover: Belize, Guyana, French Guyana, Suriname.

Defining these working groups is not exclusive. Participation in any regional activity will depend on the interest of the respective country. Countries from different subregional groupings participated in past regional workshops and meetings of other working groups.

Main thematic areas of common interest

1. Communication, exchange and management of information
2. Development of a mechanism to compensate countries with high forest cover and low deforestation rate for their efforts to preserve the forest cover.
3. Development of a methodology for forest valuation
4. Forest research
5. Monitoring of forest cover changes
6. Forest fire management
7. Forest-based ecotourism
8. Support to the forestry sector in Haiti

1. Communication, exchange and management of information

The group recognised the need to improve networking within the group. The importance of technical meetings and communication among technical personnel was confirmed as an important aspect to improve the understanding and mutual knowledge of the forest situations in the region.

The International Institute for Tropical Forestry (IITF) hosts a website for Caribbean Foresters (<http://www.caribbeanforesters.org>) and puts this website at the disposal of the Caribbean Subgroup to facilitate the exchange of information. IITF offered to restructure

the website and to develop a protocol to structure and upload forest-related information for the Caribbean.

At the outset the following themes were considered important for the exchange of information: forest-based ecotourism, community forestry, forest monitoring, valuation of forest, forest law enforcement and governance, forest plantation establishment and management, promotion of lesser known timber species.

2. *Methodology to compensate countries with high forest cover and low deforestation rate for their efforts to preserve the forest cover*

Guyana and Suriname will cooperate in drafting a position paper to develop a mechanism to compensate countries with high forest cover and low deforestation rate for their efforts to preserve the forest cover. The process should be initiated at a two-day workshop. Cuba and Dominica indicated their interest in participating in this initiative.

3. *Forest valuation*

The English-speaking islands see a need to develop a common methodology for the valuation of forests with the objective of showing the value and contribution of forests to the national economy. Cuba has realized an initiative in this regard. It is suggested to organise a 2-3 day workshop to review available methods and outline elements for a common methodology for forest valuation in the Caribbean. The final goal is to develop a practical and easy-to-apply methodology to value forest services in the Caribbean.

4. *Forest Research*

The English and Spanish speaking islands see a common need to review and improve their national forest research programmes. With the objective of analysing research needs and the institutional structure of national forest research programmes, a 2-3 day fact-finding workshop should be organised. The workshop will also analyse options for closer collaborations in forest research among member countries of the Caribbean Subgroup. Areas for research include: natural forest management, use and propagation of native tree species, non-timber forest products; and management of invasive species.

5. *Monitoring of forest cover changes*

Monitoring of forest cover changes is considered an important theme for all member countries of the Caribbean Subgroup. There is a recognised need to improve national capacities to monitor forest cover changes. In December 2008 St. Lucia will host the Caribbean workshop in preparation for FRA 2010 which should define joint activities to improve cooperation in monitoring forest cover changes.

6. *Forest based ecotourism*

The English-speaking islands identified forest-based ecotourism as a key issue. The theme was discussed at the 14th Caribbean Foresters Meeting in May 2008 in Dominica which concluded in a joint resolution (see <http://www.caribbeanforesters.org>). The member countries present at the Caribbean Subgroup meeting renewed their commitment to follow up on the resolution. To facilitate the exchange of information on this important topic it was suggested to circulate and review the report of the St. Lucia workshop (2003) on Forest Management for Ecotourism. The long-term objective is that the forest sector will

contribute to the formulation of environmental standards for ecotourism activities and the design of possible certification processes for forest-based ecotourism ventures.

7. *Forest Fire management*

The group agreed to continue to implement the 2006-2011 Caribbean Fire Management Cooperation Strategy. The strategy defines a series of actions and subregional workshops to improve cooperation on fire management in the Caribbean.

8. *Support to the forestry sector in Haiti*

All member countries present at the Caribbean group meeting urged FAO to continue to invite the forestry sector of Haiti to participate in the activities of the Caribbean Subgroup and indicated their interest and willingness to provide bilateral assistance to forestry problems in Haiti. FAO was asked to realize an official visit at the highest possible level to explore possibilities of supporting the forestry sector of that country.

WORKPLAN OF THE AMAZON SUBREGIONAL GROUP

Countries present: Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela

Action area	Objectives	Specific activities	Expected results	Inputs and possible sources of funding
Forest Information Systems	To help enhance national forest information management capabilities	Implementation of the Forest Cover Monitoring Project	System of real-time forest cover monitoring, implemented and operational in its first phase	National contributions ITTO resources ACTO resources (Amazon Programme)
		Implementation of satellite accounts for the forest sector	National evaluation reports and proposals for the introduction of satellite accounts for the forest sector Organization of a regional workshop to discuss progress and determine future actions	FAO resources National resources ACTO resources (Amazon Programme)
		Exchange of experiences on national systems of forest management, control and statistics	Consolidated regional event for the exchange of experiences with a comparative final report published on the websites of the LACFC and ACTO	National resources ACTO resources (Amazon programme)

Forest policy and legislation instruments	Progress in the knowledge and exchange of national experiences	Exchange of national experiences on forest policy and legislation instruments	Consolidated regional event for the exchange of experiences with a comparative final report published on the websites of the LACFC and ACTO	National contributions ACTO resources (Amazon Programme)
		Exchange of experiences in sustainable forest management techniques	Consolidated regional event for the exchange of experiences with a comparative final report published on the websites of the LACFC and ACTO	National contributions ACTO resources (Amazon Programme)
		Support to national initiatives of implementation of forest policy instruments	To be defined according to national requests	National contributions ACTO resources (Amazon Programme)
International Agreements	To strengthen dialogue seeking consensual regional positions in international bodies, such as UNFF, ITTO and COFO	Coordination and holding of meetings for dialogue and consensus building	Regional reports of preparatory meetings and video-conferences conducted	National contributions ACTO resources
Funding mechanisms for forest sector	To disseminate knowledge and information on funding mechanisms for forest sector	Support for national actions to build national capacity for the implementation of funding mechanisms Promotion of internal debate in countries of the region where viable	Regional workshop of exchange of experiences National workshops where viable	National contributions ACTO resources

Recommendation of the Amazon Group:

The Amazon Subregional Group recognizes the importance of forest education and urges RELAFOR to develop specific activities for the Region.

WORKPLAN OF THE MESOAMERICA SUBREGIONAL GROUP

Countries present: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama

Activity area	Objectives	Main activities	Results
To strengthen the institutional management of forest ecosystems, contributing to good governance for sustainable management, and access to goods and services generated by forest ecosystems.	To promote institutional and legal modernization for good governance of forest ecosystems, under an integrative, inclusive and participatory approach that considers the multifunctionality of ecosystems, the economic value of ecosystem resources and the interests of actors throughout the value chains	Strengthening of national forest round tables and mechanisms for the exchange of experiences.	In 2010, multi-actor and interinstitutional national mechanisms for forest coordination are in operation.
		Completion of regional and national strategy for control of trade and illegal felling of timber and its implementation	In 2010, the countries of the Region have put the strategy into effect and have harmonized instruments of control.
		Updating of country inventories in the Central American Region (FAO methodology).	Updating methodology harmonized and operational in the countries of the subregion.
		Regional strategy for the management of forest fires.	Improved management of forest cover in the subregion.
To strengthen the technical capacity of the public and private sectors and local communities so they have management instruments contribute to the sustainable management of forest ecosystems and reversal of their deterioration.	To promote processes of education, instruction and training to change the management approach towards a holistic, self-governing, entrepreneurial and proactive mindset based on the multifunctionality of forest ecosystems and market opportunities.	Formulation of training plans in priority subject areas for sustainable management of forest ecosystems (governance, sustainable use, protection, management, multifunctionality, environmental services, reforestation, regulation, control, monitoring and trade) that are regionally harmonized, incorporating mechanisms for the exchange of experiences within	In 2010, national plans are in implementation in the countries of the subregion.

		and between the countries of the Region.	
		Generation of agreements and mechanisms so that networks and centres of excellence in each country of the subregion conduct applied research in priority thematic areas of PERFOR (governance, sustainable use, protection, management, multifunctionality, environmental services, reforestation, regulation, control, monitoring, trade).	In 2010 agreements have been formally concluded and are being implemented in at least four applied research areas.
		Strengthening of systems of national forest information and input into SIAM on a six-monthly basis and facilitated access of subregional stakeholders to updated information on forest ecosystems.	In 2010, the regional thematic node on forest ecosystems is in operation.
		Central American Forest Project (CTB/MAP-Catie).	Enhanced handling and knowledge of forest management in the countries of the subregion.
To establish and put into operation financial resources and mechanisms and economic instruments, in a manner that is fair, accessible and equitable to all actors, valuing economically and financially the multifunctionality of forest ecosystems in the countries of the Region.	To create, develop and strengthen capacities for entrepreneurial activity, organization, markets (material and financial), and investment management that will promote the production and exchange of goods and services from forest ecosystems.	Stimulus for countries to have national financial strategies that are regionally harmonized	In 2010 their implementation has begun in the countries of the subregion.

To contribute to the implementation of the agro-environmental cross-sectoral agenda, particularly the generation of opportunities for sustainable development, food security and poverty reduction.	To promote cross-sectoral participatory processes of negotiation and consensus on actions to include forest ecosystem management in the implementation of the agro-environmental cross-sectoral agenda.	Encouragement of agricultural, health and environmental policies in each country of the subregion to provide mechanisms and arenas for dialogue so that the criteria of sustainable management of forest ecosystems are incorporated into the framework of the ERAS.	In 2010 the mechanisms and arenas for dialogue are in operation at national and regional level.
Central American Forestry Congress 2010 in Nicaragua	To promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the management of the subregion's forest ecosystems.	Aggregation of public and private actors in this arena for dialogue and exchange.	Participants have exchanged experiences and broadened their knowledge.

WORKPLAN OF THE SOUTHERN CONE SUBREGIONAL GROUP

Countries present: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay

It was agreed to use as guideline for discussion the document from the Meeting of Forestry Directors of the Southern Cone held in Colonia, Uruguay in May 2008.

Title of the workplan

The title chosen for the workplan was that of the above-mentioned meeting “**Towards a shared forest agenda in the Subregion**”, which recognizes differences between countries, which means that some activities are shared while others are carried out by selected countries, with the others informed and able to follow and/or support those activities.

Objective of the workplan

Drawing upon the general objective of the meeting in Colonia (“*To establish the baseline for the subregional forest agenda in the framework of sustainable forest development, analysing all bodies and processes of recent years*”) to determine strategic thrusts for the Subregion's workplan for 2008-2010.

Description of the main activities

The main activities are based on Block 3 of the Colonia meeting, in which the participating directors determine the central pillars of the subregional agenda.

Item 1: The building of national capacity in the countries of the Southern Cone to monitor, evaluate and report on progress made in sustainable forest management through the development, use and implementation of criteria and indicators.

The countries considered this item to be a priority which FAO reports is in the final stages of approval.

Brazil will participate as an observer as it is not a party to the Montreal Process.

The project will be based in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Item 2: A subregional forest health system

The project initially presented as a forest health and early warning network is evolving as a Southern Cone network on invasive species in forest environments.

A workshop was held in September in Paraguay to discuss the subject of evasive species and issues relating to forest health.

The countries consider it important to continue discussion of forest health in the framework of this project to the extent possible.

It was decided to take advantage of the project formulation body for forestry directors to contact all internal structures coordinating this topic, covered by more than one structure in all countries, and to seek FAO funding for a meeting with all parties.

It was agreed that other technical and financial support would be arranged to develop the forest health aspect of detection and early warning.

Item 3: Strategies for the management of sectoral and cross-sectoral conflicts

The training of experts in negotiation skills serves to facilitate round tables (countries report this as a general problem). This will be combined with Item 5, national forest programmes (NFPs). Support could be sought from the National Forest Programme Facility on behalf of the subregion as a whole, given that some individual countries have eligibility difficulties.

The countries would exchange a document on the terms of reference for the project.

Item 4: Valorization of the forest

Brazil reports that it has made progress in this area. A related workshop will be held in the near future to which the other countries of the subregion could be invited.

It was decided to suggest this topic to the other subregions as a regional project and to involve FAO in seeking funding.

IUCN-South presented the countries of the subregion with a proposal for the formulation of a training programme, which was agreed.

Item 5: National Forest Programmes

This was included in Item 3

To carry out in-depth evaluation of each national situation, checking the state of affairs and determining possible horizontal cooperation, as the basis for a possible subregional National Forest Programme Facility.

Item 6: *Ad-hoc* Group on Forests SGT6 MERCOSUR

To continue activities to set up an *ad-hoc* Group on Forests under SGT6 MERCOSUR.

Under this orientation and in compliance with the mandate from the VIII Meeting of Ministers of the Environment of MERCOSUR and Associate States, which made specific reference to the topic of forests and charged the SGT6 with carrying out concrete actions in two areas:

1. Economic valorization of tangible and intangible forest assets;
2. Presentation of common subregional positions at the World Forestry Congress in 2009 in Argentina.

The Subregional Group decided to draw up a proposal for the valorization of tangible and intangible forest assets for presentation at the next SGT 6 meeting.

With regard to the drafting of a proposal for the World Forestry Congress, the Vice-Chair of the Subregional Group will circulate a draft proposal for consideration by the other countries.

Item 7: Database of forest activities, processes and other matters

- Designate FRA focal points in each forest service as contact point for this item.
- Charge FRA focal points with addressing the specific requirements of the forest services of each country, when these seek information on activities, projects and bilateral experiences. The first theme of work would be silvopastoral systems and agroforestry.
- Charge FRA focal points and officials responsible for webpages in each service to upload ongoing national and binational projects in the countries.

Other items for consideration by the Secretariat of the Commission

- Consult FAO and other donors about the possibility of technical and financial support for development of the tasks proposed in the agenda of the Southern Cone Subregion for the 2008-2010 biennium.
- Request that FAO maintain and strengthen its support for the technical secretariat of the Vice-Chair of the Subregional Group, which was initiated in the 2006-2008 biennium.
- Reiterate acknowledgement to the Puenbo Initiative for its contribution to dialogue in the Region and its role of facilitator of exchange and collaboration between countries and subregions. In particular, thank it for its support to the meeting of Forest Directors of the Southern Cone Subregion and the achievement of its objectives. The countries express their support for a new stage of this Initiative.
- Promote the broad participation of the Subregion in the World Forestry Congress in 2009 in Argentina, and help identify sources of funding. Disseminate and promote the event on account of its importance to the Subregion.

The Subregion is aware of the need to carry out studies to assess the impact and benefits of sustainable management in the development of territories and populations. Efforts are needed to identify funding for achievement of the stated objectives.

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