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منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة للأمم  
المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of the  
United Nations

Organisation des  
Nations Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et l'agriculture

Продовольствен  
ная и  
сельскохозяйств  
енная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura y la  
Alimentación

## CONFERENCE

### Thirty-seventh Session

Rome, 25 June - 2 July 2011

International Year of Forests 2011

#### Executive Summary

This report documents FAO's contribution to the International Year of Forests 2011<sup>1</sup>, including FAO's role, as chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, in facilitating international cooperation. The attention of the Conference is also drawn to the importance of continued recognition of sustainable forest management beyond the Year.

#### The Conference is invited to:

- encourage countries to engage actively in the celebration of the International Year of Forests 2011 and enhance cooperation to this end;
- welcome the cooperation within the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and request FAO to continue its efforts in coordinating these activities;
- recognize the importance of adequate resources in successful public awareness activities and encourage countries and FAO to seek synergies and innovative approaches in this regard;
- note the important role of an International Day of Forests in promoting sustainable forest management and support its establishment, and recommend that FAO serve as an information hub for events related to the celebration of that day.

## I. Introduction

1. The UN General Assembly, in Resolution 61/193, declared 2011 the International Year of Forests (IYF) and requested the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) to serve as the international focal point for the implementation of the Year, in collaboration with Governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and international, regional and subregional organizations and processes as well as relevant major groups. The General Assembly has invited, in

<sup>1</sup> Resolution 61/193 of the UN General Assembly, adopted on 20 December 2006.

particular, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, as the Chair of the CPF, within its mandate, to support the implementation of the Year.

2. The purpose of the Year is to recognize that forests and sustainable forest management can contribute significantly to sustainable development, poverty eradication and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. The Resolution emphasizes the need for sustainable management of all types of forests and that concerted efforts are required to raise awareness at all levels in order to strengthen the sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

3. The Year was officially launched at the high level segment of the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of UNFF on 2 February 2011. In support, FAO provided a briefing to Members and the public on 9 February by introducing its flagship forestry publication, the State of the World's Forests 2011 and the IYF Toolkit for Communicators.

4. For celebrating the Year, FAO has developed its activities in three main directions: cooperating with, and providing support to, its Member Nations; collaborating with members of the CPF and other international and regional partners; and the Organization's own actions. This document provides an account of these clusters of activities.

## **II. Cooperation with Member Nations**

### **A. Toolkit for Communicators**

5. The International Year of Forests offers a significant opportunity to promote sustainable forest management nationally and internationally. To support national efforts, FAO has developed a toolkit as an open source that can be used by both national authorities and civil society. It contains several components, some of them taken from the international focal point, such as the logo and the possible key messages, while others have been developed by FAO, including outreach suggestions and media interview know-how, design elements such as posters and web-banners. Special video spots of 30 and 60 seconds have been produced in all FAO official languages<sup>2</sup> for advertising the Year through television programmes. The videos have been used in several national televisions as well as international networks, e.g. CNN International, and arrangements are underway with others, for example EURONEWS. The toolkit also contains a 11-minute film (with a 2-minute version for special broadcasts) on one recent success story in forestry, a project in the Philippines on assisted natural regeneration<sup>3</sup>.

6. Other elements of the Toolkit include a collection of forest-related photographs and key publications of the FAO Forestry Department as well as information on ongoing IYF-related activities of the CPF.

7. The toolkit is an online instrument<sup>4</sup> and will evolve throughout the Year, but a DVD version has also been produced and disseminated in early April to all national forestry administrations, FAO regional offices and country representations to ensure large distribution and wide effects.

8. FAO Forestry's IYF website provides additional supporting information related to the Year, including reports on relevant international events and an online calendar of international days recognized by the UN and which are directly or indirectly related to forests.

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<sup>2</sup> The 30-second version is also available in German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Turkish, the 60-second version in German, Italian, and Portuguese

<sup>3</sup> The project itself has been nominated for the Saouma Award

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fao.org/forestry/iyf2011/68425/en/>

## B. Collaborative activities

9. Many events to celebrate the International Year of Forests are currently under preparation. Some examples are given below.

### *Contributions of Forests to a Green Economy*

10. Germany, with support from Finland and Austria<sup>5</sup>, is working to host a conference on “Contributions of Forests to a Green Economy”, to take place from 4 to 7 October 2011 in Bonn, Germany. The conference is a country-led initiative in support of the work of the UNFF and is one of Germany’s activities to celebrate the International Year of Forests. The conference will be organized in close collaboration with the UNFF Secretariat and FAO. The objective of the conference is to exchange ideas and experiences concerning the role of forests and sustainable forest management in progressing towards a Green Economy and provide recommendations for realizing the potentials offered by forests. The conference also aims to contribute to the outcomes of the Rio+20 summit and UNFF10.

11. Parallel to this conference, FAO is also cooperating with Germany in organizing the International Bonn Forest Days (6 to 9 October 2011) at a central market place in Bonn to offer an international theme show for interested countries from all continents to present raw materials, food, crafts as well as information on cultural and spiritual values from forests in an interactive way. The event seeks to promote the key theme of the Year, “Forests for People”.

### *The role of forests, forestry and forest products in sustainable development*

12. FAO is working with the Government of India on a global conference titled “Rediscovering wood: the key to a sustainable future”. The conference (19-22 October, 2011, Bangalore, India) intends to examine how the use of wood can make a greater contribution to sustainable development and how wood producers and users can benefit from increased prosperity and the growing demands for more sustainable consumption and lifestyles.

13. While the three pillars of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) have already been frequently discussed at international forestry events, the sustainability of wood use attracted much less attention. The conference intends to explore how far the social dimensions of wood use (culture, traditions and aesthetics) can be integrated into the development of the sector. It is hoped that this would bring new perspectives and shed more light on how wood use can continue to contribute to sustainable development and remain firmly connected to human life.

### *Support to international networks in forest communication*

14. As requested by COFO<sup>6</sup>, FAO is elaborating a proposal for strengthening forest communication capacities in countries and regions, including the capacity of FAO decentralized offices. The concept is focused on developing a forest communication practitioner training module applicable at country or regional level, and on developing a longer-term strategy for establishing and/or strengthening regional forest communication practitioner networks.

### *Support to national efforts*

15. FAO is supporting national IYF activities based on requests from Member Nations. The Regional and Sub-regional Offices are playing a key role in providing such support. Requests cover a broad range of services, from information resources and technical and logistical support to events and initiatives, and financial contributions. It may be noted in this regard that the Organization is making every effort to meet expectations, within the given resource constraints.

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<sup>5</sup> Other countries, including Brazil, China, Japan, Ghana, Mexico and the United States have also provided input to the conference.

<sup>6</sup> C 2011/18

### III. Activities within the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)

16. FAO, as chair of the CPF, initiated a new cooperation on forest communication and convened a working meeting for communication officers of CPF member organizations to develop a proposal for collaborative actions. CPF members have agreed on a special timetable for the Year, assigning forest-relevant topics to each month and identifying lead and contributing agencies from among CPF members for developing specific programmes related to these topics. Activities represent a broad spectrum from the minimum requirement of a joint CPF press release to organizing major events such as Forest Day 5 in relation to climate change.

17. Relevant information, news items and the press releases are made available on the FAO Forestry IYF website<sup>7</sup>. Altogether 26 themes were identified for the year, linked with the relevant international day whenever possible. FAO is the lead agency on six of the themes: Forest and water; Managing risks of forests under climate change; Forests and tourism; Urban forestry; Forests and food security; Forests and mountains, and is a contributing agency for additional eight topics<sup>8</sup>.

18. Other areas of cooperation are also being discussed by CPF members including possible joint production of information and media products as well as the use of existing communication networks to promote the Year.

### IV. FAO Activities

19. Plans at the regional offices and in headquarters include a broad range of activities, from publications to organizing events and conducting outreach activities. The following section provides a non-exhaustive list of planned and already implemented actions.

#### *Publications and audio-visual materials*

20. The State of the World's Forests 2011 was the first major contribution to the Year with a special chapter devoted to the forest and people nexus, and was introduced at the launching event of the Year in February. Fourteen other major publications are planned for the year covering the widest possible range of topics related to forests and sustainable forest management, mostly in the form of Forestry Working Papers.

21. One special issue of FAO publication *Unasylva* was devoted to showcasing, through the different international days, how forests and trees are inextricably linked with almost every aspect of human life. The other two issues of this publication planned for this year will focus on forests and natural disasters, and on forest degradation. Other periodicals, for example the 2011 issues of the *Nature and Fauna Magazine* of the Regional Office for Africa will also be dedicated to the Year.

22. A series of fact sheets, related to the "CPF monthly themes" and based on most recent information including the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010, will be produced and published on the web in support of the communication activities presented in the previous section.

23. Considerations are given to producing additional short video features on key forestry issues around the world that could potentially include topics such as the economic significance of dryland forest commodities, forests and watershed management, forests and food security, sustainable mountain development. Implementation of these plans is subject to availability of funds.

#### *Events*

24. Many important related events are taking place during the year. For instance, the Second Mediterranean Forest Week took place on 5-7 April in Avignon, France, featuring main achievements of, and key challenges to, forestry in the region and also celebrating the 100 years anniversary of *Silva Mediterranea*. The event was very well attended and attracted considerable media attention, thanks to the strong commitment of member countries and partner organizations.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fao.org/forestry/iyf2011/68850/en/>

<sup>8</sup> For details please visit <http://www.fao.org/forestry/iyf2011/69194/en/>

25. The FAO European Forestry Commission will hold its 36<sup>th</sup> session, organized jointly with the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the UNECE Timber Committee, on 10-14 October, in Antalya (Turkey) at the kind invitation of the Government of Turkey. The joint session will focus on forests and green economy and be built around the central topic of the Year.

26. The Asia Pacific Forestry Commission will hold its 24<sup>th</sup> session on 7-11 November in Beijing at the generous invitation of the Government of China. The session will coincide with the Second Asia Pacific Forestry Week: “New challenges – new opportunities”, the most important forestry event in the region in 2011 which is expected to attract 1500-2000 participants, providing ample opportunities for raising awareness of forest issues and the Year in general. The Week will host several professional and outreach activities intended for the broadest possible audiences. The programme of the event was still being formulated at the time of preparation of this document.

27. FAO is organizing/co-organizing other events that also provide ample opportunities for promoting the International Year of Forests. Most notable among these are the International Model Forest Network Global Forum in March in Spain, the 5<sup>th</sup> International Wildland Fire Conference in May in South Africa and the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Landslide Forum in October in Rome. Special attention would be paid to World Food Day celebration which could provide an important opportunity to demonstrate the strong linkages between forests and food security and highlight the role of forests as an important source of food and livelihood for huge populations, often the poorest and most vulnerable people among them.

28. Steps are made to make the Staff Day in 2011 a global organization-wide effort to celebrate forests by planting trees. In Italy the Corpo Forestale dello Stato has expressed readiness to provide venue for such an event if FAO so wishes. In addition, cooperation partners could be sought for in every country hosting an FAO office to make it a truly global event.

#### *Web-based activities*

29. The FAO Forestry Department has launched a dedicated website<sup>9</sup> to provide up-to-date information related to the Year. In addition to traditional use of the web, more innovative approaches are also tested including the creation of social media-based communication platforms, a special website presenting information for children, and applications designed for hand-held devices targeting the most technology-savvy adolescent and young adult generations.

#### *Media and outreach*

30. Efforts are made in cooperation with the Office of Corporate Communications and External Relations (OCE) to achieve a steady media attention throughout the year. In addition to press releases and media material on key events and publications, several interviews have been organized with national and international media, and although no complete inventory can be presented at this early stage, quick surveys show considerably more intense presence in the media than in similar periods of any other year.

31. Outreach activities are targeting various audiences, some are for more professional ones, such as the standing exhibition “Forest Corner” at FAO Headquarters following the monthly topics of the CPF cooperation or the Art of Trees exhibition in the Palais des Nations in Geneva, while others are targeting the general public, like rock concerts (e.g. the Lollapalozza in early April in Santiago, Chile, or the Earth Day Concert in Rome), cultural events, advertisements placed in public transport facilities, or joint celebration with the Italian Forestry Authority in October. Opportunities for such cooperation are and will be continuously sought throughout the year.

32. FAO has made important steps in establishing a strong visual identity for the Year. Since the launching event, all electronic correspondence, the FAO website, and offices worldwide, including headquarters, carry visual elements, marking the celebration of the Year.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fao.org/forestry/iyf2011/en/>

## V. Sustaining Attention to Forests

33. The IYF underscores the importance of sustainable forest management and highlights the potential advantages to establish one or more mechanisms to sustain attention to forests. At its 20<sup>th</sup> session (Rome, 4-8 October 2010), the Committee on Forestry (COFO) recommended to countries and FAO to consider the strengthening of the idea and profile of the observation of an international day of forests<sup>10</sup>.

34. A number of such mechanisms exist, mostly outside forestry and mainly in the form of international or world days.

35. The idea of having such a day has a long history, more recently the General Assembly of the European Confederation of Agriculture made a recommendation<sup>11</sup> in this regard in 1971. In November 1971, The Sixteenth Session of FAO Conference “*recommended that FAO should support the establishment of a World Forestry Day (WFD), and cooperate in an appropriate manner to this end with Member Nations*”<sup>12</sup>. Although this was a forward looking recommendation by the Conference and a bold step towards recognizing the multiple and significant roles forests play, it has not fully materialized. As a result, at present there is no one globally recognized day to celebrate forests. According to various sources researched recently, about 40 countries are celebrating forests under different names such as Forestry Day, Arbor Day or Tree Day, and on different dates, depending partly on climate and suitable planting season, but mostly on 21 March. The date is believed to be set at the autumnal equinox in the Southern, and the vernal equinox in the Northern Hemisphere.

36. Most recently the 9<sup>th</sup> session of UNFF considered the need for a mechanism for lasting recognition of the role of forests and recommended to ECOSOC and through it to the General Assembly “*to consider the establishment of an International Day of the Forest with the aim to recognize the significant contribution of forests to sustainable development, the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, and the corresponding need to strengthen the sustainable management of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations*”<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Paragraph 46 of document C 2011/18

<sup>11</sup> 23rd General Assembly of the European Confederation of Agriculture (CEA) in Santa Cruz de Tenerife on 21st October 1971: “*La CEA, au nom des propriétaires forestiers européens, prendra, dans les plus brefs délais, l’initiative en vue de l’introduction d’une journée mondiale de la forêt*”.

<sup>12</sup> FAO Conference Report <http://www.fao.org/docrep/C3592E/C3592e08.htm#d> programme objective 2.4: war on waste

<sup>13</sup> Item 6, paragraph 5 in: [http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/session\\_documents/unff9/Adopted\\_resolution\\_at\\_530PM\\_4\\_Feb\\_2011.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/session_documents/unff9/Adopted_resolution_at_530PM_4_Feb_2011.pdf)