FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Thirty-fifth Session
Thimphu, Bhutan, 17-20 February 2020

Information Note

Conference arrangements

1. The 35th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) will be held at Le Méridien Hotel from 17 to 20 February 2020. The inaugural ceremony of the Ministerial Session will take place in the Plenary Hall at 08.30 hours on Wednesday, 19 February 2020.

2. Due to space restrictions, the Plenary Hall will accommodate a maximum of two delegates from each Delegation, namely the Head of Delegation and one Senior Official. All other delegates and observers may attend the Sessions in a nearby satellite room, connected by video link.

3. The normal working hours of the Conference will be from 09.00 to 12.00 and from 14.00 to 17.00 hours, unless otherwise decided by the Conference.

4. An “Order of the Day” will be issued daily, giving detailed information of the Regional Conference business, timetable of meetings, items to be discussed and other general information.

5. The Provisional Annotated Agenda (APRC/20/1) is being circulated to delegates with the invitation letter and will also be available on the APRC website at http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/aprc35.

6. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) will act as the Secretariat of the Regional Conference and will provide a list of names, roles and responsibilities of its staff to delegates on the first day of the Conference.

Working languages

7. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided and documentation issued in Chinese, English, French and Russian.
Press liaison and information

8. For the duration of the Regional Conference, the Conference Information Officer, assisted by a Press Officer of the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB), will ensure contact with the press and be responsible for matters concerning information to the public.

9. Any foreign journalist visiting Bhutan must be accredited prior to arrival with the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority (BICMA). An Application Form for ad hoc Accreditation for foreign journalists is available at the following link: http://www.fao.org/3/ca6697en/ca6697en.pdf. It may also be requested from the following e-mail address: aprc2020liaison@moaf.gov.bt.

Documentation

10. The Regional Conference webpage is available at: http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/aprc35.

11. Working documents will be made available to all participating governments and organizations, before the Regional Conference commences, at the following address: http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/aprc35/documents/en. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring their own copies of documentation to the meetings and to refrain from requesting additional copies. Documents drafted during the Regional Conference will be available at the documents distribution desk, outside the Conference Hall. All documentation will be published on the APRC webpage, at the above-mentioned link.

Draft recommendations and amendments

12. Delegates who wish to submit draft recommendations, or other documents requiring decision by the Regional Conference, are requested to provide an electronic version of their text in English, to the Regional Conference Secretary at: APRC@fao.org. Delegates wishing to circulate other written material related to the Agenda of the Regional Conference are requested to deliver 15 copies in Chinese, 100 copies in English, 15 copies in French and 15 copies in Russian to the Secretariat for distribution.

Advance communication of speeches and statements

13. Delegations are encouraged to limit their written statements to a maximum of 800 words. In order to ensure accuracy in interpretation, delegates are kindly requested to submit digital copies of their statements, in English, to the Secretariat of the Regional Conference at APRC@fao.org by Thursday, 30 January 2020.

14. FAO will post these statements on the Regional Conference webpage at: http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/aprc35.

15. For those wishing to do so, a three-minute video presentation of country statement may be sent to: APRC@fao.org to be posted on the webpage: http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/aprc35.

Webcasting

16. All Plenary sessions will be webcasted live and/or uploaded to the Conference website at: http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/aprc35.

Correspondence

17. WiFi access and postal services, as well as a travel and tourist information desk, will be available during the Session.
18. All correspondence concerning the Regional Conference should be addressed to:

**Conference Secretary at the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific**
Mr Jong-Jin Kim
Conference Secretary, 35th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
39 Phra Atit Road
Bangkok
10200, Thailand
Tel: +66 2 6974000
Fax: +66 2 6974445
E-mail: APRC@fao.org

Please copy all correspondence to the Government Liaison Officer at the addresses below.

**Liaison Officer (FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific)**
Mr Kencho Thinley
Chief Planning Officer, Policy and Planning Division
Ministry of Agriculture and Forests
Thimphu, Bhutan
Tel: +975 2 323745 or +975 1 7118384
Email: aprc2020liaison@moaf.gov.bt

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**Conference venue**

19. The main Regional Conference venue is the Plenary Hall at Le Méridien Hotel in Thimphu. There will also be a nearby satellite Conference venue, connected to the Plenary Hall by video to allow for additional space for delegations. The Plenary Hall will accommodate a maximum of two delegates from each delegation; for both the Senior Officers Meeting and the Plenary Session. The satellite venue will accommodate the remaining participants in the Conference.

**Main Venue:**
Le Méridien Hotel
Chorten Lam, P.O. Box 01286
Thimphu, Bhutan
Tel: +975 2 337 788
Toll free reservation centre: +975 2 337 788 ext. 322
Fax: +975 2 337 799

**Formalities for entry into Bhutan**

20. All countries except for **Bangladesh, India** and **Maldives** require a visa to enter Bhutan.

21. Citizens of **Switzerland** and **Thailand** holding official or diplomatic passports will be provided with a visa on arrival at the Paro International Airport. The passport must be valid for at least six months from the intended departure date from Bhutan. Foreigners with a valid SAARC Visa Exemption Sticker do not require a visa for entry into Bhutan.

22. For all information on visas for Bhutan, please visit the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs (MOHCA) of the Royal Government of Bhutan at: [www.mohca.gov.bt](http://www.mohca.gov.bt). The “Visa Application Form for the Kingdom of Bhutan” is under the Immigration Forms link or can be downloaded directly from: [http://www.mohca.gov.bt/download/revisedvisaform.pdf](http://www.mohca.gov.bt/download/revisedvisaform.pdf).
23. To visit Bhutan, visa requirements include a return ticket and passport valid for at least six months from the date of departure from Bhutan. All participants are required to submit a copy of their passport, passport details and a completed “Visa Application Form for the Kingdom of Bhutan” (http://www.mohca.gov.bt/download/revisedvisaform.pdf) with a recent passport-size photograph. Visa applications must be submitted at least seven working days in advance of the intended date of arrival in Bhutan. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF) of Bhutan can prepare a clearance letter for visa-on-arrival from the Department of Immigration, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs (MOHCA), Thimphu, Bhutan. This visa clearance letter will be provided to all participants requiring a visa before entry into Bhutan. Participants should ensure that they carry a printout copy of this visa clearance letter with them upon arrival, to be shown during check-in and on arrival at Paro International Airport. Participants should ensure that they also carry the invitation letter issued by FAO, which will need to be shown at the Immigration desk upon arrival. The visa will then be granted on arrival at the Airport.

24. The same passport that was submitted for obtaining the visa must be presented upon arrival.

25. It should be noted that, in order to process visa applications, the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) may also require other information and/or certifications from applicants on a case-by-case basis.

26. For foreigners issued with immigration permits, the individual or agency concerned must extend the visa on the passport as per the validity of the immigration permit.

27. Should a delegate be required, due to unavoidable circumstances, to stay longer than three days after the intended departure date, the concerned agency must write a letter addressed to the Secretary, MOHCA/Director, Department of Immigration, enclosing the reason and supporting documents.

28. Visa fee: all foreigners entering Bhutan are required to pay a visa fee of BTN 2 500, except for persons with a UN laissez-passer or those who are exempt from visa requirements, as stated above in paragraph 21. This fee can be paid upon arrival at Paro International Airport in cash in Bhutanese Ngultrum (BTN) or United States Dollars (USD). Visa fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.

29. Travelers arriving from infected areas will only require a valid international certificate of vaccination if there is a special case, or during an emergency, such as an outbreak of disease as per directives from the government.

30. Prior permission must be obtained from Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA) of the MoAF to import any animal, plant and food products into Bhutan. Requests should be submitted at least two weeks in advance of arrival to allow for processing of such requests. Online information on the importation of animal, plant and food products can be accessed from: http://www.bafra.gov.bt/

### Online registration form and travel

31. The Regional Conference online registration form, including hotel registration, is available at: https://event-services.fao.org/35thAPRC

32. The authorities of Bhutan will provide participants with transfers to and from the airport. Participants are requested to register online at least three weeks prior to arrival, to ensure that they are properly met on arrival at the Paro International Airport (PBH). Participants are advised to mark their luggage clearly to facilitate identification.

33. Paro International Airport is 34 miles/54.7 km southwest of Thimphu.

34. The authorities of Bhutan will assist participants regarding immigration, visa, and customs formalities upon arrival and exit. Similar arrangements will be made at the end of the Regional Conference.
35. All participants in the Regional Conference are advised to finalize, at an early date, return travel arrangements. Participants are advised to contact the travel desk at the Regional Conference premises immediately upon arrival, for reconfirmation of their departure date and time.

**Foreign exchange and banking**

36. Bhutan’s local currency is Bhutanese Ngultrum (BNT). United States Dollars, Euros or other currencies may be exchanged in banks, hotels and foreign exchange services located in the airport, hotel, and city. The current exchange rate is approximately USD 1 to BNT 70.00. Visa and Mastercard credit cards are usually accepted in hotels, airport and shopping malls with a 3 percent surcharge for international users. More information on Bhutanese currency is available at the following links: [http://www.bob.bt/](http://www.bob.bt/), [http://www.bnb.bt/](http://www.bnb.bt/), [http://www.rma.org.bt/](http://www.rma.org.bt/).

37. Amounts of USD 10 000 or more, or the equivalent in foreign currency, must be declared to the Customs Officer.

**Medical services and first aid**

38. Medical and first aid services will be available at the Conference premises.

39. Participants should be aware that the elevation of Thimphu, Bhutan is 2 350 metres above sea level. Altitude sickness may be an issue for some participants. Some medicines are locally available to treat and prevent altitude sickness. However, delegates are strongly encouraged to discuss prevention and/or treatment with their physician before travel.

**Hotel accommodation**

40. Requests for hotel accommodation for participants should be made at the earliest possible date. Participants should use the online registration form available at: [https://event-services.fao.org/35thAPRC](https://event-services.fao.org/35thAPRC). Heads of Delegations are recommended to reserve their accommodation at the Le Méridien. For any questions, enquiries or request for additional information, participants should contact APRC-Registration@fao.org.

41. Permission for family members to accompany a delegate to the Regional Conference is limited by the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) to persons in certain categories of diplomatic, ministerial or UN missions. Therefore, delegates considering bringing their family members should contact the Conference Liaison Officer at aprc2020liaison@moaf.gov.bt for clarification.

42. There are many high quality hotels in the immediate vicinity of the Regional Conference venue to give delegates ample choice of hotel accommodation. However, it is strongly recommended to complete the online registration at the earliest convenience. A number of recommended hotels are available as choices to delegates during online registration, and a list is also included below:

- **Le Méridien (venue)**
  Chorten Lam, P.O. Box 01286
  Thimphu, Bhutan
  Toll free reservation centre: +975-2-337788 ext. 322
  Fax: +975 2 337799

- **The Namgay Heritage Hotel**
  Jangchhub Lam, Thimphu
  Tel: +975 2 332191
  Email: amgayheritaehotel@gmail.com
http://namgayheritagehotel.com/

- **The dusitD2 Yarkay**
  Chorten Lam, Thimphu
  Tel: +975 2 339988
  Fax: +975 2 335588
  Email: info2tb@dusit.com
  https://www.dusit.com/dusitd2/yarkay/thimphu/

- **Hotel Druk**
  Post box 1178
  Clock tower square
  Wogzin lharn, Thimphu
  Tel: +975 77 198819, +975 2 322966
  Fax: +975 2 322677
  Email: druk.thimphu@drukhotels.com
  http://drukhotels.com/thimphu/

- **Norkhil Boutique Hotel & Spa**
  Doe Bum Lam, Thimphu
  Tel: +975 7 7116562
  reservation@norkhil.com
  sales@norkhil.com

- **Pedling Hotel and Spa.**
  Dondrup Lam,
  P.O. Box 976 Thimphu,
  Thimphu Bhutan
  Tel: +975 2 325 714
  Email: reservation@hotelpedling.com or info@hotelpedling.com
  Website: www.dewachenhospitality.com

43. At check-in, hotels may require guests to present a credit card and/or make an advance cash payment. It should be noted that participants are required to settle their hotel bills on departure, including meals, bar, tips, telephone, laundry, etc.

**Registration upon arrival at the venue**

44. All delegates and observers are requested to register, upon arrival, at the Regional Conference Plenary Room to receive their identification tags and the meeting package. The registration desk opens on Sunday, 16 February 2020 from 14.00 to 18.00 hours and daily from 7.00 onwards. The Regional Conference Secretariat will provide a Provisional List of Participants on the first day of the Conference. The Secretariat should be notified of any corrections or additions to this list. Only registered participants will be issued with special badges, permitting them to enter the Regional Conference meeting venues.

**Weather and time**

45. Bhutan is located 27 degrees north of the equator. During the month of February, the temperature in Thimphu varies during the day, on average between 12 and 15 ºC, and falls to below zero at night. The climate is usually dry and sunny in the day during the winter months, but snow is possible.

46. Bhutan is 6 hours ahead of UTC/GMT (standard time).
Electricity

47. The electricity in Bhutan is 220/230 volts at 50Hz. Bhutan uses a three-pin plug (two round pins as well as grounding pin) arranged in an inverted-V shape, which carries 2000 Watts of 16 Amperes. It is to be noted that universal adaptors are not always provided at all hotels.