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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Thirty-fifth Session

Thimphu, Bhutan, 17-20 February 2020

**Report of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) and the Fourth
Asia-Pacific Forestry Week (APFW 2019)**

Executive Summary

The Twenty-eighth session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) was held from 17 to 21 June 2019 in Incheon, Republic of Korea. The main theme of the session was “Forests for peace and well-being”. It was attended by approximately 200 participants, including delegates from four United Nations (UN) organizations, 22 member countries and 22 regional and international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Commission was convened as the core event of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2019, which attracted more than 2000 participants and included 100 events organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and partner organizations.

APFC recognized the important contributions forests can make to peace-building and people’s well-being. It highlighted the need for governments, key stakeholders and FAO to continue to advance work in a number of areas, including regional and national capacity-building on conflict management and dispute resolution; forest and landscape restoration; community forests, trade and markets; impacts of technological advances on forests and forestry; biodiversity; supporting the implementation of key recommendations coming from the *Third Asia-Pacific Forest Sector Outlook Study* (APFSOS III); and forests and climate change.

The outcomes of the deliberation are summarized in this information note.

Suggested action by the Regional Conference

The FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) is invited to take note of the main outcomes of the APFC and advise the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific on the key steps to take in the countries of the region. Key outcomes are reflected in APFC’s recommendations for FAO, such as to:

- continue to expand efforts to support climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, including building resilience against natural disasters;

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- support member countries to promote the carbon-storage properties of forest products, advance the role of forest products in addressing climate change, and pursue opportunities to promote and implement the work of the Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World initiative in the Asia-Pacific region;
- support regional and national capacity-building on conflict management and dispute resolution in forestry;
- continue to provide support to developing community forestry programmes, including community enterprise development;
- conduct further work on the basis of the APFSOS III publication to develop supporting issues-based materials, targeted at specific stakeholder groups and tailored for various media distribution mechanisms;
- continue to provide support to forest and landscape restoration, including for capacity-building and to national and regional programmes; and
- conduct a review of the use of technology in forestry, including identifying prerequisites for creating enabling environments for technology development and uptake.

Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:

APRC Secretariat

APRC@fao.org

Introduction

1. Created in 1949, the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) is one of six Regional Forestry Commissions established by FAO to provide a policy and technical forum for countries to discuss and address forest issues on a regional basis. It meets every two years. Currently, it has 34 member countries.
2. At the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Korea, the Twenty-eighth session of the APFC was held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 17 to 21 June 2019. Delegates from 22 member countries and four United Nations (UN) organizations participated in the session, together with observers and representatives from 22 regional and international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Commission was convened as the core event of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2019, which attracted more than 2000 participants and included 100 events organized by FAO and partner organizations.
3. The main objectives of the Twenty-eighth session of the APFC were: to discuss and assess technical and policy issues and trends relevant to forestry in the region; to develop and advance mechanisms for regional and subregional cooperation in addressing forestry problems; and to advise FAO on policy formulation and priorities for its forestry programmes in the region.
4. The main theme of the Twenty-eighth session was “Forests for peace and well-being”. Guided by this theme, APFC discussed 18 agenda items developed through participatory processes and in close coordination with member countries and the Executive Committee of the APFC. Key results and recommendations are provided below.

Discussion

5. In relation to the agenda item “Forests for peace and well-being”, APFC:
 - a. Recognized the important contributions forests can make to peace-building and people’s well-being.
 - b. Highlighted the need for specific policy recommendations on peace and well-being aspects of forestry.
 - c. Invited member countries to collaborate in research and development and in sharing their experiences on health, well-being and livelihood aspects of forestry, including the potential for generating employment.
 - d. Requested that FAO support regional and national capacity-building on conflict management and dispute resolution in forestry.
6. Regarding “Forest and landscape restoration”, APFC:
 - a. Appreciated the broad range of national, regional and global initiatives in forest and landscape restoration that are currently being implemented.
 - b. Invited member countries and international organizations, including FAO, to collaborate in developing new partnerships to access finance for forest and landscape restoration.
 - c. Invited member countries to develop ambitious voluntary national contributions to the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 to further progress towards the Global Forest Goals, including Target 1.1 (i.e. forest area to be increased by 3 percent worldwide).
 - d. Requested FAO to continue to provide support to forest and landscape restoration, including for capacity-building and national and regional programmes.
7. APFC deliberated on “Community forests, trade and markets” and:
 - a. Recognized a broad and diverse range of community forestry programmes operating in many countries in the Asia and the Pacific region.
 - b. Emphasized the importance of integrating community forests into national development plans and developing mechanisms to enhance the link between community forests and markets for forest products and ecosystem services.

- c. Noted that arrangements around community forestry, including land tenure, are often insufficiently robust to meet international legality requirements.
 - d. Urged FAO to leverage opportunities within the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to work with other international organizations, including the International Tropical Timber Organization, which have a trade focus in their mandate and are well placed to develop further mechanisms for community forests to contribute to the legal and sustainable trade in timber products.
 - e. Requested that FAO continue to provide support to developing community forestry programmes, including community enterprise development.
8. When discussing “The impact of technological advances on forests and forestry”, APFC:
- a. Recognized the increasingly important role technology will play in improving efficiency in forest products industries and advancing progress towards sustainable forest management.
 - b. Emphasized the need for raised awareness of available technologies and capacity-building to enhance their uptake.
 - c. Noted potential opportunities for development and transfer of open-source technologies and the need to cooperate further on issues related to restrictions on proprietary technology and data.
 - d. Noted an increasing number of timber legality measures in the region and a related need for FAO to broaden the scope of its legality work to better support these measures and to encourage the development of policies and technology to address the circumstances in the region.
 - e. Appreciated the important roles played by youth in developing and disseminating technologies, and noted their potential to enhance technology uptake by supporting technological learning and capacity-building for youth.
 - f. Requested that FAO conduct a review of the use of technology in forestry, including identifying prerequisites for creating enabling environments for technology development and uptake.
9. APFC discussed “FAO’s work on biodiversity” and:
- a. Highlighted the need for forests to be given due attention in the development of the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform.
 - b. Endorsed FAO’s work to date on the draft Biodiversity Strategy (including the overarching goal of sustainable food and agricultural systems that integrate biodiversity considerations throughout value chains) and recognition of indigenous and local knowledge.
 - c. Endorsed FAO’s work in convening multistakeholder dialogues as part of its initiative to develop a Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform.
10. APFC reviewed “The progress made by FAO in implementing APFC recommendations and FAO supported activities” and:
- a. Appreciated the collaborative and cross-cutting nature of APFC- and FAO-supported activities being implemented in the region and the potential for further scaling up the activities.
 - b. Highlighted the overarching importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in guiding the work of FAO and the APFC, including that work should directly contribute to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - c. Invited FAO to consider mapping the impacts of activities against organizational strategic goals and objectives in future reporting to the APFC.

- d. Encouraged FAO to continue or strengthen its engagement in projects supporting and building capacities of Pacific island countries and other least-developed countries to address their particular needs and objectives.
11. In relation to the “Forest Sector Outlook Study”, the APFC:
 - a. Welcomed the release of the APFSOS III as an important tool to support development of forest policies, strategies and plans in Asia and the Pacific region.
 - b. Highlighted the importance of building resilience and capacities for disaster risk management.
 - c. Appreciated the value in conducting a regional assessment of best practices related to adaptive management, which should capture national examples provided on a voluntary basis.
 - d. Noted the increasing importance of trees outside forests as an important source of wood and incomes for smallholders in most countries.
 - e. Recommended that FAO conduct further work on the basis of the APFSOS III publication to develop supporting issues-based materials, targeted at specific stakeholder groups and tailored for various media distribution mechanisms.
 - f. Requested that FAO develop quantitative forecasts to 2030 and 2050 for consumption, production and trade in forest products in the Asia and the Pacific region.
 12. Regarding the agenda item “Forest and climate change”, APFC:
 - a. Welcomed reports from member countries on a range of national initiatives being implemented to address climate change challenges.
 - b. Highlighted the need to ensure climate change dialogues are constructively advanced, duplication of effort is avoided and clarity of purpose is maintained.
 - c. Encouraged member countries, as appropriate, to effectively plan, implement and monitor forestry-related mitigation and adaptation activities consistent with their national strategies and approaches, including those identified in their Nationally Determined Contributions, where applicable.
 - d. Requested FAO to continue to expand efforts to support climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, including building resilience against natural disasters.
 - e. Requested that FAO support member countries to promote the carbon-storage properties of forest products and advance the role of forest products in addressing climate change.
 - f. Requested that FAO pursue opportunities to promote and implement the work of the Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World initiative in the Asia and the Pacific region.
 - g. Requested that FAO implement a study on the spread of forest-invasive species in the context of climate change and propose adaptive measures.
 13. In relation to the agenda item on “The state of forests and forestry in Asia and the Pacific”, APFC:
 - a. Welcomed reports on recent forestry developments in member countries.
 - b. Welcomed offers by countries to share experiences and information on a range of forestry issues.
 14. For agenda item “Preparations for the Committee on Forestry (COFO 25) and the XV World Forestry Congress”, APFC:
 - a. Encouraged FAO to phase the COFO agenda so that topics follow an orderly advance into the programme for the XV World Forestry Congress.
 - b. Identified priority topics for the forthcoming COFO 25 and 35th session of the APRC, and for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry. These included: forests for peace and well-being; the role of forest products and their storage of carbon in tackling climate change; the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation; quantifying forestry

- contributions to national economies; biodiversity in forests; forest education; and quantitative forecasting for global production consumption and trade in forest products.
- c. Identified a number of potential themes and topics that could form the basis of technical sessions at the World Forestry Congress. These included: a cross-cutting stream on technological developments; legal and sustainable wood products and promotion of legal products (including combating illegal logging and associated trade); the UN Global Forest Goals, including the proposed launch of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) 2021 flagship publication by the UNFF Secretariat; utilization of planted forests and challenges in relation to sustainable forest management; improvement of employment environments and work safety in forestry; strengthened resilience against climatic disasters by utilizing forests; carbon storage in wood products as a countermeasure to climate change; the role of forests in addressing energy challenges; circular economies and bio-economies; the role of forests in climate change; and inclusion of a youth-led stream to focus on the contributions of youth to forestry.
 - d. Noted that the World Forestry Congress will provide an important opportunity to facilitate cross-sectoral engagement with non-forest sectors to discuss the practicality of policy ideas, managing landscape approaches, securing financing and implementing solutions.
 - e. Requested the Secretariat to consider the recommendations, translate them into templates and attach them to the current report as Appendix D.
15. Based on the agenda item paper on “Forests for peace and well-being: Reports and recommendations from the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week (APFW) 2019 streams”, APFC:
- a. Acknowledged the presentations from the five thematic streams and the robust discussions within the wider APFW 2019.
 - b. Encouraged member countries to mainstream forest and landscape restoration into national policy and development agendas.
 - c. Encouraged member countries, where appropriate, to continue to work to clarify land and forest tenure rights, while also encouraging the forest sector to seek and expand collaboration with other sectors.
 - d. Invited member countries to facilitate private-sector engagement to build environmental resilience with innovative financing for a range of strategies and mechanisms, including REDD+, Nationally Determined Contributions, agroforestry and peatland restoration, and natural disaster prevention, as appropriate.
 - e. Invited member countries to continue to adapt and implement measures to regulate and promote legal and sustainable trade in forest products and, where necessary, adapt measures to improve market accessibility for smallholders, communities and micro-enterprises.
 - f. Encouraged member countries to seek opportunities to strengthen governance and establish effective institutions, including through innovative approaches across landscapes and beyond the forest sector.
 - g. Requested the Secretariat to summarize the presentations made by the five thematic streams and attach the summary to the current report as Appendix E.
16. Regarding agenda item “Global processes”, APFC:
- a. Appreciated FAO’s engagement with various international bodies on forestry issues (including Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation) and invited FAO to consider asking relevant organizations to report under this agenda item at future sessions.
 - b. Encouraged FAO and member countries to play active roles in the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit Track #8: Nature-based Solutions and in the reform process for the International Poplar Commission.

- c. Advised that FAO's core work on forestry should not be weakened by allocating additional effort to urban forestry, while at the same time recognizing increasing risks to urban areas from disasters such as landslides and debris flows.
- d. Invited countries to engage with youth in forest-related international processes.

17. The APFC discussed the "Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and collaboration with UNFF" and:

- a. Encouraged FAO and UNFF to seek opportunities at other regional forestry commissions to replicate the strong collaboration evident in jointly organizing Stream 5 of the APFW.
- b. Supported harmonization of work in the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests.
- c. Urged FAO to ensure that its budget allocations are sufficient to properly meet its roles and obligations as Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, including provision of adequate support to the Global Forest Goals.

Conclusion

18. The Twenty-eighth session of the APFC concluded with the commitments of member countries to continue to work together with key stakeholders and FAO to improve forest management in the region and to pursue sustainable forest management in the context of sustainable development.