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**LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION****TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION****Asuncion, Paraguay, 5 – 9 March, 2012****FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE****Secretariat Note***Summary*

The aim of this secretariat note is to review international policy developments as agreed by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in particular related to forests, and to highlight opportunities for strengthening national action by integrating climate change into national forest programmes and by reinforcing regional cooperation on mitigation and adaptation. It is intended to stimulate discussion among members of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission at the in-session seminar on forests and climate change. Some issues for consideration by Commission members are included at the end of the note.

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Climate change has emerged as one of the crucial challenges facing countries today and in the foreseeable future. Climate change and climate variability are expected to have major impacts on most sectors and aspects of life, including on agricultural productivity and food security, household economies and environmental sustainability. Climate change puts recent and future development gains at risk, but also offers the possibility of rethinking paths of development and of strengthening efforts to institutionalize sustainability. Heightened political awareness and emerging sources of financing for climate change adaptation and mitigation could offer critical support to sustainable development in the Latin American and Caribbean region, including for sustainable forest management.

**KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

2. The seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 17) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Durban, South Africa, from 28 November to 11 December 2011. The 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 7) was also convened, as were sessions of the *Ad hoc* Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA), the *Ad hoc* Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP),

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the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

3. The UNFCCC's key decisions<sup>1</sup> at Durban included:
  - A second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol will start January 2013 and terminate either at the end of 2017 or 2020, as to be decided by UNFCCC at COP18.
  - A process will be launched under a new body, the *Ad hoc* Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, to develop a legal framework that will be applicable to all Parties to the UNFCCC and that will enhance mitigation ambition and facilitate mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology transfer and capacity building. Negotiations are to be concluded by 2015 so that the legal instrument can come into effect in 2020.
  - The Green Climate Fund was made operational through the adoption of its governing instrument. The Fund's policies, processes and guidelines will be developed in 2012.
  - Adoption of the terms of reference for the Climate Technology Center and Network, the implementing arm of the new Technology Mechanism. In 2012, the host of the Centre will be selected.
  - Launch of the Adaptation Committee, established to advise and guide UNFCCC on adaptation.
  - The life of the AWG-LCA was extended for one more year to complete its work under the Bali Action Plan.

#### **UNFCCC DECISIONS OF RELEVANCE TO FORESTS**

4. Two major forest issues were negotiated by the UNFCCC at Durban: REDD+, the proposed instrument to provide financial incentives to developing countries for climate change mitigation actions in the forest sector (i.e. reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks); and land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) issues, including greenhouse gas accounting rules for forests and forest products in developed countries.

5. Regarding REDD+, the UNFCCC provided guidance for countries on systems for providing information on how the environmental and social safeguards agreed at COP16 in Cancun are being addressed and respected and agreed that the information would be provided in Parties' National Communications. The UNFCCC also agreed on modalities for countries to develop reference emission levels (RELS) and/or forest reference levels (RLs) for REDD+, invited Parties to submit proposed RELs/RLs to the UNFCCC, and agreed to establish a process for their technical assessment. There was no resolution of the on-going debate on financing options for REDD+ , but a process to further explore the options over the upcoming year was laid out. The UNFCCC did not reach agreement regarding modalities for REDD+ measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) and national forest monitoring systems. The SBSTA will continue to work on these, with the aim of completing its work and reporting to COP18 in December 2012<sup>2</sup>.

6. After years of negotiation on LULUCF issues, important agreements were reached on accounting rules for forest management, accounting for harvested wood products and treatment of emissions from natural disturbances. Accounting for forest management, which was voluntary during the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, will be mandatory during the second commitment period. Countries will also be required, during the second commitment period, to account for changes in the amount of carbon stored in harvested wood products. Revegetation, cropland management, grazing land management and wetland drainage and rewetting will remain optional for accounting, but countries that have elected them during the first period shall continue accounting for these activities. The UNFCCC decision also provides rules on accounting for emissions due to natural disturbances.

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<sup>1</sup> See decisions of COP 17 and CMP 17 at: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

<sup>2</sup> SBSTA draft conclusions <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/sbsta/eng/125.pdf>

7. Work will continue under the SBSTA to explore more comprehensive accounting of emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry, including through more inclusion activity-based approach or a land-based approach and also to consider additional LULUCF activities that could be eligible for the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

8. At COP 17, the UNFCCC called on countries to prepare National Adaptation Plans.<sup>3</sup> Enhanced action on adaptation should be undertaken in accordance with the Convention, should follow a country-driven, gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, and should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional and indigenous knowledge, and by gender-sensitive approaches, with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant social, economic and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate.

9. With the operationalization of the Green Climate Fund, the target for which is to provide \$US 100 billion per year by 2020 for support to developing countries balanced between adaptation and mitigation, funding for adaptation can be expected to rise significantly. These funds will augment existing sources of financing for adaptation, including various UNFCCC's Adaptation Funds: the Least Developed Country Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund, as well as various bilateral and multi-lateral sources.

#### **SUPPORTING NATIONAL ACTION AND FOSTERING REGIONAL COOPERATION ON FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

10. Forests remain high on the agenda in the international negotiations. There are substantial financial pledges for mitigation and adaptation activities in the forest sector and political will for climate change action is at an all-time high. Countries are perhaps seeing a unique opportunity to strengthen national frameworks for sustainable forest management and to foster increased regional cooperation to meet both national and global goals for forests.

11. FAO supports countries wishing to benefit from the proposed REDD+ mechanism. Most of this support is provided through the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in Developing countries, also known as the UN-REDD Programme. UN-REDD was launched in 2008 and builds on the convening role and technical expertise of FAO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The UN-REDD Programme supports nationally-led REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities, in national and international REDD+ implementation. It currently has 42 partner countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

12. There are 14 UN-REDD Programme partner countries in Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Suriname). As of 1 February 2012, four of these (Bolivia, Ecuador, Panama and Paraguay) are in the process of implementing a National Programme. Together, these four countries have been allocated US\$ 18.7 million for REDD+ readiness and "quick start" implementation efforts.

13. UNFCCC has recognized the importance of integrating climate change into national development plans and sectoral plans. Climate change mechanisms represent new opportunities to access technical assistance and financial support for the forest sector, but also bring the risk of creating an imbalance between climate change mitigation and adaptation and other objectives of forest management. There is also a risk that unless REDD+ strategies consider the links between mitigation and adaptation measures, opportunities will be lost for maximizing synergies between REDD+ mitigation actions and adaptation measures. Integration of climate change adaptation and mitigation into sustainable forest management policies, strategies and programmes and linking REDD+ with

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<sup>3</sup> [http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/durban\\_nov\\_2011/decisions/application/pdf/cop17\\_nap.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/durban_nov_2011/decisions/application/pdf/cop17_nap.pdf)

adaptation in comprehensive forest sector climate change strategies will help countries develop comprehensive and balanced climate change responses.

14. FAO's Forestry Department is developing two tools for voluntary guidance to help countries integrate climate change into the forestry sector. These are offered for country use and adaptation, as appropriate. One is for use by policy makers<sup>4</sup> to assist with incorporating climate change into national forest programmes. Published in 2011, it is now available for countries' use. FAO is ready to respond to countries' requests for assistance for a process involving use of the policy tool. The second tool is for use by forest managers to help them identify and undertake adaptation and mitigation actions. The management guidelines will be available for use in 2012 by interested countries.

15. Regional cooperation on climate change adaptation in the forestry sector is vital to enhance support among countries in facilitating the elaboration of climate change adaptation strategies and the implementation of actions. The Cancun Agreement, adopted by UNFCCC in December 2010, recognized adaptation as a challenge faced by all Parties, called for Parties to take various adaptation actions and established the Cancun Adaptation Framework to enhance action on adaptation. Parties to UNFCCC, recognizing the importance of strengthening regional cooperation on climate change adaptation, included the following in call for action in the Cancun Agreement:

*“ Invites Parties to strengthen and, where necessary, establish regional centres and networks, in particular in developing countries, with support from developed country Parties and relevant organizations, as appropriate, and to facilitate and enhance national and regional adaptation actions, in a manner that is country-driven, encourages cooperation and coordination between regional stakeholders and improves the flow of information between the Convention process and national and regional activities”*

16. FAO is working to enhance regional cooperation on climate change. It proposes that the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions be mechanisms to promote regional cooperation. FAO initiated a process to encourage regional cooperation on forests, range and climate change adaptation in the Near East. In 2010, FAO prepared two regional analyses on forests and climate change of relevance to the members of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC): one for the Near East region (FAO, 2010a) and the other for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which includes information on some members of the NEFRC : Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Uzbekistan (FAO, 2010b). The analyses highlight needs and opportunities for regional cooperation on forests and climate change.

17. Building on these, FAO, with support from the governments of Finland and Germany, organized a regional workshop from 20-22 September 2011 in Cairo, which was attended by members of the Near East Forest and Rangeland Commission (NEFRC) and various partners. The purpose was to explore shared country needs and interest in developing regional/sub-regional project(s) to support forest, range and climate change adaptation actions in the Near East region.<sup>5</sup> Countries expressed strong interest in participating in regional/sub-regional climate change projects, developed preliminary logical frameworks, and asked FAO assistance to develop project proposals and secure funding. Areas highlighted for support included for risk and vulnerability assessments for the forest and range sectors, for policy and legislative amendments, for capacity strengthening and awareness raising, and for implementing adaptation measures in pilot sites. Draft concept notes were prepared and presented at the twentieth session of the NEFRC in January 2012 for discussion among countries and potential partners/donors.

## **QUESTIONS FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF COMMISSION MEMBERS**

18. The Commission members are invited to address the following questions during the in-session seminar:

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fao.org/forestry/climatechange/64862/en/>

<sup>5</sup> The report and other information on the meeting is available on <http://www.fao.org/forestry/climatechange/72759/en/>

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- What are countries' experiences in developing and implementing forest and climate change strategies and programmes, including in response to international policy decisions under the UNFCCC? What progress has been made and what challenges are being faced?
  - In what areas would regional or sub-regional cooperation on forests and climate change adaptation and mitigation benefit country efforts in climate change adaptation, and how can existing regional or sub-regional networks or cooperative programmes contribute to meeting these needs?
  - Would the LACFC members wish to endorse and participate in the development of a regional or sub-regional network(s) or support programme(s) for forests and climate change adaptation for both adaptation and mitigation that could operate under the aegis of the LACFC?