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LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Item 3 of the Provisional Agenda

TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

Quito, Ecuador, 29 September – 3 October 2008

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

Secretariat Note

STATE OF FORESTRY IN THE REGION

1. Commission meeting discussions have traditionally been opened by presenting a Secretariat Note on the State of Forestry in the Region describing the changes, events and new initiatives which have taken place since the last Commission meeting, that is for the 2006-2008 period on this occasion. The document also attempts to present relevant emerging issues for analysis by the delegates and these may eventually, if the delegates so desire, be included in the work programme of the Commission, between sessions.
2. In order to prepare the Secretariat Note, on previous occasions the FAO Regional Office has requested member countries of the Commission to prepare national reports based on guidelines which suggested items to be considered by the forest authorities. After the Commission meeting, a document was prepared and published summarizing national reports and including information from FAO and other international or regional organizations.
3. However, on this occasion the Secretariat Note on the State of Forestry in the Region has been mainly prepared using information available at FAO or elaborated by this Organization.

FOREST RESOURCES

4. The 2005 Global Forest Resources Assessment (FAO Forestry Paper: 147) prepared by FAO in cooperation with the member countries and other collaborators, recognises that the total area of natural forest and plantations in the Region amounts to 924 million hectares, which is equivalent to 45.7 percent of the land area in the Region and 23.4 percent of the total forest area in the world. In 2005 plantations amounted to 11.9 million hectares in the Region. See Table 1.

Table 1. Forest Resources of the Region, 2005.

Sub-region	Land area ¹ (1 000 ha)	Forest area, 2005		
		Total forests ² (1 000 ha)	Land area percentage (%)	Productive forest plantations (1 000 ha)
Mesoamerica	241 942	86 649	35.8	312
The Caribbean	22 832	5 933	26.0	279
South America	1 752 020	831 540	47.4	11 326
Total Mesoamerica, the Caribbean and South America	2 016 794	924 122	45.7	11 917
Total world	13 067 421	3 952 025	30.0	
Region % of total world	15.4	23.4		

^{1/} Overall area of the country, excluding areas covered by inland waters.

^{2/} Overall natural forests and plantations.

Source: FAO, 2006. Global Forest Resources Assessment-2005. FAO Forestry Paper: 147.

5. The aforementioned Assessment estimates that annual loss of forests in the Region in the 2000-2005 period amounts to 4.7 million hectares, while annual loss of forests in the world amounts to 7.3 million hectares for the same period. Annual loss of forests in the Region is therefore equivalent to 65 percent of overall loss of forests in the world. See Table 2.

Table 2. Forest cover change, 2000-2005.

Sub-region	Total forest area 2000 (1 000 ha)	Total forest area 2005 (1 000 ha)	Total forest area change 2000-2005	
			Annual change (1 000 ha)	Annual change percentage (%)
Mesoamerica	89 377	86 649	-546	-0.6
The Caribbean	5 663	5 933	54	1.0
South America	852 796	831 540	-4 251	-0.5
Total Mesoamerica, the Caribbean and South America	947 836	924 122	-4 743	-0.5
Total world	3 988 610	3 952 025	-7 317	-0.18
Region % of total world			65	

Source: FAO, 2006. Global Forest Resources Assessment-2005. FAO Forestry Paper: 147.

6. Annual forest area loss in the Region over the 1990-2000 period amounted to 4.5 million hectares, which is to say, a little bit less than the 2000-2005 period.

7. Annual variation of the forest area over the 1990-2000 period amounted to -3.8 million hectares in South America, -0.73 million hectares in Mesoamerica and in the Caribbean there was a gain of 36 000 hectares, mainly due to the increase of the forest area in Cuba.

8. A recent thematic study by FAO entitled “The World's Mangroves 1980-2005” published in 2007 as FAO Forestry Paper: 153, indicates that there is a substantial area of mangroves in the Region. See Table 3.

Table 3. Mangrove area in the Region, 2005

Sub-region	Area (ha), 2005
Mesoamerica	1 284 700
The Caribbean	783 048
South America	1 977 900
Total Region	4 045 648

9. The mangrove formations covered a little over 4 million hectares in 2005, which amounts to 27 percent of the world's mangrove area. In 1980 the estimated area amounted to approximately 4.9 million hectares, which indicates that during 25 years there has been a loss of approximately 850 000ha. Countries with the most extensive formations of mangroves are: Brazil with 1 000 000ha, Mexico with 820 000ha, Cuba with 547 500ha and Colombia with 350 000ha.

10. FAO is currently updating the study which will cover the 2006-2009 period.

Sustainable forest management

11. Even though the expression “sustainable forest management” was coined many years ago, there are still difficulties and challenges in terms of achieving this management for natural forests in practical terms. These restrictions are well known and may be due to the characteristics of the forests as such (mixed composition, low commercial volume per area unit, forest degradation due to successive extraction operations, among others), and external factors (difficult weather and terrain conditions, land ownership, high transport costs, financing restrictions, non-existent or unapplied policies and laws associated to institutional weakness and lack of permanent infrastructure, among others).

12. The Region's challenge is still to overcome restrictions and introduce better sustainable forest management procedures and to continue the search for appropriate financing systems for this purpose.

13. An important measure to accelerate the above is the analysis of exemplary cases of sustainable forest management in the Region and subsequent description and dissemination of conditions and reasons for success in these cases, among the different actors involved, in order to adapt or reproduce the same in other zones or countries.

14. The aforementioned proposal was presented and discussed during the last meeting of the Commission in 2006, and was very favourably accepted. It is currently fully operational and will be presented and discussed within the framework of Item 4.3 of the Commission Agenda, Sustainable Forest Management.

Forest fires

15. Forest fires continue to pose a serious problem to the Region and involve important extensions of forests and pastures in member countries every year. Over 80 000 hectares were reported affected by forest fires in the first quarter of 2007 in Colombia. Other official data on forest fires from some countries in the Region report that in 2006 forest fires covered 244 000 ha of vegetation in Mexico; 321 000ha of forests and bushes in Argentina; while 43 000ha of forest burned during the 2006-2007 forest fire period in Chile; over 100 000 ha of vegetation was burned in Paraguay throughout 2007 and forest fires covered over 2.1 million hectares of vegetation that same year in Bolivia. Forest fires do not only cause economic and environmental damage combined with the degradation of ecosystems and loss of biodiversity, but also affect local populations which lose their forests, crops and homes, as well as facing health damage and in some cases losing their own lives. Forest fires are a factor causing great concern to forest authorities in the Region, who have stressed the importance of facing the problem by collaboration among countries, an action which has been strengthened during the 2006-2008 period by the subregional cooperation networks on fire management. These networks of Central America, the Caribbean and South America are sponsored by the FAO Regional Office.

16. Thanks to technical cooperation between the governments of Colombia and Brazil, Brazilian technicians are currently training Colombian technicians from the Ministry of the Environment, Housing and Territorial Development on how to manage forest fires. Brazil is also supporting Bolivia regarding the topic of forest fires and a technical visit was made including the proposal of a possible collaboration agreement between Brazil and Chile.

NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMMES

17. Over the period, countries in the Region have continued to implement, review and formulate their forest policies within the framework of the formulation guidelines of national forest programmes (nfp) established based on agreements between countries as to how and to whose benefit forests should be managed in a sustainable manner and as to the role and responsibilities of the different actors which are part and act in the forest sector.

18. The need to maintain a widespread civil society support has also been agreed to as part of the implementation of nfp in order to ensure success of the same, in addition to a high degree of flexibility in order to include new topics and opportunities.

19. The following three initiatives provide direct and indirect support to strengthen implementation of NFPs in the Region, specifically in terms of institutional, financial and forest policy topics, among others. In addition, these initiatives have contributed to relate nfp with wider agendas and specifically with intergovernmental dialogue processes on forests:

- a) The national forest programme facility.
- b) The Puembo Initiative.
- c) Financial strategies and mechanisms for sustainable forest management.

20. The nfp facility hosted by the FAO Headquarters has continued to support nfp in member countries of the Region and as of 2008 has established associations with 13 countries and three subregional organisations: the Asociación Coordinadora Indígena Campesina de Agroforestería Comunitaria (ACICAFOC), the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) and The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI). The last country to enter in association with the facility is Brazil in 2008. Between 2006 and 2008, the facility contributed to the Region approximately USD two million. A substantial percentage of these funds are channelled through non-governmental organizations (NGO) and other actors involved in nfp processes.

21. The topics most often supported by the facility in the Region have been the formulation and review of forest policies, forest sector planning, communication and information dissemination, sustainable forest management and community forestry.
22. In January 2007, the Steering Committee of the facility, upon the request of the member countries agreed to extend the operation of the facility for a new five year period (2007-2012).
23. The Puenbo Initiative was established through a joint action by CCAD, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), and the LACFC Southern Cone. The main objective of the Initiative is to strengthen regional dialogue on common issues in the forest sector. The Initiative has continued to provide support to nfp processes in the Region. The Initiative has relied on financing from the governments of Germany and the Netherlands.
24. An important activity of the Puenbo Initiative was to analyse the nfp of 16 countries in the Region, an activity which was completed in 2006.
25. The Puenbo Initiative will come to an end in November 2008, and institutions participating in the initiative have agreed to seek continuity in terms of the valuable information pooled and priorities defined during the execution of the Initiative's working programme. These can become part of the Commission's working programme for the 2008-2010 period.
26. Activities related to financial strategies and mechanisms for sustainable forest management, which also provide indirect support for nfp processes have been provided by the GCP/INT/953/NET Project "Strategies and Financial Mechanisms for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Use - Phase 1, Latin America" and the Subregional Project, Sustainable Use of Forests and Biodiversity in the Amazon Region.
27. The first project, of regional coverage is executed by FAO with financial support from the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ). The second project, for Amazon countries, is executed by ACTO and the Netherlands Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS) with contributions from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).
28. Due to the support from these projects, the issue as to how to increase and diversify the financial base for sustainable forest management has drawn increasing attention regarding the formulation and implementation of forest policies in the different countries throughout the Region. In support of the above and within the framework of the GCP/INT/953/NET project, two workshops have been held for both ACTO countries (Ecuador, 2002) and for Mesoamerica (Guatemala, 2007) in order to train different actors in the forestry sector by means of specially prepared modules in order to familiarise the same with those elements which must be considered in the design of a national forestry financing strategy (objectives, goals, principles and elements, with whom and how to better formulate and implement) within the guiding principles for sustainable management which consider institutional, social, economic, financial, technical and ecological aspects based on forest multi-functionality.
29. Near the end of the First Phase of the GCP/INT/953/NET Project and in consideration of the relevance of the subject, Dutch NGO Tropenbos International is currently preparing the document "Towards National Financing Strategies for Sustainable Forest Management in Latin America", a document which pools existing experience in 19 countries throughout the Region related to the financing of sustainable forest management. At present, a second phase of this Project is under preparation.

LEGISLATION

30. Over the period several countries in the Region have passed or are currently formulating new forest laws or respective regulations, or have resolved to review their forest legislation.

31. The new Forestry, Protected Areas and Wildlife Law in Honduras came into effect in February, 2008. The Law created a new top-notch State Forestry Administration known as the Institute for Forestry, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation and Development (ICF for its acronym in Spanish), with the rank of a State Secretariat and therefore has direct participation in the Council of Ministers. The Honduran Forestry Agenda (AFH) has been commissioned to coordinate the formulation process of the Law Regulation.

32. In Chile, after several years of discussions, the Senate passed the Native Forest Law in 2007. The law's main purpose is to recover and support the country's native forest. The Law was promulgated in July, 2008. In addition to other issues, the Law creates environmental protection standards, native forest conservation incentives, establishes the preservation management plan and provides grant funds for research, promotion and increasing know-how on native forest ecosystems. A USD eight million fund has also been established in order to preserve or recover native forest and produce sustainable forest services or products.

33. In Brazil, Law N° 11,284 of 2006 contains important standards related to the administration of public forests for sustainable production, establishes the Brazilian Forestry Service under the Ministry of the Environment and creates the National Forestry Development Fund.

34. As for public forest administration, the Law establishes the tender of areas of public forest as forest concessions for the development of forest services and products. The National Forestry Development Fund is designed to encourage the implementation of sustainable forestry activities and to promote technological innovation in the forestry sector.

35. The Brazilian Forestry Service's functions include encouraging sustainable management of public forest resources, the organisation and updating of the General Public Forest Inventory and the creation and maintenance of the National Forestry Information Service.

36. In August 2007, Brazil's Law 11,156 created the Chico Mendes Institute for Conservation of Biodiversity related to the Ministry of the Environment and integrated to the National Environmental System (SISNAMA). Its main institutional mission is to manage the Federal Conservation Units, which are extensive areas of substantial ecological value.

37. In November 2007, the Senate and Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Argentina passed the Law of Minimum Budgets for Environmental Protection of Native Forests, which establishes minimum budgets for environmental protection for the enrichment, renewal, conservation, use and sustainable management of native forests and environmental services provided by the same to society. Likewise, this law establishes encouragement and criteria regulations for the distribution of funds from environmental services provided by native forests.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS

38. Roundwood production in 2005 amounted to approximately 88 million cubic meters in Mesoamerica, 6 million cubic meters in the Caribbean and 368 million cubic meters in South America for a Region total of 462 million cubic meters. The overall roundwood production in the Region slightly increased of 2.3 percent in the period 2004-2005, reaching 13.2 percent of the total roundwood production of the world.

39. Table 4 indicates the main forest wood products and forest trade in the Region for 2005, according to statistical data published in the FAO Yearbook of Forest Products-2005.

Table 4. Forest production and trade, 2005

Subregion	Roundwood production ¹ (1 000 m ³)	Sawnwood production (1 000 m ³)	Wood-based panels production ² (1 000 m ³)	Wood pulp production ³ (1 000 ton m)	Forest products import (USD 000)	Forest products export (USD 000)
Mesoamerica	87 994	4 063	463	346	4 478 620	433 407
The Caribbean	6 375	410	149	-	645 366	25 016
South America	367 789	37 233	13 474	14 083	3 444 830	9 188 101
Total Mesoamerica, the Caribbean and South America	462 158	41 706	14 086	14 429	8 568 816	9 646 524
Total world	3 502 715	428 459	234 813	173 886	193 402 049	185 724 802
Region % of total world	13.2	9.7	6.0	8.3	4.4	5.2

1/ Represents the sum of wood fuel, including wood for charcoal, sawlogs and veneer logs, pulpwood, round and split and other industrial roundwood.

2/ Represents the sum of veneer sheets, plywood, particle board and fibre board.

3/ Represents the sum of mechanical, semi-chemical, chemical and dissolving wood pulp.

Source: FAO Yearbook of Forest Products, 2005

Note: Statistical data is based on information reported by countries to the FAO Forestry Department by means of questionnaires or official statistical publications. When this information is not available, FAO makes estimates using the best available data at its disposition.

40. Regional production in 2005 of the main forest wood products is described as follows: Sawnwood: 41.7 million cubic meters, wood-based panels: 14 million cubic meters and wood pulp: 14.4 million metric tons. These products correspond to 9.7, 6.0 and 8.3 percent of world production respectively. Forest products imports and exports in the Region for 2005 amounted to approximately USD 8 500 million and USD 9 600 million respectively, amounting to 4.4 and 5.2 percent of world forest products trade.

41. Pulp prices hit record highs during the period. In the first quarter of 2008 the price reached USD 890 per metric ton of long fibre pulp. Short fibre pulp prices have also increased, but slightly below long fibre pulp prices. High pulp prices have especially favoured Argentina, Brazil and Chile which are currently the main pulp exporters in the Region.

42. The United States of America subprime crisis in 2007 directly affected cheaper home construction in the United States, creating substantial oversupply and a significant reduction in new home construction. This situation has seriously affected the exporters of wood products from the Region which had with great efforts penetrated in the wood-based home construction market in the country.

43. In keeping with globalisation, over the period, free trade agreements and treaties and have been signed between countries of the Region and countries or regional or subregional communities in Europe, Asia-Pacific and North America. Several of these agreements also refer to forest products.

44. Illegal extraction, transformation and commercialization of wood and non-wood forest products continue to cause economic, social and environmental problems in the Region, and countries are putting forth efforts to reduce these illegal activities. Other illegal practices include illegal land occupancy and smuggling.

45. Non-wood forest products, which correspond to goods other than wood products, continue to draw increasing attention in the countries due to their importance for the family economy of rural populations and other benefits. These countries are aware of the fact that these products should be incorporated into sustainable forest management together with wood products. This would thus guarantee integral continuity of the ecosystems and conservation of the associated biological diversity.

46. One weakness continues to be the lack of proper statistics for these products, with the exception of those widely produced and commercialized in the national and international markets.

47. FAO has just published the FAO Forestry Paper N° 154, Forests and Energy, which refers to the important debate in the framework of climate change, on forests and energy and the main trends observed in both sectors. The Study also refers to bioenergy derived from wood as liquid biofuels as one way of using renewable alternative energy in order to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and reduce greenhouse gases. This Study is available at the FAO website.

SOCIAL ASPECTS

48. Many countries have increased the implementation of forest programmes designed for the rural populations and native communities. Countries are currently more concerned about ensuring the rights of these communities to their ancestral lands and there have even been cases where the State has purchased land in order to return the same to communities which were the previous owners in order to avoid situations of conflict between present landowners and those claiming rights to the same.

49. Progress has also been made regarding native communities in terms of respect for their ancestral rights to zones which have been declared protected areas and a new chapter in the relations between environmental authorities and these communities has been opened to the extent that many co-management agreements have been reached for these protected areas.

50. Even though headway has been made, the main challenge many countries in the Region currently face is to be able to combine conservation with means of sustainable use that do not go against the objectives of protected area conservation and thus enable local communities to gain economic benefits from these areas.

51. Social aspects also include a gender focus and gender equality in the forest development framework which must ensure improvement of women's position in rural communities and State forest institutions, from the level of workers up to technicians and professionals. In general, the countries in the Region are applying gender focus policies in rural areas which consider the different roles, responsibilities, needs and difficulties which exist between men and women in order to achieve development objectives better focused on persons.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF FORESTS

Protected areas

52. Several countries in the Region have continued to increase their protected forest areas in several categories (national parks, forest reserves, protected water zones, natural monuments, multi-purpose areas, wildlife sanctuaries, protective forests and wetlands, among others). In

many cases, political support has been reflected as increased hierarchy of national institutions in charge of protected areas. However, notwithstanding advances in the formulation of standards and political actions supporting the National Protected Area Systems, there is still much to be done in order to consolidate the legal and political framework of these areas.

53. Ecuador is an example of a country implementing innovative programmes linking forest conservation and poverty reduction. Ecuador has announced that it is currently studying implementation of an Ecuadorian Conservation Bonus which consists of a system for protecting forests and wildlands, while benefiting local indigenous and peasant populations. The bonus features environmental and socioeconomic advantages. It has been designed to meet three main objectives:

- a) Improve revenue and protect human capital in the country's poorest rural zones (between 0.5 and 1.5 million inhabitants) which maintain forest areas;
- b) Protect over three million hectares of forest which ensure conservation of biodiversity, environmental services and flood control, and
- c) Place the country as a pioneer in drawing up and executing a plan for Reducing Emissions of Carbon from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) which also enables access to capital from the growing carbon market which would provide financial support for the bonus.

54. The Second Latin American Congress of National Parks and other Protected Areas was held in Bariloche, Argentina in 2007 and was attended by over 2 000 participants. The purpose of the Congress was to promote the exchange of experiences, technical and scientific know-how, assess the state of biodiversity conservation at a national level and to define policies and strategies for the Region.

55. One of the important issues discussed during the Second Latin American Congress on National Parks and other Protected Areas, which was mentioned in the last Chapter, was the potential impact of climate change on protected areas and biodiversity. The urgency of taking actions which enable to identify at different levels, the vulnerability of protected areas and biodiversity to climate change was emphasized, together with the need of measures of mitigation and adaptation, especially in critical ecosystems.

56. The Latin American Technical Cooperation Network of National Parks, other Protected Areas, Flora and Fauna (REDPARQUES) and the World Conservation Union (UICN) prepared the document "Diagnosis and Current State of Protected Areas in Latin America and the Caribbean" as the main Congress document. This regional document was prepared based on national interinstitutional reports prepared by the countries of the Region. In addition to the aforementioned document, the Congress produced several documents of importance to the Region, including the Bariloche Declaration and the Congress Conclusions, Recommendations and Action Guidelines.

57. REDPARQUES celebrated its 25th anniversary in July 2008. The Network has been sponsored by the FAO Regional Office over all these years, and also provides its Technical Secretariat. The Network has enabled countries in the Region to combine efforts, human and technical resources in pursuit of shared solutions to problems being faced in the development of protected areas and protecting biodiversity. The same has also enabled the exchange of know-how and experience between members, basically using their own human, technical and financial resources. Actually REDPARQUES works with the support of the Autonomous National Parks Organization of Spain.

Climate change

58. Climate change poses major challenges to all countries. The role of forests in climate change adaptation and particularly mitigation has been highlighted at the highest political levels. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report (2007) estimates that the forest sector, mainly through deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, accounts for 17.4 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions. The Sterns Review (2006), states that "Curbing deforestation is a highly cost-effective way to reduce emissions". It estimates that 30 percent of GHG emissions from the land use change and forestry sector comes from tropical America (with 50 percent from tropical Asia and 20 percent from tropical Africa. It is important that the countries in the Region continue to work to reduce unplanned deforestation and to stem forest degradation and capture benefits from these efforts as well as from carbon sequestration through afforestation, reforestation and forest restoration. In addition, it is expected that Latin American and Caribbean countries will increasingly suffer from negative impacts of climate change on forests. Many countries are already taking institutional measures to facilitate adaptation responses, but it is important for all countries to integrate climate change considerations into their forest policies and plans, including through their national forest programme processes, to adequately reflect forestry in their national climate change strategies and to strengthen their capabilities for implementing climate change adaptation measures through field programmes. Further information on forests and climate change in the COFLAC region is provided in Secretariat Note FO:LACFC/2008/4.2.

59. Some institutions in the member countries of the Region, such as the Argentine Secretariat for the Environment and Sustainable Development to which the Forest Directorate belongs, have incorporated permanent bodies in their organizational charts for the proposal and furthering of actions leading to the achievement of objectives and goals contained in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including the execution of national awareness activities for the mitigation of climate change. In Argentina this body is known as the Directorate for Climate Change.

60. In Chile, a Climate Change Council has been created under the Ministry of Agriculture, including specialists from the forestry, agricultural and fishing sector, among others. The Council will initially analyse possible mitigation measures in the sector and, in a second stage, will analyse sector vulnerability to climate change and possible adaptation measures.

61. The National Climate Change Strategy was created in Costa Rica in order for the country to be carbon neutral by 2021. The strategy considers carbon capture and storage, as well as an international carbon market.

62. In Brazil, the Ministry of Environment through its Secretariat of Climate Change and Environment Quality coordinates and supports several programmes in order to address climate change concerns, including the Interministerial Executive Committee for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (PROZON); the National CFC Phase-out Plan; methyl bromide elimination programmes; and the Brazilian Program for the Elimination of Environment Contamination and the Use of Ozone Layer Depleting Substances (PBCO), among others.

Water

63. Watershed management continues to get significant attention in the Region. The role of forests and trees in upstream areas of Andean watersheds in maintaining water quality for downstream users is more and more recognised. In March 2007 an electronic conference was held within the "Red Latinoamericana de Manejo de Cuencas Hidrográficas" (REDLACH) in order to explore ways to strengthen the network and in order to discuss the results and recommendations from the FAO-led global review of watershed management experiences

(FAO-Forestry Paper 150: The new generation of watershed management programmes and projects) and their applicability in the Latin American context.

Environmental services of the forests

64. Environmental services of the forests which attract increasingly attention from forest authorities of member countries and new payment or compensation systems are being sought for and applied to rural communities whose land provides these services. In addition, payment for environmental services is an innovative tool for financing sustainable forest management. Costa Rica is one of the leading countries in payment for environmental services of forests.

65. The main environmental services provided by forests are the following:

- a) Reduction of greenhouse gases due to the absorption, stabilization and storage of carbon.
- b) Protection of water for rural, urban or hydroelectric uses.
- c) Protection of biodiversity.
- d) Preservation of natural scenic beauty.

PARTICIPATION IN CONVENTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS, AND THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL DIALOGUE ON FORESTS

66. It has been noted that there has been a substantial participation of countries of the Region in activities related with conventions and international agreements related to forests. All countries in the Region participate in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Kyoto Protocol of the UNFCCC under the modalities of the Protocol signed and ratified by 20 countries or by accession, 13 countries which for legal purposes has the same meaning as a ratified Protocol.

67. Only Haiti is absent from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Dominica, Granada, Guyana, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are not parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

68. Member countries also participate actively in the intergovernmental dialogue on forests and especially in the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF).

69. It is important to mention that during the sixth session of the UNFF held in New York in February 2006, within the framework of the Puembo Initiative, both the ACTO and the CCAD presented the forest priorities for Amazon countries and Central American countries. It is relevant to highlight this point since the importance of collaborative participation in the intergovernmental dialogue on forests either as a Region or as Subregional Commission Groups has been stressed at several Commission meetings.

70. Twenty-one of the 33 member countries participated at the seventh session of the UNFF held in New York (16-27 April 2007) as follows: Mesoamerica 6, The Caribbean 7 and South America 8. ACTO was present. Twenty-seven countries participated in the sixth session of the UNFF held in February 2006: Mesoamerica 8, The Caribbean 9, and South America 10. ACTO was also present.

RELEVANT OR EMERGING ISSUES WHICH MAY BE ANALYZED BY THE COMMISSION UNTIL THE NEXT SESSION

71. Finally the following suggestions of some issues are included that may be considered in the Work Programme of the Commission, between sessions:

- Status of biofuel production based on forest biomass;
- Sustainable forest management financing mechanisms;
- Forests and climate change;
- Payment for environmental services of forests;
- Review of the forestry sector in satellite forestry accounts of the national accounts;
- Illegal extraction in forests and other offences, and
- Forest health.

72. The Commission is invited to refer to the events reported in this Secretariat Note regarding the State of Forestry in the Region by presenting brief declarations on relevant changes in the forestry sector in the member countries since the last meeting of the Commission and to share information and experiences in general, while suggesting new areas for action and cooperation in the Region.

FOLLOW-UP TO RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUESTS OF THE 24th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

Recommendations	Actions taken or suggestions
<p>Overview of forestry activities of interest to the Region</p> <p>1. The Commission <u>recommended</u> that the FAO Forestry Department support the identification and mobilization of funds to strengthen the technical capacity of the countries of the region to conduct the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 (FRA 2010) and to support the compilation of information.</p>	<p>All national correspondents to FRA 2010 were invited to a technical meeting in Rome from 3 to 7 March 2008 to receive training and guidance on how to fill in the country reports for FRA 2010. Extra-budgetary resources have been secured for 10 regional and subregional workshops in 2008 to further build capacities and review draft national reports. Two workshops are planned for Latin America and the Caribbean. One for the Spanish speaking countries and one for English speaking countries. Funding is currently being sought for the global remote sensing survey of forests (including country capacity building) and for a series of special studies.</p>
<p>2. The Commission also <u>recommended</u> to the FAO Forestry Department that decisions on FRA 2010 relating to the region be more decentralized, with the more active involvement of the LACFC in its decisions and appropriate collaboration with the other organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).</p>	<p>A presentation of FRA 2010 is included in the agenda for the 25th LACFC. An auto-evaluation of the FRA programme will take place this year followed by the development of a longer term strategy for FRA, which will be presented to the next round of meetings of the Regional Forestry Commissions for comments. Most of the CPF members attended the launch of FRA 2010 in March 2008 and several of these (ITTO, UICN, and the Secretariats of CBD, UNFCCC, and UNFF) are members of the FRA Advisory Group.</p>
<p>3. Delegates expressed their concern over the future financing of the FAO Field Programme in the region. The Commission <u>recommended</u> that the matter be brought to the attention of COFO and also <u>recommended</u> that the FAO Forestry Department and the Commission follow up accordingly.</p>	<p>The concern of the Commission over the future financing of the Field Programme was put to the attention of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) at its 18th session in March 2007. In addition, the Forestry Department is permanently seeking for extra-budgetary funds to strengthen its Regular and Field Programme.</p>
<p>4. The Commission highlighted the importance of the Regional Forestry Commissions and <u>recommended</u> to the FAO Forestry Department that they play a more active role in the collaboration and dialogue between the UNFF and the regional processes, and in helping their members collectively support sustainable forest management actions and other aspects of global strategic forest objectives. It was agreed to bring the matter to the attention of COFO.</p>	<p>The Regional Forestry Commissions serve an increasingly strong link between global forest dialogues including the UNFF. At the 18th session of the COFO, all regional commissions participated in a full-day special session prior to COFO to share information. The chairs of each regional commission were given an opportunity to chair plenary sessions of COFO. During the session, an in-session seminar on “regional action on sustainable forest management” resulted in sharing experiences across regions on the subject. It</p>

	<p>was also agreed during the COFO that the Chairs of the Regional Commissions would be part of the Executive Committee of COFO to formulate the Agenda of the 19th session of COFO.</p>
<p>Special session: Implementing sustainable forest management</p> <p>5. The Commission was in full agreement that the study should be carried out under the aegis of the LACFC and be broad-based and participative in scope. The methodological aspects and criteria for the selection of the case studies would be defined by a group of regional experts, whose selection would also involve the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the LACFC. In particular, the Commission <u>recommended</u> to the FAO Forestry Department that the study be prepared in collaboration with organizations having experience in this field, such as the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the Central American Indigenous and Peasant Coordinator of Communal Agroforestry (ACICAFOC), and the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Model Forests, among others.</p>	<p>The Project began its implementation in February 2007 in consultation with the forest authorities of the member countries of the LACFC and in a broad-based and participative framework. The principal actions of progress correspond to the setting up of a cooperation and financing agreement between FAO and the Consejería de Medio Ambiente de la Junta de Castilla y León, Spain, to give continuity to the study, the undertaking of two subregional workshops to discuss and agree on the document on criteria and indicators for the selection of the exemplary cases to be studied, with the close collaboration of CATIE, Costa Rica, and the selection in close consultation with the members of the LACFC of the eight experts of the Panel of Experts for the selection of the exemplary cases. This panel includes one expert from CATIE, one expert of ACICAFOC and experts from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Honduras and Mexico. Collaboration contacts have also been held with the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Model Forests and ACICAFOC, among other regional and national organizations for the dissemination of the call to nominate exemplary cases of sustainable forest management in the Region. The programme of work for the project has been revised until the end of 2009.</p>
<p>6. The countries indicated the inadvisability of employing the term “code” because of its regulatory and binding connotations. They <u>requested</u> the FAO Forestry Department to reconsider the matter and to replace the use of the term “code” with “voluntary guidelines”. In addition, a number of countries expressed their concern that an instrument of such importance had not been sufficiently discussed, with the broad involvement of countries.</p>	<p>The term “code” was replaced by “voluntary guidelines” (responsible management of planted forests) and “guidelines of voluntary nature” (fire management). The preparation of the guidelines included technical groups, expert consultations, private associations, workshops during the meetings of the Regional Forestry Commissions, non governmental organizations, and communications with all the member countries of FAO. Both of the guidelines were presented in COFO 2007, which approved the process and requested FAO to support the implementation of the guidelines in the countries.</p>
<p>7. The Commission was also informed of progress in the development of a fire management code, an initiative that had emerged from the Ministerial Meeting on</p>	<p>The name of the “fire management code” was replaced by “guidelines of voluntary nature for fire management”. These guidelines were finalized after a participative process of expert</p>

<p>Forests and the 17th Session of COFO, both held in March 2005. Although the code was not yet available for comment by countries, it would soon be posted on the FAO website. The reservations regarding the use of the term “code” also applied in this case, and the Commission <u>requested</u> the FAO Forestry Department to review the matter.</p>	<p>consultations, meetings of technical groups, workshops during the meetings of the Regional Forestry Commissions and official communications with all the member countries of FAO.</p> <p>The guidelines of voluntary nature for fire management were presented in workshops in Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba and Paraguay.</p>
<p>8. The recommendations of the Pre-Commission Workshop on Regional and Subregional Strategies of Cooperation for the Prevention, Control and Combat of Wild Land Fires, were considered by the Commission, which acknowledged the work done by countries and urged them to apply the established strategies. It also <u>requested</u> that the FAO Forestry Department support countries in this initiative. The recommendations of the workshop are listed in <i>Appendix D</i>.</p>	<p>The recommendations of the Pre-Commission Workshop are being analyzed by the Forestry Department of FAO in the framework of how to relate the regional and subregional strategies with the guidelines of voluntary nature for fire management.</p>
<p>9. The Commission was informed of the findings of the Pre-Commission Workshop on Regional Cooperation to Promote Sustainable Forest Management. The recommendations were considered by the Commission, which acknowledged the work done by countries and urged them to strengthen structures and activities of their national forest programmes and to establish mechanisms for fostering regional and subregional dialogue under those programmes. It <u>requested</u> the FAO Forestry Department to support them in this regard. The recommendations of the workshop are listed in <i>Appendix D</i>.</p>	<p>In support of this, the Puenbo Initiative, that is a joint initiative of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) and the LACFC-Southern Cone, played an important role during the 2006-2008 biennium. In the first place it supported the updating of the national forest programmes in 16 countries of the Region and in the second place and as a result of the transversal analysis and the identification of the relevant issues related to governance, valorisation and financing, intersectorality, and the national-international relation, ten subjects were prioritized, that should integrate a shared agenda of dialogue, cooperation and exchange of experiences at national, subregional and regional level to strengthen and consolidate sustainable forest management.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Regional issues identified by the Commission for the attention of the Committee on Forestry</p> <p>10. The countries underscored the importance of the National Forest Programme Facility in supporting the formulation and application of the national forest programmes with the broad participation of civil society. They <u>requested</u> that the FAO Forestry Department and donor</p>	<p>The Steering Committee of the Facility approved in January 2007 the continuation of its operations for a new five year period (2007-2012) with the purpose of consolidating the achievements that have been reached.</p>

<p>countries continue supporting the countries of the region through this mechanism.</p>	
<p>11. The Commission recognized that the increased involvement of civil society in the intergovernmental dialogue was enriching and more productive with the inclusion of actors affected by government policies. The Commission <u>recommended</u> that this matter be brought to the attention of COFO to promote intergovernmental dialogue with private sector entities, non-governmental organizations and grassroots and indigenous groups, as a mechanism of cooperation.</p>	<p>FAO promotes and is closely collaborating with Private Associations of the forestry sector, such as, the Association Technique Internationale des Bois Tropicaux (ATIBT), and through the FAO Advisory Committee on Paper and Wood Products (ACPWP) it has contacts with the wood processing and paper industry. Latin American members in the ACPWP are Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Mexico, amongst others. The Forestry Department of FAO also maintains close links with Non Governmental Organizations and Rural Community and Indigenous Peoples Organizations on matters related with global dialogues on forests. These organizations also participate in meetings of the COFO.</p>
<p>12. The Commission <u>requested</u> the support of COFO to consolidate the formation of the Latin American and Caribbean regional and subregional cooperation networks on wildfire management, and to facilitate and support implementation of the cooperation strategies established and presented at LACFC 2006.</p>	<p>The Forestry Department organized two workshops with the Caribbean subregional cooperation network on wildfire management in Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba, to integrate the International Guidelines on fire management in the national programs of fire management.</p> <p>The Forestry Department is investigating how to relate the regional and subregional cooperation strategies with the voluntary guidelines for the management of fire.</p>