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## INTERNATIONAL POPLAR COMMISSION

### Special Session

Rome, 6 February 2019

### NOTE ON THE REFORM PROCESS

The International Poplar Commission (IPC) was founded in 1947 by nine European countries, during the "Semaine internationale du Peuplier" organized by the French Government in the aftermath of World War II (WWII), when poplar and willow culture was considered a priority to supporting the reconstruction of rural and industrial economies. The Commission now comprises 38 Member countries and, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the FAO Strategic Objectives, aims to promote utilization of poplars and willows in agriculture and forestry to support sustainable land-use and rural development. Over its 70 years of existence, the International Poplar Commission has implemented projects in all its Member countries, and has developed a wide variety of valuable forestry and agroforestry practices.

The Commission has been undergoing a comprehensive institutional reform since September 2012. This reform envisages an expansion to new regions and countries, enlarging the geographic, biological and technical scope of the IPC by including a wider range of fast-growing genera/species with similar attributes in terms of industrial and energy uses and environmental applications to poplars and willows. The reform aims to: i) transfer the experience and the lessons learnt on poplars and willows to other fast-growing species in forestry and agroforestry systems of tropical countries; ii) strengthen the contribution of forestry to food security, sustainable livelihoods and land use in rural areas.

The reform proposal was presented to the Twenty-First Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) in 2012. It has since been presented and discussed at the IPC Sessions in 2012 and 2016, and presented at the Committee on Forestry (COFO) in 2014 and 2018.

On 19 July 2018, a Special Session to vote on the proposed amendments to the Convention placing the IPC within the FAO was held. At that session, the member countries:

- Noted their appreciation of the Secretariat's work on the International Poplar Commission's Reform;
- requested the vote on the proposed amendments to the Convention be postponed to allow time for countries for internal consultation;
- requested the Secretariat to provide a process and a platform (which platform could be electronic) to members for further consultations;



- agreed that after the consultation, a vote might be held at the seat of the Secretariat on the proposed amendments to the convention;
- requested the secretariat to expedite the process described above and arrange, in consultation with the Executive Committee, for a vote to be conducted on the most cost-efficient manner.

(Report of the Special Session of the IPC 2018, p. 2)

The Committee on Forestry, after its meeting and the presentation to COFO from the IPC on 18 July 2018:

- a) Supported the process for reforming the International Poplar Commission (IPC), including the reorganization of its Working Parties;
- b) reiterated that there are neither new obligations on contracting parties nor additional costs to the FAO Regular Programme;
- c) encouraged members of the Commission to actively contribute to the reform of IPC;
- d) encouraged the IPC to consider potential new species, especially those of significance to support tropical countries, while avoiding duplication of work with other organizations such as ITTO;
- e) encouraged FAO to enhance coordination with the IPC ensuring timely distribution of relevant documents and enabling member countries to be more informed about IPC progress.

(Report of the Committee on Forestry 2018, p. 9)

The IPC, following the direction of Member Countries, developed a process for consultation that included provision for:

- A consultation period of one month; member countries were notified of the comment period via letter to the IPC focal points and the Heads of Forestry in each member country;
- a 120 days' notice period for the vote on the Proposed Draft Amendments to the Convention placing the International Poplar Commission within the FAO;
- a vote 30 days before the meeting of the FAO's Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters in March 2019;
- a text to be placed before the FAO Conference in June 2019.

During the consultation period, the IPC Secretariat received comments from 13 countries. Based on those comments, the IPC Executive Committee elected to make one change to the Proposed Draft Amendments to the Convention. It is that text which is now placed before member countries for their consideration and vote in February 2019.

After the vote to expand the scope of the IPC, the IPC executive committee will continue its growth and reform through further consultations with members.