

25th Session of the Committee on Forestry

Items not under Written Correspondence Procedure – inputs from Members (English version)

Item 4.2 Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020: Key findings and ways forward including digitalization

Member Name	Comments
Switzerland (25 September)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent updates on key forest-related indicators, and use the FRA on-line reporting platform to promote and share publicly available tabular and geospatial information on national forest resources at their desired level of detail, and use FRA data for evidence-based policy decisions and forestry outlooks. • Use of Global Core Set of forest related indicators to monitor progress towards the Global Forest Goals and the SDGs and further develop and improve the indicators as per the recommendations of the EWS hosted by FAO in 2019. • Ensure that their FRA focal points are in continuous communication with the focal points of other processes for adequate reporting on forest resources and forest products in the context of SDGs, Global Forest Goals, and Rio conventions, including the Paris Agreement. <p>The Committee may wish request FAO to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop in consultation with CFRQ partners, international experts and other stakeholders, a more flexible and frequent FRA reporting process that allows annual/bi-annual updates of key indicators, such as those of the SDG 15, and produces a full FRA report (see separate Information Note FO:COFO/2020/Inf.6 on the options): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Every five years as currently, OR ○ every four years to coincide with and support the State of the Worlds Forest (SOFO), OR ○ every six years to be launched at the World Forestry Congress. • Develop guidance and operational tools for more consistent reporting on primary forests and other forest characteristics, including using remote sensing, and include the forest restoration potential, restoration plans and their implementation status in the future FRA reporting content in support of SDGs, post-2020 biodiversity framework, the Bonn Challenge and monitoring of progress on restoration within the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. • Implement the recommendations of the Expert Workshop (EWS) hosted by FAO on the “Global Core Set of Forest Related Indicators” with regard to further work on Tier 2 and Tier 3 indicators and steps needed to

	<p>utilize the full potential of the Global Core Set of Forest related Indicators at all levels, in collaboration with CPF members and other relevant international organizations and processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and promote new technologies and digital innovation for data collection and dissemination on forest resources, their management and uses - including livelihoods and socio-economic data - as well as on forest products, in synergy with other data-related initiatives of FAO, including the Hand- in Hand and the 50x2030 initiatives. A background document on this topic will be provided on this by FAO for COFO26. <p>Swiss intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switzerland recognises the important role of FAO as a reliable and technically innovative global forest data provider • Switzerland therefore supports the direct involvement of FAO in working on the Global Core Set of Forest Related Indicators, in collaboration with CPF members and other relevant international organizations and processes • Switzerland supports the more flexible and frequent reporting of the FRA because of the currently quickly changing dynamics of climate, deforestation, extreme events, and natural disturbances. However, we request that the secretariat clarify what would be the implications for countries of more frequent reporting for the FRA. It is important to avoid extra reporting burden. Concretely, what would be the requirements for data provided by member states versus data generated by FAO through remote sensing and other sources? • Concerning to promote new technologies and digital innovation for data collection and dissemination on forest resources, Switzerland would welcome more information on this from FAO in the form of a vision document or something similar on future digitalization of forest information. Switzerland would like to add to the last bullet point in the requests to the FAO: “A background document on this topic will be provided on this by FAO for COFO26”.
Japan (2 October)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FRA is the most comprehensive report on global forest resources, and Japan appreciates the work which reports reliable data on forestry sector based on sufficient validation process. o Japan understands more frequent updates of FRA has certain significance to provide information on implementation of SDGs. Having said that, it is important to minimize countries’ reporting burden and cost increase by carefully considering target indicators to be updated annually or biennially. o Also, in case SDG related indicators were being updated annually or biennially, it is preferable not to change current reporting cycle for full version of FRA. Therefore, maintaining 5-year cycle is an adequate option. o The future consultation on indicators for update, its frequency, modality and costs for a series of works should be carried taking into account members’ opinions while sharing information at appropriate timing.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding the estimation of forest area using remote sensing data, we believe validation process by countries is necessary to avoid confusion and prejudice caused by coexisting of multiple figures based on different methodologies. • Japan appreciates FAO's strong initiative as a chair of CPF in the formulation of global core set of forest related indicators. It should be noted that the objective of the global-core-set is not to create new indicators but to efficiently respond to issues identified in global agendas and to avoid duplication of reports on forests. Meanwhile, there are indicators remaining in tier two or tier three for several years. Hence, replacement of these indicators into other existing and measurable ones could be an option for consideration, taking into account actual circumstances in which the indicators are expected to be used in UNFF flagship publication for instance.
USA (4 October)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you Chairman. The US expresses our appreciation and congratulations to FAO in generating both an excellent SOFO and FRA2020 report. • The US strongly prefers to maintain the 5 year FRA cycle. We do not see the gains of more frequent reporting cycles offsetting the additional cost and burden to countries associated with that reporting. • While the information note did a cost-benefit analysis of the different options, it was through the lens of the impact on FAO. This is not a true reflection of the total cost as it does not account for the increased cost and human resource implications to countries, which is a critical consideration. • We also note that UNFF, during its last meeting, changed its reporting cycle to align with the 5 year FRA cycle. Changing the FRA cycle would disrupt this alignment. • We underscore that more frequent reporting on key variables through the on-line platform, regardless of whether the 5 year cycle of FRA is maintained, should be on a voluntary basis by countries, and this should be reflected in the COFO report text. • We understand the demand for more frequent reporting is motivated in part by the FAO's need to report on an annual basis on specific SDGs Indicators. However, we need to balance international reporting demands and the demands on countries' capabilities and limited resources, recognizing that countries do not just report, but actually have to implement actions on the ground. Hence, we recall the rationale for the CPF's work on streamlining forest related reporting. • Progress towards and reporting on SDG indicators is the prerogative and responsibility of countries. FAO should develop a more formal process for communication and country verification prior to publication of those FRA numbers developed by FAO and not directly submitted by countries. • We recognize that technological advances, including the FAO Global Remote Sensing Survey work, have opened up opportunities for countries to gather and analyze data in new ways. However, the role of remote

	<p>sensing in reporting and monitoring should not replace country inventory data or the need for a strong on-the-ground forest inventory system within a country, but rather complement it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In regards to the Global Core Set of Indicators, we believe it is useful to have further work on indicators involving national experts and are providing some written edits on the bulleted recommendation text, along with this intervention to the Secretariat (see Annex). • We also request some edits to the third bullet recommendation on country action in order to focus more on increased internal coordination between FRA focal points and their national focal points of other processes, as well as correctly reference the international processes. • There may be value in an analysis by FAO on the use of GCS by other reporting processes of forest related conventions and agreements. The aim of the analysis would be to determine if the GCS is really contributing to reducing reporting burden or just adding another layer of reporting. • We continue to stress that the use and reporting of the GCS Indicators should be voluntary. • Finally, in regards to the inclusion of restoration potential, plans, and implementation status in future FRAs, each of the global initiatives on restoration has its own reporting requirements and processes. • There is not currently an agreed common reporting framework, especially regarding how restoration or restoration potential is defined. Further analysis and cooperation with CPF members and other restoration initiatives is needed before the US can see the value of this being gathered for future FRAs, without increasing reporting burdens. Therefore, we do not support the inclusion of the recommended bullet on this issue in the COFO report as currently written. • In conclusion, the United States thanks the hard work of the FAO in the delivery of the FRA 2020. We repeatedly have voiced our support for FRA over the years and believe it is one of FAO's greatest contributions to the forests and the international community.