Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission
Twenty-ninth session

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
22-25 February 2022
(virtual meeting)
REPORT

of the

TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

of the

ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY COMMISSION

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
22-25 February 2022
(virtual meeting)

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Bangkok, 2022
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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

For the attention of FAO

The Commission recommended:

- to support capacity building and provide technical assistance to underpin national efforts to enhance, redesign and implement policies and actions to upscale forest and landscape restoration (including agroforestry) and reduce deforestation and forest degradation, including in the context of green recovery actions;

- to support legal and sustainable forestry value chains with appropriate involvement of local communities, small-scale operators as well as women and youth, using innovative forest technologies and digital tools for improved transparency, monitoring and decision making;

- to strengthen the capacity of governments and relevant stakeholders as regards the sustainable management and use of forest biodiversity (including wildlife) and zoonotic disease prevention through the One Health approach;

- to further strengthen cross-sectoral work through activities aimed at halting deforestation and land degradation, and promoting sustainable agriculture and forest management in ways that lead to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems;

- to continue to provide support to capacity building, technology transfer and mobilization of resources, to ensure continuing food security and rural development and ongoing development of the role REDD+ plays in this;

- to continue improving the FRA platform to support easy and transparent reporting on forest resources, their management and uses;

- to continue the work on improved reporting on primary forests and report the first results of the work in the 26th Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO);

- to complete the FRA Remote Sensing Survey and continue capacity development on remote sensing and data management, as well as facilitate related technology transfer;

- to circulate the draft scoping report of the APFC governance review for comments;

- to convene an informal consultation with nominated representatives from APFC Members and other stakeholders to further discuss and refine proposed options, including budgetary implications, to reform the APFC governance structure to provide greater relevance, efficiency and effectiveness;

- to report on progress made in the APFC governance review at its next session as well as to next session of COFO;

- to promote SOFO 2022 within and outside of the forestry sector;
• to take an active part in advancing the UN Secretary-General’s Initiative on Turning the Tide on Deforestation and related activities;

• to continue to take an active role as the Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and through this enhance advocacy on forests through relevant global processes and initiatives.
INTRODUCTION

1. At the invitation of the Government of Mongolia, the Twenty-ninth Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) was held as a virtual session from 22 to 25 February 2022. Delegates from 23 member countries and 2 United Nations organizations participated in the Session, along with observers and representatives from 13 regional and international inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations. A list of participants is given in Appendix B.

Opening ceremony

2. The opening ceremony featured addresses by the Assistant Director-General and FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, the Deputy Director-General, FAO and the Minister for Environment and Tourism, Mongolia.

3. Mr Jong-Jin Kim, Assistant Director-General, FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific welcomed participants to the session. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruption to the global economy, including the forest sector, and hence the theme of the 29th Session of the Commission, "Forests and green recovery in Asia and the Pacific” is very timely. He observed that forests offer a means for building back better in the aftermath of the pandemic, including creating jobs and income, reducing the risks of future outbreaks of zoonotic diseases, and mitigating the negative impacts of other global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss. He informed the Commission that the new FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031 reflects the Organization’s commitment to transformational change that ensures better agri-food production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind. Mr Kim invited the Commission to share its outcomes at the forthcoming 36th Session of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific.

4. Ms Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General, told participants that the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the world into a global crisis never seen before. Progress in reducing poverty has slipped back, while hunger has increased worldwide. She noted the important role forests can play in tackling the crisis, including in helping to transform agri-food systems. She observed that building back better from the pandemic will require accelerating actions to turn the tide on deforestation and forest degradation and promotion of efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems that consider sustainable forest and landscape management, water conservation, and safeguard biodiversity. Ms Semedo highlighted FAO’s commitment to working together with Members to achieve these transformations and the aspirations of the “Four Betters”: better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life for all. As part of FAO’s new Strategic Framework 2022–2031, the Four Betters reflect the interconnected economic social and environmental dimensions of agrifood systems and their centrality to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. Mr Oyunsanaa Byambasuren, Director General of the Department of Forest Policy and Coordination, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Mongolia welcomed participants on behalf of His Excellency, Mr B. Bat-Erdene, Minister of Environment and Tourism and on behalf of the Government of Mongolia. He noted the importance of the range of issues to be discussed during the session in the context of green recovery. He highlighted the significance of climate change issues to Mongolia, particularly noting the country’s vulnerability to desertification and the role that forests can play in adaptation and mitigation of climate change. Mr Byambasuren outlined key forestry elements in Mongolia’s green recovery response, including a One Billion Trees programme designed to increase forest area, reduce poverty and contribute to development of new forest products value chains. He encouraged delegates to contribute actively to the deliberations of the Session and noted opportunities for further dialogue at the XV World Forestry Congress and beyond.

6. Ms Tiina Vahanen, Deputy Director, FAO Forestry Division emphasized the importance of forests and forestry in green recovery. She told participants that the past year had been an important one for global forestry, with renewed momentum created by the Glasgow Leaders’ Declaration on
Forests and Land Use and rapid advancement in the preparations for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. She emphasized that the Commission has a crucial role in shaping directions for forestry and guiding and upscaling future action on the ground and FAO’s Forestry Division stands ready to support efforts in this regard.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Item 1)**

7. Under the guidance of Mr Sapol Boonsermsuk (Thailand), outgoing Rapporteur and Acting Chair of the Commission, the provisional agenda was adopted as presented in document FO: APFC/2022/1 (see Appendix A). Documents considered by the Commission are listed in Appendix C.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Item 2)**

8. The Commission unanimously elected the following individuals to hold office until the commencement of the Thirtieth Session:

(i) **Chairperson:** Mr Oyunsanaa Byambasuren (Mongolia)

(ii) **Vice-Chairpersons:**
    - Ms Sanjana Lal (Fiji)
    - Mr Rohit Tiwari (India)
    - Mr Marcial Amaro Jr. (Philippines)

(iii) **Rapporteur:** Mr Keiran Andrusko (Australia)

Ms Sheila Wertz-Kanounnikoff, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific served as Secretary of the Commission.

**APFC SESSION THEME: “FORESTS AND GREEN RECOVERY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC” (Item 3)**

9. On the basis of Secretariat Note FO: APFC/2022/2 and a presentation by the delegation of Mongolia, the Commission considered opportunities for forests and forestry to contribute to green recovery by restoring and creating jobs, supporting economic growth and helping the global economy transition toward a more equitable, resilient, sustainable and carbon-neutral future.

10. The Commission:

a. emphasized the importance of maintaining forest ecosystem services to support livelihoods of local communities during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;

b. emphasized the potential of nature-based solutions in addressing disruptions to livelihoods and supporting policies to conserve, restore, and sustainably manage forests as a part of resilient and sustainable green recovery plans;

c. encouraged FAO to continue to promote an ethos of enabling environments and delivery of capacity building to ensure that no-one is left behind;

d. invited its Members to:

   (i) promote greater solidarity in collectively addressing global challenges through forestry;
(ii) strengthen forest governance and technology-based solutions to contain the negative impacts of the pandemic and enhance contributions of the forest sector to the COVID-19 recovery phase;

(iii) consider provision of financial incentives to the forest sector to allow a shift from an emergency phase to a COVID-19 recovery phase;

(iv) create enabling conditions for the forest sector to access international assistance and financing in support of specific COVID-19 recovery measures;

(v) promote the domestic production, sourcing and processing of legal and sustainable timber in support of a more circular economy and to improve or maintain access to increasingly demanding, but also rewarding international markets;

(vi) emphasize the importance of strengthening supply chains and systems of trade against future disruptions to ensure forest products are not substituted by less sustainable products;

(vii) collect and improve data on the number of jobs and the level of economic activity generated by the forest sector, to better inform the elements of the COVID-19 recovery response;

(viii) reflect on other priority actions enabling the forest sector to play a more prominent role in national COVID-19 recovery actions.

e. recommended that FAO:

(i) support capacity building and provide technical assistance to underpin national efforts to enhance, redesign and implement policies and actions to upscale forest and landscape restoration (including agroforestry) and reduce deforestation and forest degradation, including in the context of green recovery actions;

(ii) support legal and sustainable forestry value chains with appropriate involvement of local communities, small-scale operators as well as women and youth, using innovative forest technologies and digital tools for improved transparency, monitoring and decision making;

(iii) strengthen the capacity of governments and relevant stakeholders as regards the sustainable management and use of forest biodiversity (including wildlife) and zoonotic disease prevention through the One Health approach.

PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING APFC- AND FAO-SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION (Item 4)

11. Based on Secretariat Note FO: APFC/2022/3, the Commission reviewed progress in implementing APFC- and FAO-supported activities in the region.

12. The Commission:

a. appreciated a range of project activities being implemented by FAO, including specifically several being managed for the Global Environment Facility;

b. encouraged FAO to continue its work on forest governance, including giving attention to capacity building on compliance with legality assurance systems in the forest sector with particular focus
on group certification for small and medium enterprises and linking community producers with timber processing enterprises;

c. recognized the important roles of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation, including minimizing natural disaster risks through effective watershed management;

d. highlighted the importance of collaboration with other international organizations to ensure efficient allocation of resources, timely progress of activities and utilization of appropriate expertise;

e. emphasized the importance of robust national forest monitoring systems to ensure forest planning and decision-making are effectively supported.

**MAINSTREAMING FORESTRY INTO FAO’S WORK ON AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS** (Item 5)

13. On the basis of Secretariat Note FO: APFC/2022/4, the Commission considered linkages between forests and landscapes and the need to transform agri-food systems to pursue synergies and manage trade-offs between agriculture and forestry.

14. The Commission:

a. appreciated the wealth of actions already being implemented in the region to integrate the role of forests and forestry in efforts to make agri-food systems more sustainable and resilient;

b. recognized the importance of addressing deforestation through supply chain approaches, with due attention to circumstances in producer countries;

c. invited its Members to:

   (i) strengthen actions on halting deforestation, enhancing forest and landscape restoration, while enhancing food security, within work on making agri-food systems more sustainable and resilient;

   (ii) recognize the synergies between sustainably managed forests and landscapes and climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits to support sustainable and productive agri-food systems;

   (iii) strengthen the institutional mechanisms for agroforestry and community forestry approaches to maximise synergies between food and fibre provision, carbon storage, wildfire prevention, restoration capacity, biodiversity conservation, soil fertility and water management;

   (iv) promote efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems that contribute to sustainable forest and landscape management, including through agroforestry, integrated forest and land use approaches, capacity building programmes and improved access to technologies and markets, especially for women and youth;

   (v) send a message to its Regional Conference emphasizing the need to consider food security, agriculture, forestry and other aspects for rural development in an integrated manner.
d. recommended that FAO:

(i) further strengthen cross-sectoral work through activities aimed at halting deforestation and land degradation, and promoting sustainable agriculture and forest management in ways that lead to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems;

(ii) continue to provide support to capacity building, technology transfer and mobilization of resources, to ensure continuing food security and rural development and ongoing development of the role REDD+ plays in this.

GLOBAL FOREST RESOURCES ASSESSMENT 2020: STATE OF FORESTRY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (Item 6)

15. Based on Secretariat Note FO: APFC/2022/5, the Commission considered recent developments in relation to the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and the state of forestry in the Asia-Pacific region.

16. The Commission:

a. appreciated recent initiatives in relation to the FRA including efforts in capacity building, to streamline reporting processes, reduce reporting burden and to develop more accessible, user-friendly multi-lingual platforms for outputs;

b. invited its Members to:

(i) continue their active participation in the FRA process through in-kind contributions to the work on improved reporting on primary forests and other forest characteristics;

(ii) collaborate with FAO, partner institutions and other countries, to further improve the FRA process and its data collection, analysis and dissemination processes;

c. recommended that FAO:

(i) continue improving the FRA platform to support easy and transparent reporting on forest resources, their management and uses;

(ii) continue the work on improved reporting on primary forests and report the first results of the work in the 26th Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO);

(iii) complete the FRA Remote Sensing Survey and continue capacity development on remote sensing and data management, as well as facilitate related technology transfer.

LINKING THE WORK OF FAO FOREST-RELATED STATUTORY BODIES WITH RELEVANT POLICY AREAS, AND FACILITATING POLICY DIALOGUES AND TECHNICAL EXCHANGES (Item 7)

17. On the basis of Secretariat Note FO: APFC/2022/6 and a presentation on a specific review of its own governance structures and modalities, the Commission considered ways to better facilitate its policy dialogues and technical exchanges to assist in achieving Members’ goals and contributions to international processes and goals and explored options for more strongly linking its work to the work of FAO’s Forestry Division and other policy areas with relevance for forestry, in order to increase its relevance and efficiency, create synergies and enhance participation.
The Commission:

a. observed that the COVID-19 pandemic requires inclusive and transparent policy dialogues that move beyond business-as-usual, encompass credible and science-based approaches, while also recognizing common, but differentiated, responsibilities and balancing targets with means of implementation;

b. recognized that virtual meetings can provide an efficient means to reduce burdens on member countries;

c. invited its Members to:

   (i) continue reflecting on ways in which its policy dialogues and technical exchanges can be focused to better assist in achieving its Members’ goals and their contributions to international processes and goals;

   (ii) consider, with reference to the questions contained in Annex 1 of Secretariat Note FO: APFC/2022/6, ways to further enhance the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Regional Forestry Commissions and other FAO forestry-related Statutory Bodies as well as ways to increase participation in meetings of the Statutory Bodies, in the context of the ongoing APFC governance review;

   (iii) note the emerging findings outlined in the scoping document of the APFC governance review;

   (iv) actively contribute to the next steps of the APFC governance review to ensure the reform meets the needs of APFC members.

d. recommended that FAO:

   (i) circulate the draft scoping report of the APFC governance review for comments;

   (ii) convene an informal consultation with nominated representatives from APFC Members and other stakeholders to further discuss and refine proposed options, including budgetary implications, to reform the APFC governance structure to provide greater relevance, efficiency and effectiveness;

   (iii) report on progress made in the APFC governance review at its next session as well as to the next session of COFO

e. identified a number of priority topics for the attention of the 26th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry. These included:

   (i) forest pests and diseases;

   (ii) green recovery and the role of sustainable forest management and sustainable production in meeting growing demands;

   (iii) international collaboration and synergy among global initiatives;

   (iv) enhancing sustainability for the forest sector taking into account differing national contexts and priorities;

   (v) aligning public and private stakeholder perspectives within a practical and actionable framework for sustainable forest management;
(vi) promoting trade and development policies that contribute to sustainable development;

(vii) evidence-based policy and appropriate tools to support decision making in sustainable forest management;

(viii) promoting the science-policy interface for agri-food systems and sustainable forest management;

(ix) sustainable production and consumption of forest products;

(x) sustainable financing, including for REDD+ and Payments for Ecosystem Services modalities;

(xi) promoting value chains for forest products in the context of COVID-19 impacts and recovery;

(xii) leveraging technology for sustainable forest management;

(xiii) innovative technologies to support wood-based industries;

(xiv) deforestation.

**UPDATE ON GLOBAL INITIATIVES AND PROCESSES OF RELEVANCE FOR THE REGIONAL FORESTRY COMMISSIONS** (Item 8)

19. On the basis of Secretariat Note FO: APFC/2022/7, a presentation on preparations for the XV World Forestry Congress and a statement by the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), the Commission considered major developments within global policy initiatives and processes with strong relevance to forestry.

20. The Commission:

a. invited its members to:

   (i) consider forest-relevant updates on international events and processes as contained in Secretariat Note FO: APFC/2022/7 to facilitate policy dialogues and technical exchanges, and to assist in achieving Members’ goals and contributions to international processes and goals;

   (ii) welcome the topical focus of FAO’s flagship publication “The State of the World’s Forests” 2022, titled “Forestry and Green Recovery, Building Inclusive and Sustainable Green Economies”;

   (iii) welcome FAO’s efforts in mainstreaming forest-related issues into the UN Food Systems Summit and its follow up process;

   (iv) welcome the developments under the UN Secretary-General’s Initiative on Turning the Tide on Deforestation

   (v) welcome the themes of the International Day of Forests 2022 and 2023 and consider them in the preparations of celebration events in the region.
b. in regard to the XV World Forestry Congress, the Commission welcomed the report and invited its members to:

(i) recommend ways and means to best collaborate with relevant global processes and instruments and to create synergies including in implementing the World Forestry Congress outcomes;

(ii) support the XV World Forestry Congress by encouraging and facilitating good attendance, and encourage countries in a position to do so to provide financial support to the Congress to enable balanced participation.

c. **recommended** that FAO:

(i) promote SOFO 2022 within and outside of the forestry sector;

(ii) take an active part in advancing the UN Secretary-General’s Initiative on Turning the Tide on Deforestation and related activities;

(iii) continue to take an active role as the Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and through this enhance advocacy on forests through relevant global processes and initiatives.

**OTHER BUSINESS** (Item 9)

21. The Commission was informed of activities implemented by three of its working groups and by several other organizations and initiatives, including:

- TeakNet;
- Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN);
- Asia-Pacific Forest Communication Network (APFCN);
- Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-Based Industries (ACSFI);
- Bio, Circular and Green Economy (BCG) model as theme of Thailand’s APEC 2022 Presidency;
- Asia-Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN);
- Update on the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration;
- Update on GEF7 Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration Impact Programme (FOLUR).

22. The Commission:

a. noted that several of its networks had remained active throughout the COVID-19 pandemic;

b. was informed that the BCG model provides an exemplar for production of renewable biological resources, re-using and recycling resources, and can help to balance environmental, social and economic goals as a basis for sustainable development;

c. appreciated the significance of policy frameworks that enable the monetization of a wide range of forestry goods and ecosystem services as a means of attracting large-scale investment in sustainably managed forests;

d. acknowledged the importance of reliable data to support appropriate policy and investment decisions and catalyze transformative action;
e. invited members to identify significant ecosystem restoration efforts for nomination as Flagship Initiatives within the scope of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Item 10)

23. The Commission noted with appreciation the offer of the delegation from Australia to host its thirtieth session.
AGENDA

“Forests and green recovery in Asia and the Pacific”

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Election of officers
3. APFC session theme: “Forests and green recovery in Asia and the Pacific”
4. Progress in implementing APFC- and FAO-supported activities in the region
5. Mainstreaming forestry into FAO’s work on agri-food systems
7. Linking the work of FAO forest-related statutory bodies with relevant policy areas, and facilitating policy dialogues and technical exchanges
8. Update on global initiatives and processes of relevance for the Regional Forestry Commissions
9. Other business
10. Date and place of the next session
11. Adoption of the report
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chairperson: Oyunsanaa Byambasuren (Mongolia)

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Rohit Tiwari (India)
Marcial Amaro Jr. (Philippines)

Rapporteur: Keiran Andrusko (Australia)

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# APPENDIX C

## LIST OF DOCUMENTS

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