



**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**

Governance Review of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC)

Co-Chairs' Report on Phase II: Informal Consultation

25–26 July 2022

Prepared by the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission Secretariat.

BACKGROUND

At its Twenty-eighth Session in 2019, the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) requested that FAO develop a scoping document outlining potential elements and processes for a review of its governance, including budgetary implications (APFC/2019/REP). Relatedly, the Twenty-fifth Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) requested that FAO consult with the Regional Forestry Commissions on ways to help facilitate their policy dialogues and technical exchanges to assist them in achieving their members' goals and contributions to international processes and goals (COFO/2020/REP).

To initiate the APFC Governance Review, the APFC Secretariat commissioned a scoping study which covers the following elements:

- Review of the basic texts of technical Commissions and past evaluations of APFC.
- Analysis of the current institutional setup related to forestry in the region and review of the role/positioning of APFC in this regard.
- Analysis of the main findings and recommendations from Third Asia Pacific Forest Sector Outlook Study (APFSOS III) in relation to directions of APFC technical work.
- Review of the agenda items and recommendations of APFC over the past 20 years (thematic areas covered, continuity of topics, level of implementation of the recommendations, financial aspects).
- Analysis of the four Asia-Pacific Forestry Weeks and their added value for APFC.
- Analysis of the current linkages of APFC to the work of other major bodies and/or processes such as FAO Regional Conference, COFO, etc.
- Consultations with countries and partners through an online survey and interviews.

At its Twenty-ninth Session in 2022, upon taking note of the draft scoping study, APFC recommended that FAO (APFC/2022/REP):

- Circulate the draft scoping report of the APFC governance review for comments.
- 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.
- Report on progress made in the APFC governance review at its next Session as well as to the next Session of COFO.

In light of the above, the APFC Secretariat organized this informal consultation to share the findings of the Phase I assessment with member country and observer representatives and facilitate provision of their inputs into the APFC governance reform process.

ITEM 1. OPENING CEREMONY

Ms Sheila Wertz-Kanounnikoff, Secretary of APFC welcomed participants and outlined some zoom protocols for the consultation.

Mr Oyunsanaa Byambasuren, Chair of the Twenty-ninth Session of APFC welcomed participants and briefly summarized the background to, and purpose of, the consultation. He noted that in the face of emerging trends, it has become increasingly evident that APFC governance requires modernization, to be more relevant to its members and to ensure that its work continues to reflect their greatest needs and highest priorities. Similar governance reviews are being undertaken for the Regional Forestry Commissions in Africa and Latin America. Mr Byambasuren recalled that preliminary results of the Phase I scoping study for the APFC governance review were presented at the Twenty-ninth Session of APFC and that a revised version of the scoping study has been distributed prior to the consultation. He reminded participants that the key objective of the consultation is to hear the feedback and ideas from, particularly, member countries and also key observer organizations. The consultation is an important opportunity to set the course for APFC; to determine how it can best help member countries, identify topics it should focus on, ensure it works more effectively in-between Sessions and discuss how countries and key observer organizations might better engage with and support APFC activities.

ITEM 2: ELECTION OF THE CO-CHAIRS

Ms Sanjana Lal (Fiji) and Mr Rohit Tiwari (India) served as Co-Chairs of the meeting.

ITEM 3: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Under the guidance of Ms Sheila Wertz-Kanounnikoff (on behalf of the Co-Chairs), the provisional agenda for the meeting was adopted.

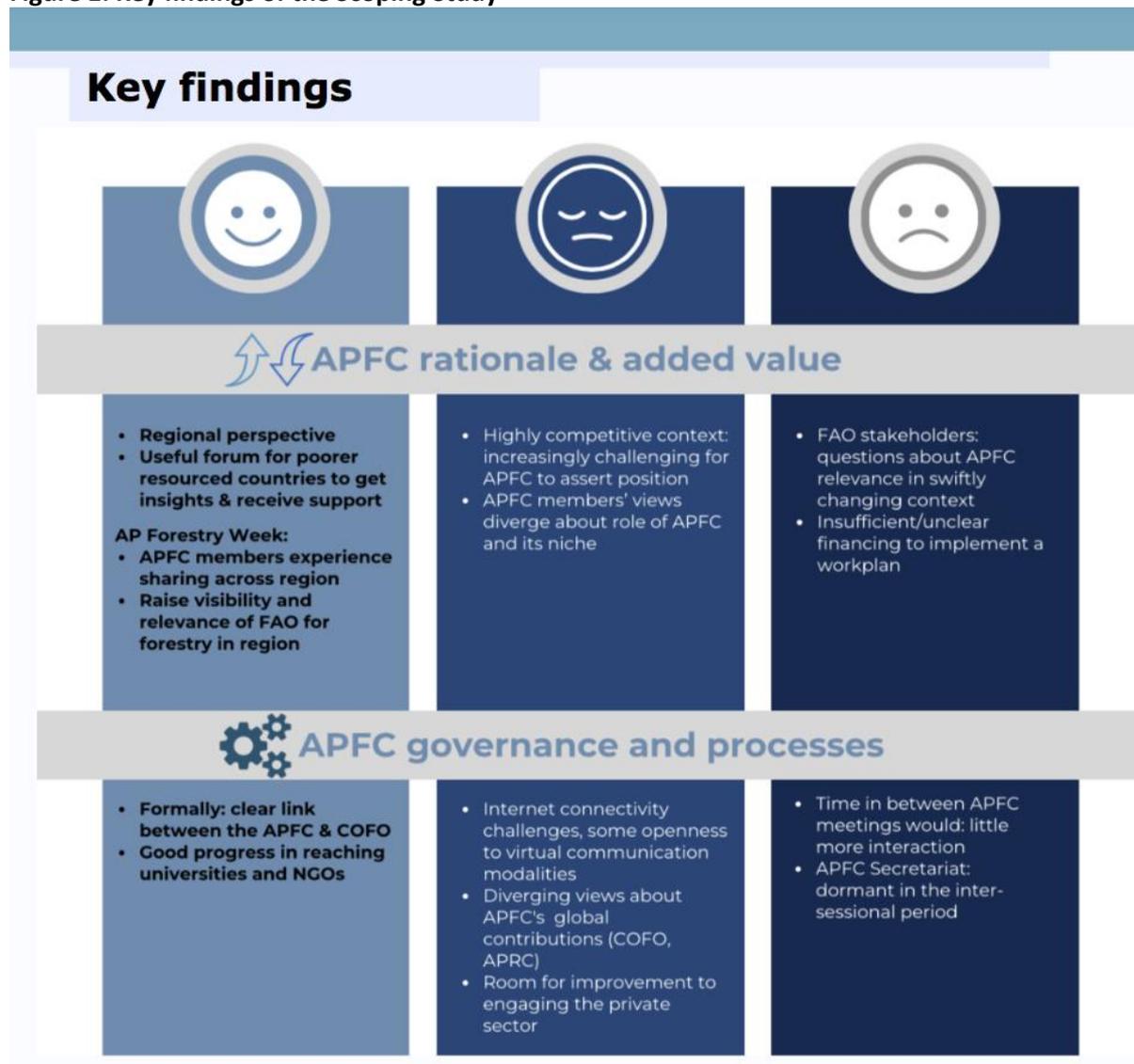
ITEM 4: OPENING REMARKS BY THE CO-CHAIRS

On behalf of the Co-Chairs, Ms Wertz-Kanounnikoff reiterated the importance and timeliness of the APFC governance reform to ensure continuation of a strong APFC that adds value to its members through regional exchange and collaboration on technical forestry issues. She noted the overarching need to ensure that APFC remains relevant in an increasingly crowded institutional landscape – and that it functions to best serve the priorities and needs of its member countries. In this regard, it is very timely to review the Commission’s operations and ensure that it continues to be “fit for purpose”. She noted that the consultation provides an excellent opportunity for member countries to provide their ideas and feedback on reforming the governance of the Commission. She welcomed the excellent representation of countries and organizations attending the consultation and looked forward to joining in productive discussions over the next two days.

ITEM 5: PRESENTATION OF THE CONSULTANT REPORT “APFC GOVERNANCE REVIEW”

Mr Achim Engelhardt, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist at Lotus Monitoring & Evaluation Group, presented the key findings of the APFC Governance Review Scoping Study and entry points for reform. Key findings presented by Mr Engelhardt are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key findings of the Scoping Study



Mr Engelhardt identified three key areas that offer potential ways forward:

1. policy relevance: strengthening direct links to FAO;
2. enhanced financing: resource mobilization opportunities; and
3. enhanced reach: beyond Forestry Departments.

To facilitate each of these he identified three “Enablers”, each of which had several suggested actions proposed:

1. enhanced communication and outreach;
2. developing a strategy document; and
3. strengthening the APFC Secretariat.

The variety of issues identified in the scoping study formed the basis of discussions in the subsequent breakout groups.

ITEM 6: DISCUSSION ON OPTIONS TO IMPROVE THE “POLICY RELEVANCE” OF THE APFC

The consultation moved into four breakout groups (Group 1: Pacific member countries; Group 2: East and Southeast Asia member countries; Group 3: South Asia member countries; and Group 4: Observer Organizations) to consider a first set of five questions relating to options for improving the policy relevance of APFC.

Question 1: *Niche*: The background document notes a declining member attendance over the past 10 years in APFC Sessions. To ensure APFC remains relevant for its members, which types of topics and activities should APFC take up to best add value to its objectives:

(i) to provide advice and coordination of forest policy implementation at regional level;

(ii) exchange information on suitable practices for technical problems; and

(iii) develop appropriate recommendations for member countries and FAO?

Could these include for example sharing experiences of successful implementation of policies and measures related to forests and trees? Or could this involve collaboration towards implementing a common regional priority, (e.g. the Regional Strategy and Action Plan on Forest and Landscape Restoration for Asia and the Pacific)? Which types of topics and activities are best left to other regional forestry processes?

Member countries made a number of suggestions in relation to Question 1 including:

- Perhaps the primary activity and output of APFC is in providing a regional voice into COFO, which helps inform the direction of the FAO forestry programme. It is very important to have a shared regional voice into that process.
- APFC should retain the mission and focus outlined in concept document for this consultation, but it should extend its work to advise and assist member countries on developing mechanisms to coordinate forest policy implementation.
- During preparations for APFC Sessions it may be useful to source ideas prior to the Session through the use of surveys and similar tools. As well as providing agenda topics, these might also inform the content of agenda papers including identifying discussion points and recommendations.
- Implementation of activities requires a focus on financing. Development of regional projects to support capacity building and experience sharing based on demonstration of best practices can be important roles for APFC.
- APFC can provide technical and policy advice and support subject to the availability of extra-budgetary resources.

In relation to Question 1, observer organizations suggested:

- There is a real need for the APFC membership to clearly understand the purpose of the Commission. The objectives listed in the question (above) should be used to guide the activities the Commission undertakes.

In regard to specific issues, activities and initiatives that APFC might usefully pursue, member countries proposed a range of topics. These included:

- For APFC to remain relevant it is imperative to meet the needs of member countries. Key topics for member countries include: forests and climate change and linkages to local communities; forestry and food security; natural resources management; soil and water conservation and watershed management including upstream and downstream linkages; climate change related disasters; science, research, development and innovation; landscape-scale management; collaborative forest management including forestry taking account of the needs of forest dependent communities; ecosystem valuations; transboundary issues such as transboundary haze, illegal trade, watershed management, and biodiversity; achieving the Glasgow declaration; blue economy systems; and wildlife habitat restoration and conservation. Several countries noted that APFC agendas generally reflect these types of topics.

It may potentially make sense to link topics and ideas for all the Regional Forestry Commissions to COFO and other FAO regional priorities and strategies. If, for example, the overarching topic for the next biennium were a certain topic, then each of the Regional Forestry Commissions could have regionally focused targets/activities related to that topic.

Observer organizations also proposed several topics including renewing several previous APFC initiatives. These included:

- The Regional Forest Policy Short Course ran under the auspices of APFC. The course was a very important conduit for capacity building in policy making, noting particularly that government policy staff often rotate into new positions. The course provided training around the key policy decision points in the region and allowing legal and institutional reforms to be shared among the Commission members. Occupied an important and appreciated niche for APFC.
- Preparation of policy and information briefs both before and after major international events (e.g. UNFCCC COPs etc.) both to inform member countries' preparations and help to identify key outcomes have been important APFC contributions in recent years.
- Provision of high-quality forestry data is a critical role.
- APFC could usefully develop a database where important forestry research and innovations can be accessed by member countries.
- There may be value in APFC providing increased focus on SDG 15.2 (Implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally), data and statistics (deforestation and forest degradation).
- That APFC needs to ensure consistency of priority activities (including budget) so that they are "institutionalized", rather than ad hoc activities. A formal workplan can help with this.

Question 2: *Strategy Document*: The background document suggests the development of a strategy document for APFC, for a given time period and with defined priority areas. Do you agree, and if so, could this be combined with a more detailed work plan for the intersessional period (the period between APFC's formal Sessions)?

In relation to developing APFC Strategy and Workplan documents a mixture of views were expressed. Several member countries were supportive of the idea, while others believed it was largely unnecessary. In favour of developing a strategy, the member country groups noted:

- To move ahead APFC must take a broad view; in broad terms it must have a long-term strategy and, to implement the strategy, we need an implementable workplan.
- A strategy is a good idea, but it must be implemented. There needs to be recognition, however, that while APFC as a whole may be able to implement the workplan underlying the strategy, this may not necessarily be achievable by individual countries.
- The proposal for a strategy is sensible in terms of ensuring alignment in reporting across all forums. The strategy document (when we have one) should be aligned with other global processes and cover both national and international obligations. There will be a need to be mindful of the current governance structures already in place in various forums.
- Any strategy must identify the highest priority issues for its member countries. It would also be worthwhile focusing on topics that APFC has been successful in addressing, where good results have been produced, and where APFC may hold some competitive advantage.
- Several countries supported the concept of a strategic document, but emphasized that it should be kept simple and precise and the language barrier should also be considered. Priority areas could be set by convening a working group that focuses on short- and long-term activities depending on key global trends.
- It would be important to ensure the strategy and workplan are flexible and adaptable given that APFC meets every two years and priorities can change rapidly during that period.
- Many APFC member countries are also members of the UNFF. For some countries, a part of their strategic direction is drawn from the UNFF Strategic Development Plan. Having APFC create a similar strategic document would likely be beneficial to countries to help ensure that national strategies incorporate both national priorities and international obligations.
- Such a strategy document could be helpful in supporting forestry proposals to national planning processes and for prioritizing Departmental work.
- A need to be conscious not to burden countries with more documentation/reporting preparation.

Several member countries suggested that a strategic document is not necessary. It was suggested that:

- APFC has no need to create a large blueprint and, rather, should just focus on a few work areas. Creation of strategies can be very time consuming and sometimes unproductive.

Rather than preparing a new regional strategy, focus on ways to support implementation of national strategies that member countries already have in place.

The observer organizations suggested a potential intermediate path focusing on the Asia-Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study (APFSOS). They noted that the APFSOS can potentially serve as both regional and subregional strategy documents. The APFSOS provides some of the best policy analytics for the region, very good for exchanging information, but also provides a roadmap and to a large extent a workplan for forest policy implementation at a regional level. The outlook studies haven't

been given as much prominence as they deserve, but they are a very important and valuable process and output. It may be valuable to complement the APFSOS study with a condensed version that provides both a summary and key highlights. Below the APFSOS a clearly defined workplan (or strategic action plan) and related budget will be important.

Question 3: *Participation*: The background document recommends greater participation by the private sector and government entities beyond Forestry Departments (e.g. Agriculture, Environment and Finance Departments) in APFC Sessions. Do you agree, and if so, what concrete steps might be taken to better engage the private sector and other sectors in the work of APFC?

In relation to broadening APFC engagement with the private sector and other government entities, a number of member countries were broadly supportive, with several caveats. Several member countries were not supportive, while there were also views differentiating between entities participating in APFC Sessions compared with participation in intersessional activities. In broad support of increasing participation, the member countries noted:

- That multisectoral approaches are relevant – need all stakeholders to be involved – stakeholder analytics need to be done.
- Broad engagement is important particularly the private sector. Private sector plays an important role in several other international forestry forums especially in dealing with emerging issues with significant implications for business (e.g. trade).
- APFC is often perceived as being mainly about production forestry, despite that it deals with much broader issues. Opportunities to engage other government departments might help to alter this perception.
- Other sectors are very important – many have significant impacts on forests – need to involve and educate them – how can we protect forests from development pressure? Need to change mindsets in other sectors to protect forests from development pressure.
- Wider participation can be very beneficial – for example, as witnessed in the World Forestry Congress and also within UNFF. APFC should examine potential roles for e.g. indigenous people and the private sector. This would align with broadening participation in other fora.
- There is a need to promote engagement with the private sector and other government departments and other sectors through strong communication and outreach activities as well as offering opportunities for them to participate in specific initiatives. The Secretariat should seek to build long term partnerships with private sector groups. Effort could also be made to identify regional private sector champions.
- There is a need for APFC activities that create knowledge products to inform other sectors.
- Greater participation by the private sector and exposure to international dialogue might assist in encouraging conformation and compliance with international standards and certification requirements (including for SFM, protection of biodiversity, carbon trading);
- APFC should endeavor to make space for Youth and Indigenous Group participants including efforts to identify how youth and indigenous groups can contribute to forestry within APFC's space.

- Part of APFC's role could be to seek greater engagement with institutions that might provide financing or investment in forestry. APFC initiatives might be relevant to some companies' Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.
- Declining participation in APFC is a concern. Providing incentives to enhance participation, for example a regional project, is worth consideration.

Participants who were less supportive of expanding participation in APFC noted:

- Objectives of private sector and government forestry are often different – profit vs wider view. We would need to set some boundaries and need some caution.
- Limitations on the size of national delegations that can participate in APFC, means the role is often assigned to single lead agency (e.g. the Forestry Department). Lead agencies are expected to gather relevant perspectives and bring these to APFC but it is possible to engage more broadly on specific issues and during intersessional activities.
- If APFC activities accommodate the interests and needs of the private sector they will have incentive to engage in APFC events. Less need for the private sector to participate in the formal APFC Sessions.

The observer organizations also expressed a mix of views, including:

- To broaden participation in APFC to other Ministries, such as Agriculture or Finance, could be detrimental to the work of the Commission. "Mission creep" could see the direction of the Commission influenced in ways that might not necessarily be most suitable for the forest sector. Focus should be on key forestry stakeholders and beneficiaries. Other commissions within FAO already focus on these other sectors and there is risk of overlap and confusion if APFC is opened to other sectors. Nonetheless, need to engage with other "competing" sectors (e.g. Agriculture), particularly where multisectoral approaches are required.
- There is value in involving other stakeholders including Youth and Indigenous People's. Youth participation via the International Forestry Students Association (IFSA) is already significant in APFWs, but perhaps less so in APFC Sessions. There may be value in involving IFSA in the APFC Executive Committee.
- We need to be wary of merely being "Foresters talking to Foresters". If we don't engage with other sectors that are competing with, or creating problems for forests and forestry, we are unlikely to change anything.
- A key question is what might be the incentives for the private sector to participate in APFC? APFC is centered around policy, while private sector is focused on implementation. There would need to be clear definition of mandate for their participation and their role. The private sector in our region seems to only be interested in participating if they see direct benefit. Intermediary organizations that work with the private sector might be better to target as representatives (e.g. Tropical Forest Alliance).

Question 4: Link to FAO processes: To enhance FAO-internal relevance and uptake, the background document recommends to better feed APFC recommendations into other relevant FAO processes (FAO Regional Conference, Committee on Forestry). Do you agree with, or see

additional entry points to the proposed ones? These include aligning agendas and participation of the APFC Chair in other FAO bodies? If affirmative, which additional entry points do you suggest?

In relation to Question 4, member countries noted the following:

- There are challenges in developing a single regional voice within APFC. Various forums have different regional groupings and structures that are not necessarily consistent with the APFC membership/grouping. For example, UNFF has different caucus structures. There may be a need for a broader discussion (beyond APFC) on how to align these groupings and channel the regional voice noting that it can be difficult to maintain consistency across multiple forums. The 2024 review of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests could provide an opportunity to explore this issue.
- That the governance review document recommends potential to feed APFC technical deliberations directly to political level. This sounds like a good idea and the Group would welcome further discussion on how best to achieve this.

The observer organizations noted that APFC outcomes should be shared with, and aligned to, other “processes” beyond FAO processes. These should be delivered as a joint regional voice. There is a need to understand how policy processes in regional bodies work, so that the Commission can provide timely and effective input. Good for observer organizations to provide consolidated advice to organizations such as ASEAN and SAARC and APFC might have a role in coordinating this.

Question 5: Other: What other options could be considered for enhancing the policy relevance of APFC?

In regard to Question 5, member countries noted:

- APFC can play a coordinating role where multiple members are interested in a specific topic. The Secretariat can potentially play a coordinating role in helping to coordinate communications and mobilize resources to support action. The scoping study identified the UNFF Financing Facility as a potential avenue to support activities. Direct government-to-government assistance might also form part of APFC mobilizing resources.
- APFC’s policy relevance could also be enhanced by elevating dialogue to political and Ministerial meetings, beyond technical discussions.
- APFC’s policy relevance can be enhanced by strengthening national capabilities of member countries to achieve their workplans and implement their policies.
- APFC could enhance its policy relevance by issuing legally binding joint statements from the member countries.
- A decade ago, the APFC Executive Committee appeared to play a more important role in driving APFC’s policy discourse, but this has been less evident in more recent times.

It was also noted that several member countries have been unable to attend the current consultation, but it would nonetheless be useful to proactively seek feedback from these absent members. There may also be value in seeking input from beyond the Forestry Departments in member countries. The Group additionally identified that several major donor countries are

observer members of APFC or otherwise absent from the consultation and there would likely be significant value in engaging with these countries.

ITEM 7: KEY POINTS OF THE DISCUSSION ON DAY 1 (CO-CHAIRS)

Ms Sanjana Lal briefly recapped key points from the day's discussions. She also outlined the programme for Day 2 and urged participants to come prepared with ideas and suggestions to ensure best use is made of the opportunity to strengthen APFC and its operations.

ITEM 8: DISCUSSION ON OPTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE FINANCIAL BACKGROUND OF APFC AND ITS ACTIVITIES

Participants again moved into four breakout groups to consider four questions relating to options for strengthening the financial background of APFC and its activities.

Question 1. How might APFC better promote its work to attract extra-budgetary financial support for its initiatives? What resource mobilization options might be suited for APFC?

In relation to Question 1, member countries noted a range of potential options and issues, including:

- APFC activities should be aligned with global forestry priorities and promoted to key global funding platforms to assist in attracting funding.
- APFC could look for opportunities to partner on high priority topics such as food security and/or building climate change resilience and seek opportunities to mobilize resources jointly. Because APFC is a forum to bring together forestry experts it makes sense to form partnerships to jointly address issues; need to explore relevant partners (regional sustainable forest management organizations; such as AFOCO, APFNet, ASEAN, APEC etc.).
- Some countries make annual contributions via substantive subscriptions to a number of international organizations: they are often quite large amounts (e.g. ITTO, APAFRI; SPC; SPREP, INBAR). Possibility to explore options for APFC to partner with some of these organizations to help ensure maximum benefits are derived from these subscriptions.
- Developing countries are able to secure funds from donor partners (for example, to help meet SDG commitments). In relation to SDGs, APFC may be able to access funding to ensure no-one in the Asia-Pacific region is left behind.
- Secretariat should improve communications and outreach to member countries to better explain the importance and expected outcomes of APFC initiatives. Need to appreciate that country budgets are limited and investments will be made according to national priorities. Most countries have review and approval processes to be followed, many of which have substantial lead times. This may require that FAO should initially use its core funding to support APFC activities, while seeking support from member countries over a longer period.
- FAO Regional TCP projects could provide funding on specific topics at either regional or subregional levels.
- Leverage opportunities through multilateral development agencies/funds such as Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), etc. Interrelated positive impacts of forests on mitigating climate change offer huge

opportunities to attract funding from multilateral donor agencies at the Asia-Pacific regional (or subregional) scale.

In relation to Question 1, observer organizations noted:

- Resource mobilization is a challenge for most agencies. Development of a resource mobilization strategy may be helpful.
- A fundamental role of APFC is to drive policy development and action at a regional level. APFC recommendations should extend beyond FAO's work to also include actions by member countries and other regional organizations. At that level, attribution and responsibility for securing funding also should probably extend beyond FAO, collectively to all regional organizations, to ensure country needs are being met; i.e. fundraising should be a collective responsibility.
- Significant funding opportunities may be available through GEF 8.

Question 2. What mechanisms or capacities does my country or organization have to support APFC intersessional activities (financial or in-kind contributions, incl. internships or staff secondments)? What is required to benefit from these?

In relation to Question 2, member countries identified a range of potential mechanisms and capacities for supporting APFC, including:

- Internships and secondments are a useful avenue to explore. Two internships are being sponsored to FAO RAP Forestry and Biodiversity Module in 2022.
- Some countries have specific mechanisms already in place to provide internships and secondments to international and regional organizations. The APFC Secretariat can make application to these processes, highlighting the roles that interns or secondees would be required to undertake. These processes can take some time before a secondment is approved. On the other hand, it would be helpful if processes to allow internships and secondments to the APFC Secretariat could be clarified and simplified.
- Staff secondments at mid- or senior-levels could be very positive in making APFC more relevant to member countries. Such staff might act as *ex officio* ambassadors for APFC to their country and build national knowledge and linkages to the Commission.
- Internships also good for building knowledge and career development for young people (several countries supported this and indicated that such internships are feasible for developing countries).
- Hosting of events can be an important contribution, including hosting APFC Sessions as well as other meetings and workshops and participation in pilot studies and similar field initiatives. Co-funding of meetings may provide an avenue for contributions.
- For donor countries to make a case to provide funding for any initiatives there needs to be alignment with priority recipient countries or subregions, linkages to domestic and regional thematic priorities and international obligations. A key in attracting support is to have good ideas and a practical workplan.

- Provision of financial support often requires a high-level call in many countries. Secondments are possible, but likely to require formal processes.
- APFC should focus on mainstream global issues. This makes it easier to make the case for support from decision makers.
- Developing countries are in a resource crunch so financial contributions are often difficult. However, in kind contributions are often more feasible.

In relation to Question 2, observer organizations indicated that several organizations have previously seconded staff to FAO/APFC and they remain open to similar arrangements in the future.

Question 3. Establishing a trust fund for APFC activities is suggested as a possible option. Under what conditions could a multi-donor trust fund be successful in attracting additional financial support? What could be constraints for your government/organization to make contributions?

In relation to the potential establishment of a trust fund, member countries made the following observations:

- Several countries observed that existing mechanisms to make contributions (including voluntary contributions) to FAO are sufficient. Better strategy is to improve outreach and communications by the Secretariat to promote initiatives that might attract additional funding. APFC tends not to be visible between Sessions so improved outreach and communications could assist in this regard.
- If a trust fund were to be established it would need to provide clear evidence that it benefits the region and/or specific subregions. This point was made mainly in relation to a more specific fund being established, for example, to support multi-country field studies and establishment of project or study sites.
- Any proposal for a trust fund would initially require detailed explanation regarding the expected outcomes and benefits of the Trust Fund, as well as providing analysis identifying potential donors and other funding options.
- A trust fund would not be an easy thing for many developing countries to find resources to contribute to.

Observer organizations noted that most would find it difficult to contribute to a trust fund directly. However, there is potential to leverage organizational “in kind” contributions as part of proposals to potential donor agencies.

Question 4. What other options may exist for strengthening the financial background of APFC?

In regard to other options for strengthening the financial background of APFC the following suggestions were made:

- A consortium of potential donors could be identified as primary supporters of APFC activities.
- APFC should particularly aim activities toward the climate change sphere where significant resources are potentially available for support. Activities should be designed to meet

requirements/objectives of agencies such as the Green Climate Fund and Global Climate Facility.

- APFC could identify and explore other innovative financing mechanisms that might potentially offer funding opportunities. In the past, APFC has been very successful in finding multiple small tranches of money to support activities. At the large scale, for example, APFWs have been successfully run by a large number of organizations providing co-funding.
- Engage FAO Headquarter to provide additional support.
- Several countries suggested exploring possible options for APFC countries to contribute an annual membership fee.
- There may be value in APFC undertaking cost–benefit analyses of initiatives implemented in the past to assist in identifying most efficient initiatives for implementation in the future.
- Several countries agreed that a future APFC agenda item on Regional TCPs that explains how they work and how APFC member countries might benefit from them would be useful.

ITEM 9: DISCUSSION ON OTHER OPTIONS TO ENHANCE THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF APFC

The consultation moved back into the four breakout groups to consider a set of five questions relating to other options to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of APFC.

Question 1. How can we improve the process for setting APFC Session agendas to ensure these reflect member countries' highest priorities and needs while avoiding inclusion of too many items on the agenda?

In relation to Question 1, member countries identified a number of possible actions to improve the APFC agenda-setting process, including:

- The current process involves consultation with countries and agenda setting with Executive Committee, which is quite comprehensive.
- Various countries have differing burning issues; ask each country to identify its key issues and then come to a common set of recommendations for the agenda.
- The APFC Secretariat could seek inputs from members on their priorities ahead of the Session through an informal surveys and similar tools.
- The Asia Pacific Forest Sector Outlook Study should be a key resource to provide ideas and themes for agenda items. APFSOS can be used to inform key forestry priorities in regions and subregions.
- The agenda should certainly reflect common and high priority themes. One current example is forest fires.
- Greater attention could be paid to alignment with international reporting requirements, for example, the Global Forest Goals and other key United Nations priorities.

- The APFC agenda should reflect key international commitments so that it aligns with major funding opportunities.
- It could be useful to retain one or two standing agenda items relating to key topics to provide continuity.
- Identification of key issues relevant to each subregion might be a useful approach, for example, selecting a common issue specific to each particular subregion for inclusion in the agenda.
- Several countries supported the idea of providing a dedicated space for subregional groups, as is already being done as part of reporting on Global Forest Goals (e.g. Pacific subregion reports as Oceania).
- Knowledge sharing events should be agreed in consultation with countries and reflect highest priority issues.

In relation to Question 1, observer organizations indicated:

- The heterogeneous nature of the Commission, with very different countries having very different forestry priorities, makes it difficult to properly align on agenda settings. Possibly explore opportunities to breakdown the agenda into subregional priorities.
- A key APFC role should be to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This perspective should be used to reflect different subregional priorities, but also to try to enhance cooperation between developing countries and developed countries.
- Starting from the agenda-setting process, there seem to be excessive formality in the process, which may result in losing the participatory aspects. This is potentially an issue with both agenda-setting and running the meeting (and especially with virtual meetings). There is a need – as far as possible – to break down formality so that people are comfortable to participate. Reducing formality starts with the agenda-setting process.
- There is too much “FAO business” in the agenda; i.e. items that relate to the Commission itself (or FAO processes). There is no interest for organizational partners to listen to these sort of “internal” Commission items.

Question 2. At recent Sessions, reporting on progress implementing activities since the previous Session has been mainly done by FAO. How could we allow and encourage greater member engagement e.g. reporting of own progress on topics by members and observers?

In regard to encouraging greater reporting on progress implementing activities since the previous Session, member countries observed:

- National reporting on progress in implementation of APFC recommendations is certainly possible, but need to ensure it does not become a significant burden.
- There should be provision of a specific opportunity for countries to share their experiences in a dedicated agenda item. If this is to be done during the “State of Forestry” agenda item then it should be made more obvious that this is the opportunity for countries to report their progress.

- There may be value in trying to promote alignment with GFG reporting. Inviting or scheduling presentations that highlight achievements could be useful. APFC could also align with UNFF voluntary reporting (for example, reporting on common issues, International Day of Forests activities, etc.)
- The APFC Secretariat could specifically identify themes or formats for reporting, while ensuring that countries keep reports brief.
- Allowing flexibility in reporting formats, for example, allowing countries to report progress using powerpoints, might enhance interest.
- One country expressed reservations about countries reporting directly on progress, but proposed that FAO continue to lead reporting in discussion with the member countries.
- It was noted that face-to-face Sessions provide more time for reporting compared with virtual Sessions.
- APFC might consider developing a set of indicators or topics that countries might report against.

Observer organizations noted that:

- In the past, creation of informal groups/working groups on specific thematic issues (e.g. Forest Landscape Restoration) has allow organizations and members to report on progress in an informal setting. Informal groups can be very positive and these could be institutionalized, with collective workstreams, during intersessional periods.

Question 3. How valuable was the virtual 29th Session of APFC compared with normal face-to-face APFC Sessions? Should virtual or hybrid Sessions be considered in the future? What role might virtual meetings play during the intersessional period?

In relation to the various meeting modalities for APFC Sessions and intersessional meeting, member countries observed:

- Most participants supported face-to-face APFC formal Sessions where possible, due to the significant advantages for increased interaction. However, travel is still a challenge for a number of countries so need to acknowledge continuing role of virtual and hybrid events. Several participants noted with interest that that the attendance trend improved in the most recent APFC Session with virtual modality.
- Recent experiences have reinforced the potential value and efficiency of virtual meetings during intersessional period. Smaller technical meetings and workshops are particularly well-suited to virtual modalities.

Observer organizations emphasized that hybrid meetings are particularly hard to facilitate. Experiences for a number of organizations of trying to run hybrid events at World Forestry Congress showed they are very difficult to do well and the APFC Secretariat should take careful advice before undertaking to run a Session in this mode. However, a virtual event with live streaming (instead of hybrid interaction) offers an easier and probably more successful option under the current environment.

Question 4. Given the very high value accorded to Asia-Pacific Forestry Weeks in the governance review, how can we collectively work to encourage and support countries to host future APFWs?

In relation to Question 4, member countries proposed several options, including:

- Opportunities for co-financing and co-support should be identified and emphasized (it is acknowledged that APFW is a large burden for one country to host). Opportunities for co-financing and historical levels of support should be made clear to potential host countries.
- Host countries need to be aware of the benefits, including economic benefits, of hosting the event. There may be value in analyzing the economic impact of APFWs and help build the business case for member countries to host.

Observer organizations proposed several options in relation to Question 4, including:

- Emphasizing that APFWs are highly valued in the region and noting that host countries have done fabulous work in hosting previous APFWs.
- All key organizational observers at APFC (and many other organizations) already provide significant financial and technical contributions to APFWs. All key institutions have a commitment to continue, and see great value, in supporting APFWs.
- There is likely value in engaging more with the private sector and other stakeholders to harness more support for hosting the event.
- As far as possible, the host country of APFWs should rotate between the subregions.

Question 5. What other options may exist for strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of APFC?

In regard to identifying other options for strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of APFC, member countries suggested:

- Virtual meetings held periodically to update progress and facilitate planning can help to better implement APFC initiatives during the intersessional period.
- A need to think more on structure; i.e. how can APFC and Secretariat strengthen activities including through better communications and interactions with countries. How can APFC coordinate better among member countries?
- Strong monitoring mechanisms for implementing an APFC workplan can assist in promoting efficiency.
- APFC should enhance science-based problem solving in the forestry sector and promote more partnerships with universities to improve research and development.

ITEM 10. KEY POINTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS AND PROPOSALS ON THE WAY FORWARD

Ms Sheila Wertz-Kanounnikoff outlined a series of seven future steps to progress the APFC governance review:

1. July 2022 – Email submissions of additional comments on APFC Governance Review from countries and organizations APFC-Secretariat@fao.org;

2. August 2022 – Preparation and circulation of draft Co-Chairs’ report on Informal Consultation;
3. September 2022 – Revision and finalization of Co-Chair’s report on Informal consultation;
4. late-2022 – APFC Executive Committee meeting to identify recommendations for reform of APFC governance;
5. February–March 2023 – Preparation and circulation of draft recommendations paper for comment;
6. May 2023 – Revision and finalization of recommendations paper; and
7. June 2023 – Proposals for reform of APFC governance presented to 30th Session of APFC.

ITEM 11: CLOSING OF THE MEETING

Ms Sanjana Lal thanked participants and various resource people for a concise, but excellent consultation. She appreciated the constructive discussions and the willingness of all colleagues to offer their thoughts, ideas and expertise towards shaping a stronger and a more relevant APFC in the future.

Ms Sheila Wertz-Kanounnikoff thanked all participants and the Co-Chairs and Chair for their introductory remarks. She appreciated the high level of the participation in the consultation and reminded participants that the process does not end here.

Mr Rohit Tiwari thanked participants, the Secretariat and various resource people. He noted the very fruitful discussions, generating ideas will help move forward the work of APFC and closed the meeting.

ANNEX A: AGENDA

Day 1: 25 July 2022

Time	Agenda Item
12.00-12.15	Item 1. Opening Ceremony Greeting by APFC Secretary, Ms Sheila Wertz-Kanounnikoff Welcome remarks by APFC Chair, Mr Oyunsanaa Byambasuren Group picture
12.15-12.20	Item 2: Election of the Co-Chairs
12.20-12.25	Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda
12.25-12.30	Item 4: Opening remarks by the Co-Chairs
12.30-12.50	Item 5: Presentation of the Consultant Report “APFC Governance Review” Ca 15 min presentation by the consultant, Mr Achim Engelhardt Ca 5 min questions of clarification
12.50-14.20	Item 6: Discussion on options to improve the “policy relevance” of the APFC Ca. 10 min introduction by APFC Secretariat, Ms Sheila Wertz Ca. 50 min break-out room discussions Ca. 30 min plenary discussions
14.20-14.30	Item 7: Key points of the discussion on Day 1 (Co-Chairs)

Day 2: 26 July 2022

Time	Agenda Item
12.00-12.05	Introduction by APFC Secretary, Ms Sheila Wertz-Kanounnikoff
12.05-13.05	Item 8: Discussion on options for strengthening the financial background of APFC and its activities Ca. 5 min introduction by APFC Secretariat, Ms Sheila Wertz Ca. 40 min break-out room discussions Ca. 15 min plenary discussions
13.05-14.05	Item 9: Discussion on other options to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of APFC Ca. 5 min introduction by APFC Secretariat, Ms Sheila Wertz Ca. 40 min break-out room discussions Ca. 15 min plenary discussions
14.05-14.20	Item 10. Key points of the discussions and proposals on the way forward
14.20-14.30	Item 11: Closing of the meeting

ANNEX B: QUESTIONS FOR BREAK-OUT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Item 6 – Discussion on options to improve the *policy relevance* of APFC

- *Niche*: The background document notes a declining member attendance over the past 10 years in APFC Sessions. To ensure APFC remains relevant for its members, which types of topics and activities should APFC take up to best add value to its objectives:
(i) to provide advice and coordination of forest policy implementation at regional level;
(ii) exchange information on suitable practices for technical problems; and
(iii) develop appropriate recommendations for member countries and FAO?
Could these include for example sharing experiences of successful implementation of policies and measures related to forests and trees? Or could this involve collaboration towards implementing a common regional priority, (e.g. the [Regional Strategy and Action Plan on Forest and Landscape Restoration for Asia and the Pacific](#))? Which types of topics and activities are best left to other regional forestry processes?
- *Strategy Document*: The background document suggests the development of a strategy document for APFC, for a given time period and with defined priority areas. Do you agree, and if so, could this be combined with a more detailed work plan for the intersessional period (the period between APFC's formal Sessions)?
- *Participation*: The background document recommends greater participation by the private sector and government entities beyond Forestry Departments (e.g. Agriculture, Environment and Finance Departments) in APFC Sessions. Do you agree, and if so, what concrete steps might be taken to better engage the private sector and other sectors in the work of APFC?
- *Link to FAO processes*: To enhance FAO-internal relevance and uptake, the background document recommends to better feed APFC recommendations into other relevant FAO processes (FAO Regional Conference, Committee on Forestry). Do you agree with, or see additional entry points to the proposed ones? These include aligning agendas and participation of the APFC Chair in other FAO bodies? If affirmative, which additional entry points do you suggest?
- *Other*: What other options could be considered for enhancing the policy relevance of APFC?

Item 7 – Discussion on options for strengthening the *financial background* of APFC and its activities

- *Resource mobilization*: In the face of limited FAO core funding for APFC activities, extra-budgetary resources are critical for the APFC to fully implement its initiatives to better support member countries. How (and where) might APFC better promote its work to attract financial support for its initiatives? Can you give examples for resource mobilization options that might be suited for APFC?

- *Voluntary contributions:* What mechanisms and or capacities does my country or organization have to support APFC intersessional activities (financial or in-kind contributions, incl. internship programmes or staff secondments)? What is required to benefit from these?
- *Trust fund:* The background document mentions the option of a trust fund for APFC, which would allow for longer-term financial visibility and planning. Under what conditions could a multi-donor trust fund be successful in attracting additional financial support for APFC? What could be constraints for your government/organization to make contributions?
- *Other:* What other options may exist for strengthening the financial background of APFC?

Item 8 – Discussion on other options to enhance the *efficiency* and *effectiveness* of the APFC

- *APFC agenda:* How can we improve the process for setting APFC Session agendas to ensure these reflect member countries' highest priorities and needs while avoiding inclusion of too many items on the agenda? Could a strategy document for the APFC and an associated intersessional work plan ensure certain common priority items?
- *APFC inputs to COFO:* What steps can we take to ensure that APFC recommendations to COFO are more focused around fewer priority topics? Would a dedicated space during APFC Sessions for discussing priority topics among members, e.g. by sub-region, be useful?
- *Member engagement:* At recent Sessions, reporting on progress implementing activities since the previous Sessions has been mainly done by FAO. To effectively respond to the APFC mandate, how could we allow and encourage greater member engagement (e.g. reporting of own progress by members and observers through national (and organizational) reports and presentations during the APFC Sessions, or encourage "member or organization-led" initiatives (as opposed to FAO-leading) on certain topics)?
- *Virtual meeting modality:* How valuable was the virtual 29th Session of APFC compared with normal face-to-face APFC Sessions? Is the virtual or hybrid modality an option that should be considered for future post-COVID-19 Sessions? What role might virtual meetings play in enhancing communications during the intersessional period?
- *Asia-Pacific Forestry Weeks:* Given the very high value accorded to Asia-Pacific Forestry Weeks in the governance review, how can we collectively work to encourage and support countries to host future APFWs?
- *Other:* What other options may exist for strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of APFC?

ANNEX C: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Representatives of member countries

AUSTRALIA	Keiran Andrusko
BANGLADESH	Gobinda Roy
BHUTAN	Sonam Tobgay
CHINA	Hu Yuanhui
FIJI	Sanjana Lal
INDIA	Rohit Tiwari
INDONESIA	Krisdianto Sugiyanto
MALAYSIA	Ramli bin Mat
MONGOLIA	Oyunsanaa Byambasuren
NEPAL	Uddhaw Bahadur Ghimire
NEW ZEALAND	Rata Muda
PAKISTAN	Ghulam Qadir Shah
PHILIPPINES	Kenneth Tabliga
REP. OF KOREA	Jina Kim; A-Ram Yang
SAMOA	Moafanua Tolusina Pouli
SOLOMON ISLANDS	Vaeno Vigulu
SRI LANKA	Nishantha Edirisinghe
THAILAND	Preecha Ongprasert

Representatives of observer organizations

AFoCO	Yeong-Joo Lee
APAFRI	Pin Kar Yong
APFNet	Yuan Mei; Lu De
CIFOR-ICRAF	Robert Nasi
ITTO	Ma Hwan-Ok
RECOFTC	David Ganz
SPC	Jalesi Mateboto

Secretariat

Achim Engelhardt (Consultant)
Chris Brown (Consultant)
Devin Sethi (FAO)
Illias Animon (FAO)
Kallaya Meechantra (FAO)
Marco Piazza (FAO)
Megha Bajaj (FAO)
Rao Matta (FAO)
Raushan Kumar (FAO)
Sheila Wertz-Kanounnikoff (APFC Secretary, FAO)