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Organización
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y la
Alimentación

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COMMUNICATING THE ROLE OF FORESTS IN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

Summary

The aim of this paper is to inform the North American Forestry Commission of the work of FAO and partners on communicating the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation to the public and decision makers.

INTRODUCTION

1. Forests figure prominently in the climate change negotiations under way in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Forests, in both industrialized and developing countries, are being singled out for their crucial role in climate change mitigation. The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that the forestry sector is responsible for 17.4% of total global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, due in large part to tropical deforestation, but also points out that carbon sequestration in boreal and temperate forests more than compensate for GHG emissions from tropical forests.

2. UNFCCC recognizes that both industrialized (Annex 1 Parties) and developing countries (non Annex 1 Parties) must undertake mitigation actions if the goal of limiting the average global temperature increase to within 2⁰C is to be achieved. Forests are acknowledged as part of the solution. Efforts are being made to realize the mitigation potential of forests through providing positive incentives to countries to carry out forestry mitigation actions. The on-going deliberations on “reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries” (REDD), under way in the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Long Term Cooperative Actions under the Convention (AWG-LCA), focus on the creation of an instrument to provide incentives to developing countries to undertake forestry mitigation actions. The outcome of negotiations under way in the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Further Commitments of Annex 1 Parties to the

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Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) could lead to increased mitigation benefits from management of forests and forest products in industrialized countries. The issues being debated in AWG-KP include proposed changes in rules for carbon accounting for forest management and for harvested wood products, as well as the possibility of expanding the scope of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) so that other types of land use projects may be eligible. Decisions adopted could provide positive incentives for forest management in Annex 1 countries, and, through CDM, also in non-Annex 1 countries.

3. UNFCCC negotiations under the two *Ad Hoc* Working Groups were not concluded at the Copenhagen climate change meetings in December 2009. The working groups' mandates have been extended, and negotiations continue with the hope of being concluded at the next Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC to be held in Mexico in November/December this year.

COMMUNICATING THE ROLE OF FORESTS IN CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION: EFFORTS OF FAO, IN COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

4. FAO, in collaboration with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), has been working to communicate the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation to the public and decision makers and to put this into the context of sustainable forest management and sustainable development. The effort arises from a conviction that, to be successful over the long term, climate change mitigation and adaptation measures must be compatible with and build on the principles of sustainable forest management (SFM). Moreover, they should be integrated into existing national forest programmes -- countries' overarching policy framework to support SFM. If climate change actions in the forestry sector are devised outside the context of the broader forest sector policy framework, the achievement of other forest policy goals could be jeopardized. SFM recognizes the multiple roles of forests and seeks to reach a balance among the social, environmental and economic functions of forests appropriate to the unique conditions of each country and stakeholder views. Giving precedence to climate change, functions of forestry risks to disrupt this balanced approach.

5. This concern gave birth to a joint effort of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the "Strategic Framework on Forests and Climate Change" developed in 2008 and launched at the UNFCCC's COP14 held in Poznan, Poland in December that year. The Framework emphasizes that SFM provides an appropriate foundation for climate change mitigation and adaptation and is intended as a resource for policymakers on climate change and forests. It puts forward a case for the strategic role of sustainable forest management in achieving long-term climate change mitigation and as a robust and flexible framework for effective adaptation to climate change. The framework document also emphasises that with their broad experience in the promotion of SFM, forest conservation, poverty alleviation and forest governance, the members of the CPF can greatly facilitate comprehensive approaches to the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

6. A related concern that has arisen within FAO and other members of the CPF is the use of "sustainable forest management" in draft AWG-LCA texts on REDD+ in a way that is inconsistent with the meaning of that term as applied in regional and international forestry fora and processes. A different use of the same term in UNFCCC and in various forestry processes (e.g. UNFF) would certainly lead to confusion at international policy level. The UNFF

Secretariat, on behalf of the CPF, made a submission to the UNFCCC in August 2009¹ which provided the language on SFM adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. FAO prepared and distributed a note on this issue at UNFCCC negotiations held in Bangkok in September 2009. CPF members are also in the process of preparing a policy brief on sustainable forest management in the context of climate change, with the focus of creating a common understanding of SFM.

7. CPF, under the leadership of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) has sponsored a Forestry Day on the occasion of the previous three UNFCCC COPs – Bali, Poznan and Copenhagen. These one-day events have played an important role in raising awareness among climate change negotiators of the roles of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation and the role SFM can play not only in achieving climate change goals but also in sustainable livelihoods, in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and in other development goals. The attendance has continually increased over time, reaching about 1500 participants at Forest Day 3 in Copenhagen. Plans are under way for Forest Day 4 which will be held at COP16 in Mexico and is expected to draw up to 2000 participants.

8. Another joint CPF effort is a study on forest degradation. This effort, which is under the leadership of FAO, seeks to clarify the meaning of forest degradation as relates to various international forest-related processes (UNFF, UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD) and to examine means to assess the degree of degradation and its impact.

9. FAO is actively facilitating exchange of views and experiences on forests and climate change within the forestry community at regional and global levels. Climate change has been included on the agenda of almost all regional forestry commission meetings both in 2008 and 2010. Other meetings have been organized, for example, the recently convened workshop, “Climate change impacts on forest management in Eastern Europe and Central Asia”, held in Sopron, Hungary from 14-16 April. FAO’s objective is to strengthen regional collaboration on forests and climate change issues. The draft text on adaptation in the AWG-LCA calls for the establishment of “regional centres or platforms for climate change adaptation”. The RFCs, including the long experience in regional networks on various aspects of forestry supported by FAO, could be an effective basis for developing regional or sub-regional networks or capacity strengthening projects.

10. Responding to a call from member countries FAO in 2009 initiated the development of two sets of guidelines related to climate change. In collaboration with the National Forest Programme Facility, FAO has initiated an effort to assist countries address emerging policy issues related to forests and climate change through integrating climate change considerations into national forest programmes. These guidelines are being developed through an expert consultation process, informed by the outcomes of five national workshops held from late 2009 through mid 2010. The draft guidelines will be tested during 2010 and 2011 and FAO will seek support to assist countries use these guidelines. The other set of guidelines are being developed in collaboration with ITTO. These address integrating climate change considerations into forest management at the forest management unit level. These will be drafted in 2010 and tested in 2011 in selected countries.

¹ UNFF Secretariat’s submission, on behalf of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests”, to UNFCCC: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/smsn/igo/057.pdf>

11. FAO plays an active role in information generation and dissemination. The UK Forestry Commission and FAO jointly produced in the six official languages of FAO the film “Forests and Climate Change: A Convenient Truth”. FAO issues the monthly newsletter, CLIM-FO-L, which highlights forestry developments in the UNFCCC negotiations, policy relevant scientific literature on forests and climate change, key publications, events, and jobs on forests and climate change. FAO has also produced many information notes and communications materials on climate change and the agricultural sectors (agriculture, forestry and fisheries) and food security as inter-departmental products. To ensure cross sectoral collaboration and to capture synergies and trade-offs a “FAO Profile for Climate Change”² has been developed, which outlines FAO’s priorities for its current and future work on climate change. Communication on climate change issues is done on a forest specific website and on an extensive climate change website. It has also raised awareness of forestry and climate change issues in the World Summit on Food Security held in Rome in November 2009 and regional FAO Commissions. These are opportunities to raise awareness among the broader agricultural community of forestry and climate change issues and links between forestry and agriculture in particular.

12. The UN-REDD Collaborative Partnership on Forests and Climate Change, a partnership of FAO, UNDP and UNEP to assist countries in pilot activities on REDD+ and contributes to the development of national REDD+ strategies. The UN-REDD programme also provides support for development of an international REDD+ mechanism and has an active outreach function which raises awareness of REDD+, SFM and the need to take a more comprehensive approach to REDD+ actions which look at cross-sectoral linkages and a land-based approach to climate change mitigation.

Issues for the consideration of the NAFC members

13. Members may wish to describe their own outreach strategy and approaches to communicate the potential of forests in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

14. Members may wish to provide their views on FAO, in conjunction with its various partners, on what is being done to communicate the role of forest in climate change adaptation and mitigation to the public and decision-makers.

² FAO Profile for Climate Change: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i1323e/i1323e00.htm>