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XIV WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS: REVIEW OF KEY OUTCOMES AND MESSAGES

1. Nearly 4,000 participants from 142 countries met at the XIV World Forestry Congress on 7–11 September 2015 in Durban, South Africa – for the first time on the African continent – in a spirit of inclusiveness and with a willingness to learn from each other, share diverse points of view and gain new perspectives.
2. The Congress produced three outcome documents, available at the Congress website¹:
 - a) Durban Declaration - 2050 vision for forests and forestry;
 - b) Message from XIV World Forestry Congress to the United Nations General Assembly Summit for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and
 - c) Message on from the XIV World Forestry Congress on Climate Change to the 21st Conference of parties of the Unities Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
3. The Durban Declaration calls for new partnerships among the forest, agriculture, finance, energy, water and other sectors, and engagement with indigenous peoples and local communities. It calls for further investment in forest education; communication; capacity building; research, and the creation of jobs, especially for young people. It also points out that gender equality is fundamental, with women participating fully in decision making on forestry.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/world-forestry-congress/outcome>

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4. In summary, the new vision for forests and forestry sets a way of contributing to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and a sustainable future to 2050 and beyond. The vision emphasises that:

- Forests are fundamental for food security and improved livelihoods. They will increase the resilience of communities by providing food, wood energy, shelter, fodder and fibre; generating income and employment to allow communities and societies to prosper; harbouring biodiversity; and supporting sustainable agriculture and human wellbeing by stabilizing soils and climate and regulating water flows.
- Integrated approaches to land use provide a way forward for improving policies and practices to: address the drivers of deforestation; address conflicts over land use; capitalize on the full range of economic, social and environmental benefits from integrating forests with agriculture; and maintain multiple forest services in the landscape context.
- Forests are an essential solution to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Sustainably managed forests will increase the resilience of ecosystems and societies and optimize the role of forests and trees in absorbing and storing carbon while also providing other environmental services.

5. The message on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recaps that the need to sustainably manage forests is clearly stated in SDG 15, and in the SDG 6 target on protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems. Moreover, due to their multi-functionality, forests have a role to play in achieving several of the other SDGs, including those related to ending poverty, achieving food security, promoting sustainable agriculture, ensuring access to sustainable energy for all, and combating climate change. To successfully implement the SDGs, forests and forestry need to be mainstreamed into strategies for sustainable development at both the international and national levels.

6. FAO and other relevant international organizations stand ready to support strengthening the contributions of forests to the SDGs by making available data and information, providing technical support and promoting best practices and dialogue.

7. The message on climate change emphasises that policies and responses to climate change present opportunities for forests, such as new and additional sources of financing and increased political support for forest governance and stakeholder engagement; and that forests can significantly contribute to climate change mitigation through Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+).

8. Acknowledging the urgency of addressing climate change threats, the XIV World Forestry Congress recommends to: increase understanding among governments and other stakeholders of climate change, with particular attention to forest-dependent communities and indigenous peoples, and to address climate change in the wider context of sustainable development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; promote partnerships and south-south exchanges; continue increasing the availability and quality of information in order to meet multiple objectives of climate change adaptation and mitigation; encourage the assessment and communication of progress in climate change mitigation and adaptation, including by the more coordinated and effective mobilization of diverse financial resources.

9. Held under the theme “Addressing climate change through sustainable forest management”, keys messages from the Special Africa Day events reminded the Congress participants about the start of journey towards “Africa 2063 Agenda” and called for Africans to translate the principles of “the Africa we want” into concrete and actionable programmes in the forestry and natural resource management sectors.

10. The Africa Day events further underlined the role that forests, trees outside forests and sustainable management of forests can play in reducing vulnerability to climate change, and the opportunities it provides to achieve in food security, economic development and employment creation

for African people including youth and women. In addition, it was noted that addressing deforestation, forest and land degradation requires adoption and up scaling of forest restoration and forests rehabilitation technologies and approaches. The day called for :

- Multisectoral integrated approaches of sustainable management of forest resources;
- Technological innovations and strengthening in the forestry sector;
- Further investment and financing for Sustainable forest management.

11. The XIV World Forestry Congress marked the launch of The Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015². The findings of FRA are brought to the attention of the Commission under a separate agenda item.

12. The week of rich technical discussions among various stakeholders in Durban has inspired a reflection on the forest definition. FAO will be setting up a process to determine how “forest” could be described better including its various functions.

13. World Forestry Congresses serve as fora for the exchange of views and experiences and for robust debate on key aspects of forests and forestry, leading to recommendations applicable at all levels, from local to global, as appropriate. Given the technical nature of the Congress, the outcome documents reflect a diverse set of viewpoints of the participants in the XIV World Forestry Congress.

14. Yet the Congress outcomes could serve as a useful input to orient the future work by FAO on forestry, prioritising work on food security and livelihoods, better integrating forests with other land uses; and ensuring forests continue to provide a range of products and services, including climate change mitigation.

15. The next World Forestry Congress is expected to be held in 2021. The official process to bid for hosting the next Congress will be launched by the end of 2015 and decision on the host country is expected to be made by the Council at its 155th session on 5-9 December 2016.

16. More information on the XIV World Forestry Congress and its rich and inclusive programme with various sessions, events, media coverage as well as more detailed outcomes can be found at www.fao.org/forestry/wfc and www.wfc2015.org.za

17. Points for consideration

The Commission is invited to:

- welcome the outcome documents of the XIV World Forestry Congress and reflect on how the outcomes may influence the orientation of the future work by FAO and UNECE in the region;
- provide guidance, as necessary, for the further dissemination of the outcomes of the congress and for the effective implementation of the recommendations included in the outcome documents by FAO, UNECE and other relevant parties;
- recommend the 23rd session of the Committee on Forestry to build on and incorporate the outcome of the congress in its guidance for FAO and member countries.

² <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4793e.pdf>