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AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

TWENTIETH SESSION

Nairobi, Kenya, 1 - 5 February 2016

SECRETARIAT REPORT ON FAO RESPONSES TO THE REQUESTS FROM THE NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

1. The Nineteenth Session of the Commission made some requests/recommendations for the attention of members, FAO and the Committee on Forestry (COFO). This document presents the actions that FAO has taken to implement the recommendations directed to it.

The Commission:

Requested FAO to build on and support on-going initiatives in the region, including country to country knowledge exchange and the sub-regional programme on forests for food security being developed through the auspices of COMIFAC and the recently adopted Forest Convergence Plan for West Africa by the ECOWAS ministerial technical committee in charge of forestry and wildlife.

2. FAO supported the African Union Commission to launch the inception activities of the new FAO-EU-ACP Project “Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSI)”, and the “Monitoring for Environment in Africa” initiative for Africa. For Eastern Africa, FAO conducted a study on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) for timber movement in East Africa from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the greater lakes region. It collaborated with the East Africa Community Secretariat (EAC) on Climate Smart Agriculture with emphasis on trees and agroforestry practices.

3. FAO supported the development and technical validation of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) sub-regional programme on forests for food security and nutrition (FSN) on 22-23 June 2015 in Douala, Cameroun. The final version of the programme was submitted for

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validation to the COMIFAC Secretariat. The COMIFAC sub-regional dialogue on FSN was undertaken through the COMIFAC working group on Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFP) while the national policy dialogue on FSN was done with the national consultative committees.

4. In West Africa, FAO completed the National Forest Policy updates for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) member countries, and developed a sub-regional strategy for enhancing the participation of civil society actors in forest policy formulation.

Requested that FAO strengthens partnerships with sub-regional economic integration organizations (e.g. SADC, ECOWAS) which could act as a channel in supporting Member countries.

5. In collaboration with the African Union, the FAO Regional Office for Africa has formulated and approved a new TCP project (TCP/RAF/3508) entitled: “Strengthening the capacities of member states of the African Union, and the Regional Economic Communities to sustainably manage and develop their forestry sectors for social and economic development and to provide long-term environmental protection”. One of the main expected outputs of this project is the development of a sustainable forest management framework programme in Africa to respond to one of the outcomes of the Malabo Summit.

6. At sub-regional level, in 2015 the FAO Subregional Office for Central Africa involved COMIFAC and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in its priorities’ identification. In eastern Africa, FAO has engaged in technical work with the African Forest Forum (AFF) in establishing the Forestry Association/network and collaborated on climate change, forest plantations and planted forests, and information dissemination. While in West Africa, FAO is directly supporting the implementation of the West Africa Forest Convergence Plan, led by the ECOWAS. FAO has been tasked to lead one of the seven thematic areas titled “Forest Management and Reforestation”.

Encouraged FAO to use all opportunities available to further disseminate the outcomes of the International Conference on Forests for Food Security and Nutrition and create deeper understanding of these issues.

7. The sub-regional programme on Forests for Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) is considered as the main framework to translate into actions the outcomes of the International Conference on Forests for FSN in Central Africa.

8. Contribution of forests to FSN was brought into the multi-stakeholder policy dialogues during the 22nd session of COFO and the 41st session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS41) and the XIV World Forestry Congress (WFC), side events were organized at both occasions. CFS41 selected the topic: “Sustainable Forestry for Food Security and Nutrition” for the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) Report for 2017. A Sub-theme dialogue on “Forests for Food Security” was organized during the WFC, and was considered as one of the three key outcomes of the Congress.

Requested that FAO support on-going initiatives on forest ecosystem management issues, assist in their studies and share information, available data and results of research.

9. FAO published the Guidelines for the formulation of community-based action plans for addressing the Human-Wildlife conflict at local level.

10. FAO is supporting countries in eastern Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda in conducting their national forest assessments as part of their national REDD+ strategy and programme. Kenya has received support through a GEF grant in the preparation of the full project investment entitled “Development of SFM and Support to REDD+ for Dryland Forests”. In Ethiopia, a project entitled “Implementation of a national forest monitoring and MRV system for REDD+ readiness in Ethiopia” was launched and Ethiopia has also benefited from FAO collaboration with CIFOR-Ethiopia on

REDD+ policy, legal and institutions framework. Moreover, FAO continues to provide support to Ethiopia in the implementation of its GGWSI National Action Plan.

11. In collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the International Tropical Timber Organization, FAO's Subregional Office for Southern Africa organized a "sub-regional workshop on Forest products Statistics for Southern Africa", in Johannesburg, 24-26 November 2014.

12. In West Africa, FAO is assisting nine countries with the ongoing sub-regional assessment at country level where needed, it also helps in defining challenges and opportunities in the areas of National Forest Monitoring Systems and Reference Emission levels with a view to proposing options to support REDD+ readiness in these areas. FAO is also providing support to Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and Togo on their REDD+ processes.

Requested FAO to support countries to develop necessary technical and institutional capacities to systematically value the contribution of forests and wildlife resources to national economies and to local livelihoods.

13. FAO has released the "Global guidelines for the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes in drylands: building resilience and benefiting livelihoods".

14. In eastern Africa, FAO undertook baseline studies on NWFP management capacity in Burundi and Rwanda along with National Strategies and Action Plans on NWFP; and an extension manual on Prosopis (invasive tree species) management is ready for publishing. Along the Kagera River Basin, a transboundary agro-ecosystems project is being implemented to help combat land degradation, rehabilitate degraded lands and achieve local and global environmental benefits which include biodiversity conservation, protection of international waters and mitigating the effects of climate change through enhanced carbon sequestration.

15. FAO organized a regional workshop on "Improving the production and marketing of Gum Arabic and Gum Resins: Empowering Women and Enhancing Climate Change Resilience in the Drylands of Africa" with the view to improving livelihoods in the gum producing areas.

16. FAO also provided technical support to African countries to help them create/improve their environmental policy, their legislation and institution as well as enable them to develop small scale forest enterprises. The following accomplishments have been achieved in this regards:

- Stock taking studies were conducted in Cameroon, Ghana, the Gambia, Congo DRC Republic of Congo and Gabon on the commercialization of timber from community forest enterprises;
- An expert meeting attended by 30 participants from thirteen African countries took place in Douala, Cameroon on 18-20 November. Experts discussed and agreed on the right conditions, incentives and technical support needed for sustainable small forest enterprises to significantly improve the livelihoods of rural communities, reduce poverty and become the drivers of local economies in Africa;
- Capacity building/ trainings of trainers on Market analysis and development (MA&D)" in Zambia involving 15 participants selected from government, non-governmental organization, civil society and private sector to master FAO's MA&D approach. Participants started training Zambian smallholders and community groups targeted by the Green Jobs project to develop sound small scale forest-based enterprises, improve their livelihoods and reduce poverty;
- Formulation of the Sawlog Production Grant Scheme 3 (SPGS III) with the aim of increasing incomes of rural population through commercial tree planting by medium and large scale private sector actors and local communities, while at the same time mitigating climate change effects through intensive afforestation.

17. At national level:

- FAO continues to implement the NWFP Project and is specifically involved in activities related to local livelihoods in Burundi, Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea, Chad and Sao Tome and Principe.
- A study on the contribution of forest plantation to national economy was commissioned by FAO through the project « Formulation and implementation of national reforestation programme in Togo (TCP/TOG/3502) ».
- FAO supported Benin to develop its national strategy for the valorization of NWFPs. A national workshop gathering key institutions and stakeholders was organized in Cotonou and the strategy has been adopted by the government to ensure sustainable use and valorization of NWFP in a way that will generate sustainable income, improve the livelihoods of the rural communities and reduce poverty.
- FAO developed a 4 year GEF project on Sustainable management of forest under the authority of cameroonian councils that will help the country ensure sustainable use of forest resources, carbon enhancement, biodiversity conservation as well as sustainable income generation for the local communities to improve their livelihoods and reduce poverty.

Requested FAO to enhance efforts to popularize the voluntary guidelines and the guidelines on forest tenure (VGGT) in countries and provide support on implementation of activities aimed at strengthening land and tree tenure issues.

18. Technical workshops on the Voluntary Guideline and on tenure governance were organized in Gabon, Congo and the Central African Republic. The aim of these workshops was to make the participants familiar with the VGGT.

19. Technical work with Land Policy Initiative (LPI) of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) on land policy and tenure was supported with the aim of having integrated implementation of the AU's Framework & Guidelines on Land and FAOs' VGGT. LPI Expert Group Meetings were also supported in the sub-region by providing key input regarding incorporation of 'land issues' in the post-2015 development agenda as well as the development of key messages regarding women and land in the Sustainable Development Goals.

20. FAO developed a VGGT-based forest tenure assessment framework that helps countries assess the level of alignment of their policies, laws, institutions, and tenure administration practices to the good governance principles of the Guidelines, and to identify actions for strengthening tenure following the Guidelines. Testing of the framework is on-going in Uganda, where under a VGGT forest tenure programme, FAO supported the Ministry of Water and Environment to help implement provisions on community and private forestry by: i) enhancing public awareness and understanding of the VGGT and other related national guidelines and legislation; ii) developing popular versions of community and private forestry registration guidelines; iii) training communities and individual forest owners in the development of forest management plans; and iv) helping communities and private forest owners in registering their forests with the government.

21. In Sierra Leone, under a VGGT forest tenure programme, FAO is supporting the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests, and Food Security in developing a national strategy/concept note for community-based forestry, and associated national action plan for implementation.

The Commission recommended that FAO and Members strengthen forestry communication at all levels in the continent to enhance public participation in forest and wildlife management and to increase their profile in the government systems.

22. FAO has provided wide support in profiling the forest sector at regional and sub-regional levels.

23. Forestry information materials were developed and disseminated widely at national, regional and international levels; publications from all sub-regions and samples of NWFPs from Central Africa were displayed at the XIV WFC. In collaboration with Heads of Forestry from SADC countries, the Southern Africa region prepared and presented a publication “Southern African Forestry and People”.

24. FAO hosted a regional African workshop on “Forest Communication in a Digital World” for members of the African Forest Communicators Network in Wilderness, South Africa, 4-6 February 2014. The workshop strengthened the African network and developed technical skills and identified emerging good practices in digital communications using success stories and case studies. FAO also facilitated two workshops to develop and strengthen forestry communication capacity in the Mediterranean and Near East region in Rabat, Morocco, from 13-15 May 2014 and 9-11 November 2015. Countries including Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia agreed to a series of commitments for the network, which included defining a common vision to improve region-wide cooperation on communication issues and stepping up communication on the need to boost the resilience of the region’s forests to increasing threats.

25. FAO ran a well-attended session on Connecting forests and people – building capacity to communicate at the XIV WFC on 8 September 2015. The session heard from experts in both private and public sectors on effective communications strategies and presented a ten-point plan for good forestry communications. FAO and the Government of South Africa also facilitated an eight-day #Forests2015 social media boot camp at the XIV WFC. Attended by more than 50 participants, the boot camp provided three days of training in social media tools and strategies in addition to five days of hands-on practical experience of live social reporting from the Congress. The Congress #Forests2015 blog to which many of the boot camp participants contributed was viewed over 100 000 times, and over 30 000 #Forests2015 tweets reached 32 million Twitter accounts.

26. At sub-regional levels, member countries were supported to provide national forestry information that fed into the Forest Resources Assessment 2015 global report. A sub-regional publication from East Africa is being prepared on forestry contribution to national economy and trade in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda and in West Africa, training sessions by video conference were organized on (i) Baseline survey; (ii) Data collection linked to Country Programming Frameworks; and (iii) preparation of the Medium Term Report to improve the reporting capacity of country offices.

Recommended that FAO should support the development of appropriate tools, methods and mechanisms for improved recognition and valorization of environmental services benefits of forests and wildlife resources for the benefit of forest dependent people and local communities.

27. In a bid to promote revenue-earning non-consumptive uses of forests for sustainable forest management, FAO Regional Office for Africa has spearheaded the preparation of a practical guide for the promotion of ‘payment for forest environmental services’. This guide will be printed in 2016 and made available to members.

28. Studies were undertaken on forest contribution to economy/GDP in Ethiopia and Kenya and reports have been produced. A sub-regional report entitled: “Contribution of Forest sectors to GDP in East African countries” has been compiled.

29. Djibouti was assisted in the development of a national strategy, and extension manual for sustainable management of *Prosopis* spp (invasive species). Djibouti also received support for the Extension, Management and Development of *Boswellia* spp.

30. Somalia is receiving support to develop its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and 5th National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity.

31. Support is being provided to Rwanda’s costing of its Green Growth Climate Resilience Strategy, related to Sustainable Forestry, Agro-Forestry and Biomass Programme of Action Plan.

Requested FAO to share more knowledge on the role of forestry in food security and poverty reduction and to increase the visibility of FAO work on reducing rural poverty, especially the vital contribution of forestry in rural development and poverty reduction.

32. The Regional Office for Africa through its Nature & Faune Journal continues to enhance the visibility of the forest sector and profiling women and youth participation in natural resource management and youth employment and sustainable forest management.

33. Through the Subregional office for eastern Africa, FAO: (i) developed a draft guidelines, training modules and manuals promotion and utilization of Bamboo resources in Rwanda; (ii) established experimental seedling nurseries for rural communities in Burundi and Rwanda; (iii) produced materials for bamboo promotion in Kenya and Ethiopia ; (iv) established small scale forestry enterprises to create rural job opportunities and increase income for women, youth and indigenous communities; (v) and supported the development of value addition in NWFP management models.

34. Knowledge on the role of forestry in food security was shared and awareness raised through a COFO22 side event in collaboration with COMIFAC (June 2014), national workshop in The Gambia (December 2014), CFS41 side event (October 2014), 14th WFC sub-theme dialogues and several side events (September 2015), Forest Landscape Restoration Forum (September 2015).

35. A framework to help countries to assess the effectiveness of community based forestry has been developed which includes important indicators for assessing the contribution of community based forestry to the socio-economic situation of rural people.

Requested that FAO, in collaboration with the other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW), support on-going initiatives and assist in studies on this issue as well as share information, available data and results of research and best practices.

36. A set of Guidelines for improving administration of sustainable hunting in sub-Saharan Africa was produced by FAO sub-regional office for southern Africa and launched at the WFC. FAO is working together with CIFOR, CIRAD and Wildlife Conservation Society in designing a regional/global project with the aim to address the bush meat crisis issues through a holistic approach of the meat supply.

Requested that FAO increases its support for sustainable forest and wildlife management at national levels, control of illegal logging and other illegal practices including cross border trafficking, as well as public-private collaboration that would not allow for any land grabbing activities.

37. In southern Africa, two technical publications on illegal hunting and bushmeat trade were prepared. In West Africa, FAO is implementing the GEF project on “development of a transfrontier conservation area linking forest reserves areas in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire”. Moreover, in eastern Africa, support is being provided to Uganda in the development and implementation of National Agricultural Adaptation Plans and National Mitigation Actions which focuses on Sustainable charcoal production and sustainable forest management as well as Community Tree Growing and Land Degradation Management. In partnership with the Ministry of Water and Environment, an intervention in the promotion of bioenergy plantations and improved charcoal production technologies is being implemented. At the regional level, FAO supported the organization of the International Conference on Illegal Exploitation and Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa, which was held in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, from 27-30 April 2015.

Requested FAO to:

- **promote a balance between forestry and agriculture, particularly between increasing agricultural production and sustainable management of natural resources;**

- **enhance forest and land restoration and agroforestry;**
- **continue to address the issue of agriculture as main driver of deforestation**

38. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, and Sao Tome and Principe received assistance on the forest and landscape restoration (FLR) approach. Requests were received for project formulation and submission to GEF funding under the umbrella programme “The Restoration Initiative” (TRI) in the central Africa sub-region. Similarly, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Uganda were supported in the implementation of FLR activities within the Global Partnerships for Forest and Landscape Restoration (GPFLR). In addition, in collaboration with CBD, the Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative and with financial support from the FLR Mechanism, FAO co-organized a capacity building workshop on Ecosystem Restoration in Ghana in October 2015.

39. FAO provided support to the forest sector review process in Ethiopia. Support is being provided in the enhancement of national capacity to promote climate-smart natural resource management through various projects such as the Mitigation of Climate Change in Agriculture programme and Conservation Agriculture.

40. Support is being provided to South Sudan in promoting the planting of Acacia Senegal for purposes of Gum Arabic production as well as for soil conservation and shelterbelts to reverse desertification in some areas. As a result the country has been focusing on community woodlots, agroforestry, shelterbelts and improved charcoal production. Kenya’s National Conservation Agriculture with Trees (CAWT) Task Force was supported to promote knowledge and awareness of climate-smart practices such as conservation agriculture and agroforestry.

41. The FAO Subregional Office for Southern Africa is supporting agroforestry projects in Seychelles and Comoros. Similarly, Burkina Faso is being supported on “Development of national strategy and action plan for sustainable development”.

Urged FAO to revise the Forestry Strategy in the light of the evolving new Strategic Framework of the Organization.

42. Based on this guidance the secretariat presented this issue for consideration by all Regional Forestry Commission in a common document. For the Commission this will be addressed under Agenda item 18 Input to COFO Agenda.

Requested FAO to support the development of a forest-related SDG to ensure continued and strengthened presence of forests in broader development goals.

43. FAO worked with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to provide information for the negotiations of the Open Working Group. The information was welcomed and used by negotiators and helped Goal 6 and Goal 15 to get their final form.

Recommended the continuation of the design and development of the SFM toolbox, and the subsequent translation of the approved methodology.

Requested FAO to establish a mechanism for reviewing contributions from countries, regional and international parties and to firmly manage the quality control processing the further design and development of the toolbox. Efforts should also be made to have the sustainable forest management (SFM) toolbox accessible and usable by remotely located stakeholders who may not have access to large bandwidth internet connection. Additionally, a module on sustainable wildlife management should be introduced in the toolbox.

44. A detailed report on progress is attached as Annex I.

Requested FAO to ensure that the national forest assessment voluntary guidelines support existing guidelines and other protocols for forest monitoring, ensuring they are integrated into

forest management principles that looks into food security with emphasis on both Forest and Non Wood Forest Products.

45. Ethiopia received support to develop a national strategy on forest protection. The strategy looked into major challenges of forest pathology and entomology in the country, the existing capacity in the fields of forest pathology and entomology, as well as the way forward to establish professional networks and improve capacity in the sector.

46. A detailed report on progress in developing the Voluntary Guidelines for national Forest Monitoring can be found in Annex II.

47. A progress report on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources (GPA-FGR) is attached as Annex III.

Points for Consideration

48. The Commission may wish to invite

1) Countries to:

- promote the use of the SFM Toolbox to support planning and implementation of SFM-related programmes/initiatives, for institutional strengthening, capacity development and others; and to provide further feedback to the Toolbox, including new tools and SFM cases.
- implement the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources;
- support, as appropriate, the regional networks on forest genetic resources and forest invasive species, and contribute to the activities of these networks to strengthen regional collaboration in these areas.

2) FAO to:

- assess the need for reconsidering and strengthening the contribution of forests and forestry to sustainable development so that it could support fully the achievement of the Strategic Objectives and strengthen the contribution to the implementation of the SDGs by reviewing and revising the Forest Strategy and make a recommendation to COFO in this regard.
- Continue supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources.
- Continue support the development and dissemination of the SFM Toolbox.

ANNEX I**SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT TOOLBOX****A. Background**

The Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Toolbox was developed in response to the request of the Committee on Forestry.

The aim of this note is to summarize the key issues in the further development of the SFM Toolbox.

B. What it is

The SFM Toolbox is a comprehensive technical package of knowledge tools, good practices, and examples of their application to facilitate the implementation of SFM under varied contexts. Its target audience is primarily (public and private) forest and land managers, and those who support them including extension services, civil-society organizations and non-governmental organizations as well as private sector associations.

The Toolbox has the following objectives: (i) increase capacities to effectively implement SFM by providing practical knowledge, tools and experiences at local and landscape levels; (ii) support forest managers and other stakeholders in progressing towards SFM with a more comprehensive approach; (iii) connect the different areas of FAO expertise related to SFM to facilitate its integration in a landscape approach to natural resources management; and (iv) identify and address knowledge and tool gaps, as well as possible incoherencies and conflicts.

The Toolbox is a user-friendly, interactive web-based platform, responsive to user's interests and needs. It includes:

- modules on SFM thematic areas, comprising (i) an overview of basic knowledge; (ii) more in-depth information; (iii) links to related tools; and (iv) links to SFM cases/examples and further references;
- a database of SFM tools and cases/examples that have been collated and arranged in an easy-to-access format; and
- a discussion forum.

The Toolbox uses knowledge references, tools and cases produced by FAO, Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) members, other partners and member countries. The scope of the Toolbox is global (for all types of forests) however it will be an evolving set that will also include regional and national resources.

The development of the SFM Toolbox aligns with FAO's mandate and role as a knowledge organization. FAO, in collaboration with its many partners, creates, compiles and shares critical information about SFM, and facilitates a dialogue between those who possess the knowledge and those who need it, aiming at "turning knowledge into action". The Toolbox is included in the Organization's Strategic Objective 2, outcome 1 under Products & Services 5 *Knowledge management: Participatory assessment, development, and promotion of mechanisms for collating, managing and sharing knowledge on sustainable production and natural resources management practices.*

The SFM Toolbox website has been designed with the intention of allowing best interaction with users. It is available at <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-forest-management/toolbox/>.

C. Current status and main issues

The SFM Toolbox is a work in progress so its further development between July 2014 and August 2015 continued with the preparation of 15 additional modules, the addition of tools and cases to the existing modules (it currently contains 620 tools and 524 cases) and the improvement of the web-platform (e.g., usability, simplified registration system, revision of module filters, video translation, etc.).

The testing of the website is ongoing (in early 2015, a heuristic evaluation focusing on the user experience and information architecture of the Toolbox; and during the XIV WFC a user interface testing with a broad spectrum of participants) and the results will contribute to the improvement of the accessibility and usability of the site (e.g. retrieving and utilizing tools, modules and cases on specific forest management issues) and to users' understanding of what it offers.

The SFM Toolbox continues to be disseminated and promoted through (demo) presentations in international and national meetings, flyers (in EN, FR and SP), links with other online websites/tools and communications in various networks (e.g. TECA, NWFP, FRA, inFO news...). Since its launch in June 2014 there have been 14,500 users and over 55,000 page views.

The SFM Toolbox is being increasingly promoted as a key reference of FAO's work on several thematic areas as well as a learning source for project design and implementation.

D. Points for consideration

The Commission may wish to invite countries to promote the use of the SFM Toolbox to support planning and implementation of SFM-related programs/initiatives, for institutional strengthening, capacity development and others; and to provide further feedback to the Toolbox, including new tools and SFM cases.

The Commission may wish to recommend FAO to continue support the development and dissemination of the toolbox.

ANNEX II**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON NATIONAL FOREST MONITORING****A. Background**

During the Twenty-First session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO 21), member countries recommended that FAO continue to support countries strengthen national forest information systems and requested FAO to “work in close collaboration with member countries and relevant organizations to prepare a set of voluntary guidelines on national forest monitoring, which takes into account the requirements for REDD+ reporting and is in line with the principles and goals of the Forest Instrument”¹.

The preparation process started just after the request from COFO 21, with the route map and the definition of the structure of the document. A two phase approach was defined to divide the process, Phase I comprised the development of section I and II with the definition of national forest monitoring, the scope and the principles; Phase II comprising of a compilation of good practices and technical recommendations on national forest monitoring.

COFO 22 endorsement of section I and II prepared in Phase I was an important step and milestone in the preparation process and highly related with the final version of the document. These two first sections provide background, the definition of forest monitoring and the principles for a national forest monitoring system which are the key elements guiding the technical recommendations and further development of the document.

As defined in the first sections of the voluntary guidelines, national forest monitoring is viewed as a comprehensive process that includes the collection, analysis and dissemination of forest-related data and the derivation of information and knowledge at regular intervals to allow monitoring of changes over time, and which focuses on national level data and information on forests and trees outside forests, their condition, values and uses. The timely, relevant and reliable information obtained supports forest-related decision making at the national and sub-national levels.

Fourteen principles were introduced in these sections: country ownership and responsibility; legal basis; national forest monitoring needs a landscape view; national forest monitoring should be institutionalized; research infrastructure and capacity building should be taken in consideration; it needs to be a participatory discussion process among national stakeholders on the scope and objectives of forest monitoring; the national forest monitoring must satisfy national level information needs; there should be integration of and consistency with existing information sources; a flexible approach in order to integrate emerging issues and allow for periodic revisions; a national forest monitoring should follow a multi-purpose approach; the feasibility including cost-efficiency should be taken in consideration; it should include a well-defined data and information sharing policy; has credibility through transparency and quality; and promote collaboration at international level.

This note provides an overview of the process up today and the next steps to finalize the document.

B. Progress to date and next steps

The development and dissemination of the voluntary guidelines on national forest monitoring was included in FAO’s new strategic framework and the programme of work for the present biennium under Strategic Objective 2: Increased and improved provision of goods and services from agriculture,

¹ FAO (Food And Agriculture Organization of The United Nations). 2012. Report on the Committee on Forestry, Twenty-First Session: COFO 2012/REP paragraf 50, page 7. Rome, Italy. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/026/me988e.pdf>

forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner, output 2.4.2: methodologies, norms, standards, definitions and other tools for the collection, management, aggregation and analysis of data are formulated and disseminated.

The first two sections were endorsed by the COFO 22 during the last session. For the preparation of these two sections, inputs from FAO member countries and relevant organizations were included, based on discussions, feedback and exchanges during the last six Regional Forestry Commissions (2013-2014), the FRA regional meetings and different technical meetings held during 2013 and 2014, and inputs from several member countries during COFO 22.

The section III is currently being finalized by FAO in collaboration with international experts. The section is based on a thorough literature review as well as on inputs provided in international workshops and technical meetings, which have taken place in 2014 and 2015. Valuable contribution and advice has been received also from many institutional stakeholders.

In October 2015, an online consultation on the final section was open for a wider number of experts for a drafting process allowing them to contribute and share opinions; thus taking part in the final stage of preparation of the document. This process allowed broader awareness raising and buy in on the voluntary guidelines by national stakeholders. The online consultation and the draft version of the document will be available at <http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/forum/discussions/forestry>.

As a final step of the preparation of the document, a face-to-face meeting took place in November 2015 to gather feedback from international experts and potential users of the voluntary guidelines.

ANNEX III**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE
CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST
GENETIC RESOURCES****A. Introduction**

In 2007, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) requested FAO to prepare *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources (SoW-FGR)*² and established, in 2009, an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (ITWG-FGR) to guide the preparation of this report. In 2011, the CGRFA also requested FAO to prepare a synthesis paper on priority areas for action based on the information gathered for the SoW-FGR and the ITWG-FGR to review it. In April 2013, the CGRFA agreed the identified priority areas as *the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (GPA-FGR)*³ and in June 2013, the FAO Conference adopted the document⁴.

The GPA-FGR identifies four priority areas for action: 1) Improving the availability of, and access to, information regarding FGR, 2) Conservation of FGR (in situ and ex situ), 3) Sustainable use, development and management of FGR, and 4) Policies, institutions and capacity building. Under these areas, the GPA-FGR includes a total of 27 strategic priorities for action at the national, regional and international levels. The relative priority of each strategic priority and associated actions may differ significantly in different countries and regions. The GPA-FGR is a voluntary and non-binding document that can be updated by the CGRFA. The implementation of the GPA-FGR will strengthen sustainable management of forests and contribute towards the post-2015 development agenda and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Activities on FGR are an integral part of the FAO's work in forestry and they are regularly reported to the Committee on Forestry (COFO) and the Regional Forestry Commissions. At its 22nd Session in June 2014, COFO welcomed the SoW-FGR and the GPA-FGR, and acknowledged the importance of FAO's work in this area. The COFO recommended FAO to support the implementation of the GPA-FGR, finalize the draft strategy for the implementation of the GPA-FGR for review by the CGRFA, encourage continued cooperation in addressing the global priorities of the GPA-FGR, and support countries as appropriate to address the strategic priorities of the GPA-FGR. This document presents information on follow-up to the GPA-FGR since the 22nd Session of COFO.

B. Follow-up to the Global Plan of Action

At its 3rd Session in July 2014, the ITWG-FGR considered the draft implementation strategy for the GPA-FGR and made several recommendations⁵. The ITWG-FGR recommended that FAO encourage its Members to develop national plans of action for the conservation, sustainable use and development of FGR. It also stressed the need to create linkages between these national plans and the National Forest Programmes, the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and other relevant planning processes.

At its 15th Session in January 2015, the CGRFA further considered the draft implementation strategy for the GPA-FGR and adopted the implementation strategy⁶. It includes seven areas of action: 1) Advocacy and international awareness on FGR, 2) Development and support of relevant global and

² SoW-FGR. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3825e.pdf>

³ GPA-FGR. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3849e.pdf>.

⁴ C 2013/REP, paragraph 77. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/028/mh093e.pdf>.

⁵ CGRFA/WG-FGR-3/14/Report, paragraphs 13-15. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml401e.pdf>.

⁶ CGRFA-15/15/Report, Appendix E. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm660e.pdf>.

regional networks, 3) Supporting countries in the development of national and regional strategies for the implementation of the GPA-FGR, 4) Supporting countries in securing adequate and sustainable funding for the implementation of the GPA-FGR, 5) Development of international technical standards for FGR and support to implement them, 6) Funding strategy for the implementation of the GPA-FGR, and 7) Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the GPA-FGR and the status and trends of FGR. The CGRFA stressed that the strategy is fundamental for achieving the goals of the GPA-FGR and called for the implementation of the strategy in coordination with the COFO and relevant international organizations.

FAO has continued cooperation with relevant partners, such as Biodiversity International and the World Agroforestry Centre, in addressing the global priorities of the GPA-FGR. This cooperation was crucial for the preparation of the SoW-FGR and related thematic studies, and it will be also crucial for the implementation of the GPA-FGR at the international level. In December 2014, the results of the earlier collaboration were published in a special issue of *Forest Ecology and Management*⁷

. The global reviews on various issues related to FGR provide valuable information for the implementation of the GPA-FGR in addition to the SoW-FGR. FAO is also strengthening its collaboration on FGR with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other relevant members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), as well as various international and regional organizations.

Regional coordination is necessary for effective implementation of regional and national priorities of the GPA-FGR as the distribution ranges of forest trees and their genetic resources typically extend beyond individual countries. Regional networks on FGR play a crucial role for this purpose by providing a platform for countries to share experiences, exchange information and develop collaborative actions. In September 2014, the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutes (APAFRI) and Biodiversity International organized, with technical inputs from FAO, a regional workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for the national coordinators of the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN). The workshop prepared a strategy for regional collaboration to implement the GPA-FGR. In October 2014, Biodiversity International organized a similar workshop in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia in collaboration with the Latin America Forest Genetic Resources Network (LAFORGEN), and with financial and technical support from Spain. FAO and its partners are planning to organize similar planning workshops in other regions, subject to the availability of financial resources. In Europe, FAO will continue its long-lasting collaboration with the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN) which has already agreed to contribute to the implementation of the GPA-FGR during its Phase V (2015-2019).

FAO has also contributed to the work of regional networks dedicated to combat invasive species affecting FGR. These networks aim to facilitate sharing of information and mobilizing resources, raising awareness and bringing together experts, institutions and other stakeholders concerned with forest invasive species. In November 2014, FAO organized, in collaboration with the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, a regional seminar in Beijing, China for the national focal points of the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN). FAO and its partners intend to rejuvenate the Forest Invasive Species Network for Africa (FISNA), the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS) and Red de Países del Cono Sur sobre Especies Exóticas Invasoras a Ecosistemas Forestales which includes the South Cone countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) and Bolivia. Furthermore, FAO organized a regional seminar in Budapest, Hungary in June 2015 for European and Central Asian countries to promote the implementation of the phytosanitary standards in forestry. As a follow-up to this meeting, FAO is planning, in collaboration with its partners, to establish a network on forest

⁷Global Forest Genetic Resources : Taking Stock (special issue of *Forest Ecology and Management*) (open access). <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/03781127/333>.

invasive species for Europe and Central Asia. In addition, FAO and its partners are considering initiating a similar network in the Central American and Caribbean region.

Biodiversity International organized, with technical inputs from FAO, a side event on the GPA-FGR during the IUFRO World Congress, held in Salt Lake City, USA in October 2014. In May 2015, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Institute for Forests (EMBRAPA Florestas) and FAO organized an International Symposium on Forest Biotechnology for Smallholders in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil. FAO will continue, together with its partners, contributing to this type of events to facilitate sharing of information and raising awareness on the conservation, sustainable use and development of FGR, subject to the availability of financial resources.

FAO is continuing to explore the interest of different donors to support countries in implementing the GPA-FGR. In collaboration with selected countries and partner organizations, FAO has developed and submitted project proposals to donors and is now waiting for their response. Countries can also seek financial support for relevant projects through the decentralized FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP).

C. Points for consideration

The Regional Forestry Commissions may wish to:

- Recommend that countries take action, as appropriate, to implement the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources;
- Recommend that countries support, as appropriate, the regional networks on FGR and forest invasive species, and contribute to the activities of these networks to strengthen regional collaboration in these areas.

The Regional Forestry Commissions may wish to recommend FAO to:

- Continue supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources.