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COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

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TRANSLATING THE OUTCOME OF RIO+20 INTO ACTION

I. FOREST-RELATED OUTCOMES OF RIO+20

1. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012 to discuss sustainability and agree to common actions on seven major areas. The Conference, known as Rio+20, reviewed progress towards sustainable development goals 20 years after the original 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. The two main themes were: green economy; and the institutional framework for sustainable development. The seven main subject areas discussed were jobs, energy, sustainable cities, food security and sustainable agriculture, water, oceans and disaster readiness. Although forests were not a key focus of the Rio+20 Conference, delegates had an opportunity to reinforce the message that forests and forest products can help address challenges in each of these seven main areas.

2. In its submission to the Rio+20 Conference, FAO, in conjunction with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), stressed the importance of taking a “*landscape approach*” to the management of natural resources. Such an approach works across sectors and institutions to ensure that the environmental, economic and social aspects of forests are taken into account in decision making. The CPF members, with FAO as Chair, noted how forests can help countries to alleviate poverty, meet their Millennium Development Goals, develop rural areas, reduce the risks of climate change, ensure food security and boost agricultural productivity, improve energy availability and maximize trade. They suggested that countries can gain benefits if they move to greener economies, where forests provide bioenergy, ecosystem services, materials for sustainable and energy efficient buildings and improved livelihoods for people living in remote rural areas. To do this, they suggested the following is needed: strengthened forest-related institutions; greater capacity for forest management; education and institutions; payments for ecosystem services; decentralization of forest management rights; adoption of coherent and coordinated policies; and the improvement of value chains.

3. “*The Future We Want*”, the outcome document of Rio+20, contains four paragraphs on forests, stressing that the forest sector has a role to play in a variety of areas, including: the provision of sustainable products and services; reforestation, restoration and afforestation to reverse deforestation; sustainable forest management; the reduction of risks from climate change; and strengthening of cooperation, capacity building and governance. The paragraphs dedicated to forests

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also note the importance of the CPF and its role in working with international processes such as the UN Forum on Forests to promote international forest policy and with countries to promote sustainable forest management.

4. Events organized by FAO and members of the CPF discussed how linkages between forests and agriculture could support sustainability; the role of forests in green economies and sustainable development; and the forestry sector's contribution to the green economy. Finally, the Brazilian Sustainable Development Dialogues collected suggestions from the public about their priorities for the future. Through a public voting process, the public suggested the following for forests: a) restore 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded lands by 2020; b) promote science, technology, innovation and traditional knowledge in order to meet forestry challenges; and c) zero net deforestation by 2020.

II. ACTIONS FOR THE FOREST SECTOR AND FAO

5. Based on the discussions and commitments made at Rio+20, a number of actions could be considered with a particular emphasis on cross-sectoral activities. The following are suggested for consideration by the Committee.

6. **Sustainable forest management and reversing deforestation:** There are guidelines that help countries to implement sustainable forest management in some types of forest.¹ The CPF has also published fact sheets on sustainable forest management that explain how the concept is integrated into a number of other areas. However, there is not one source providing and promoting voluntary guidelines on sustainable forest management in all types of forests. It is proposed, therefore, that FAO Forestry, as the main global technical agency promoting sustainable forest management in all types of forests, should establish such a framework to promote a wider uptake of sustainable forest management techniques and support countries in their efforts to reverse deforestation and forest degradation.

7. Based on FAO's broad expertise in applying sustainable forest management in all types of forests, this framework could include: educational materials and practical tools (e.g. a sustainable forest management toolkit); other materials that countries need to apply sustainable forest management; and web-based platforms and wiki pages that will facilitate implementation. Such a framework would benefit countries by, for example, helping them to meet the policies and measures agreed in the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests.

8. **Reforestation, restoration and afforestation and other land uses:** The Global Partnership for Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) has identified nearly 2 billion hectares of land that can be restored without affecting food security. The UNCCD has also promoted a goal that the world should be "*land degradation neutral*". Considerable support in countries will be required if these initiatives are to achieve their goals. FAO will support the restoration of degraded lands, improving soil quality and water management and will help countries to improve tenure arrangements (e.g. by implementing the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security). FAO will also continue to assist countries to implement their national forest programmes, in line with national policies and FAO's recently developed Country Programming Frameworks.

9. **Forest products and services:** Wood from sustainably managed forests has a vital role to play in sustainable development and in greening the economy. It is a natural and renewable material

¹ ITTO, 1992, Criteria and indicators for the measurement of sustainable tropical forest management, ITTO Policy Development Series No 3, ITTO, Yokohama, Japan.
ITTO, 2002, ITTO guidelines for the restoration, management and rehabilitation of degraded and secondary tropical forests, ITTO Policy Development Series No 13, ITTO, Yokohama, Japan.

that stores carbon and can be easily recycled. The manufacturing of wood products results in low greenhouse gas emissions and supports the livelihoods of numerous people in rural areas. Wood use also provides by far the largest source of revenue for investment in sustainable forest management. As societies become wealthier and more urbanized, demands for energy and construction will increase dramatically. Therefore, countries should consider how wood use can be promoted so that it makes the best possible contribution to the sustainability of these developments.

10. Forests also provide services that are essential for other sectors. For instance, protection of watersheds and soil conservation are just two of the services from forests that deliver benefits to farmers and local communities. Cross sectoral policy coordination is needed to ensure that the value of these services is recognized by forest managers and owners as well as the people who depend on them. This should also ensure that these vital functions of forests are properly supported.

11. **Climate change and enhancement of carbon stocks:** Forests and forest products can sequester and store carbon to mitigate the effects of climate change and produce bioenergy to substitute for fossil fuels. They can also help countries to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of natural disasters, such as adverse weather events. FAO and its partnership with UN-REDD will continue to provide monitoring, assessment and reporting for forest resources worldwide. FAO will also work with the forest industry, particularly through the Advisory Committee on Paper and Wood Products (ACPWP), to design new approaches that enhance the contribution of the sector to climate change mitigation and adaptation and support the provision of forest-related services for local people.

12. **Trade and governance:** For wood products to play a major role in sustainable development, it is essential that they are produced legally and sustainably. Improving forest governance will continue to be a major challenge and opportunity in many countries requiring close attention and efforts at all levels. FAO, through its FLEGT programme, will continue to support countries to ensure that forest products are harvested, transported and produced legally and sustainably and with the support of effective governance mechanisms in countries. FAO will also support national and regional efforts to promote investments in sustainable forest industries and the use of wood products in order to meet the Rio+20 commitments for more sustainable production and consumption.

13. **Forests and food security:** The contribution of forests to food security is mentioned in *"The Future We Want"* and FAO has committed to the UN Secretary General's *"Zero Hunger Challenge"*, which aims to eradicate hunger in the world. Various sources estimate that forests and trees on farms are a direct source of food for close to a billion of the world's poorest people. In addition, two billion people rely on biomass fuels for cooking and heating, most of which is fuelwood and charcoal. Trees and forests also contribute to food security and nutrition in more indirect ways, mainly through income generation and the ecosystem services they provide. However, these contributions are poorly understood, under-estimated and inadequately reflected in many national development and food security strategies. Coupled with poor coordination among sectors at national level, it means that forests are usually not considered in policy decisions related to food security. The linkages between forestry, food security, nutrition, gender equality, sustainable agriculture and rural livelihoods require further exploration, especially if a landscape approach is to be followed. With the objective to enhance the understanding of the important role of forests and trees on farms for food security and nutrition of rural people, and to propose ways to integrate this knowledge in decision making at national and international level, FAO will be organizing an international conference on "Forests for Food Security" in May 2013.

14. **Institutions and partnerships:** The Rio+20 Conference continued to support the integration of all three pillars of sustainable development to strengthen coordination and reduce duplication of efforts at all levels. It also recommended that the Commission on Sustainable Development will be replaced with another global political forum and that UNEP will take a stronger lead on environmental activities. Many of the actions mentioned above will require forest-related institutions to collaborate across sectors and strengthen their capacities to promote the benefits of forests and forest products for sustainable development. Therefore, it will be essential for FAO and other CPF members to build on their comparative strengths and find innovative ways to enhance collaboration and support countries in these efforts.

III. POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

15. The Committee may wish to encourage countries to emphasise and promote the benefits forests provide for sustainable development as part of national and international policy debates.

16. The Committee may wish to request FAO to seek ways to maximize forests' contribution to greening the economy and to invite UNEP, ITTO, regional economic organizations and others to cooperate in this effort;

- Carry out a systematization of existing tools and guidelines for strengthening sustainable forest management, including those that have been developed by FAO and those that have been developed by other organizations.
- Seek ways to maximize forests' contribution to greening the economy and to invite UNEP, ITTO, regional economic organizations and others to cooperate in this effort;
- Enhance the work with CPF partners in the provision of information aimed at increasing awareness, access and impact of guides and tools to support implementation of sustainable forest management.

17. The Committee may wish to recommend that FAO support countries to follow-up on their commitments made at Rio+20, especially in relation to:

- ways in which forestry and agriculture linkages can be strengthened to create more food-secure environments (including any gaps in current knowledge);
- considering the development of a framework for SFM for all types of forests to increase uptake of the concept in countries;
- providing analysis and assistance to countries to improve the sustainability of forest products and help countries raise awareness about the multiple benefits of forest products.

18. The Committee may wish to recommend FAO to strengthen its role as a member and Chair of the CPF in carrying forward its mandate to coordinate and implement global level actions on forests.

19. The Committee may wish to invite countries and partners to contribute to the International Conference on Forests for Food Security to take place at FAO Headquarters in May 2013.