

## 26th Session of the Committee on Forestry

### Item 9.2 Outcomes of the XV World Forestry Congress

The XV World Forestry Congress, originally scheduled for May 2021, was delayed for one year and turned into a hybrid event because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Congress was held on 2-6 May 2022 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. As the first ever hybrid congress it was also the best attended with about 15 000 participants from 160 countries, about 5 000 of them participating virtually. The Congress attracted a record number of speakers and voluntary contributions, and enjoyed a massive media attention, both on traditional and modern platforms.

The Congress considered the most relevant forest-related questions clustered into six sub-themes under the overarching theme of “Building a green, healthy and resilient future with forests”: reversing deforestation and forest degradation; nature-based solutions for climate-change adaptation, mitigation and biodiversity conservation; green pathways to growth and sustainability; forests and human health; forest information and knowledge; and enhancing management and cooperation. Furthermore, particular attention was paid to investments in and finance for forests, forest fires, the post-COVID-19 recovery, as well as the special concerns, opportunities and challenges of youth.

During five days of intense work the Congress generated a robust outcome consisting of the following components:

- Seoul Forest Declaration
- XV World Forestry Congress Action Points
- Ministerial Call on Sustainable Wood
- Work with Us - Youth Call for Action

The Congress stressed that forests, forestry and forest stakeholders offer major nature-based solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, hunger and poverty, but action is needed now – there is no time to lose. Key messages of the Congress outcome include:

- Forests transcend political, social and environmental boundaries: responsibility for forests should thus be shared and integrated across institutions, sectors and stakeholders;
- Investment in forest and landscape restoration globally needs to triple by 2030 to meet internationally agreed restoration targets;
- The principles of sustainable forest management should be applied beyond forestry in developing greener and more circular bioeconomies;
- Innovative green financing mechanisms are needed to promote the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of forests;
- Legal and sustainably produced wood has potential to transform the building sector, provide renewable energy and innovative new materials, and underpin a circular bioeconomy; and
- Forests are crucial for reducing the risk of future pandemics and providing other essential benefits for human health.

Ensuring such benefits requires sound decision-making and effective action, based on research, solid information and good education. Forest-based solutions must include the perspectives of all stakeholders and empower them to participate and benefit equitably.

The Congress developed a rich set of actionable recommendations for multiple areas and stakeholder groups, and served as a launching pad for several initiatives. It also made recommendations for

communicating the Congress outcomes to other global fora, including the Rio Conventions and FAO governing bodies.

The Committee is invited to:

- welcome the outcomes of the XV World Forestry Congress and recommend the FAO Council and Conference to consider these recommendations for inclusion in the Strategic Framework 2022-31, the Medium-Term Plan 2022-2025 and the Programme of Work and Budget of the Organization for the coming biennia;
- encourage Members to implement the Congress recommendations as appropriate;
- recommend FAO, and invite members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to support FAO Members in their efforts to implement Congress recommendations;
- invite FAO Technical Committees and the Regional Forestry Commissions to consider appropriate actions at the regional level;
- commend the Republic of Korea for the excellent hosting of the Congress and call for continued efforts to present the Congress outcomes to major global fora with FAO support;
- invite Members and FAO to strengthen collaboration with and support to youth; and
- recommend FAO to report back on implementation of Congress recommendations at forthcoming sessions of the Committee.

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