

Thank you. It is my pleasure to provide a brief overview of the 31st Session of the North American Forest Commission (NAFC) meeting, which took place virtually 17-19 November 2021, hosted by Mexico.

The NAFC, as you know, is comprised of only three member countries, making consensus relatively consistent across our more than 50 years of collaboration. Common priorities conveyed to FAO for the North America region, all through a climate change lens, included:

- strengthening fire management and suppression capacity, in particular cross-regional training within and between different regions
- the role of urban forests in helping community resilience to climate change
- avoiding deforestation from agriculture – in particular cross-sectoral dialogue between COAG and COFO
- continuing work to help countries build capacity for forest monitoring and inventory, including increasing their ability to report to the FRA and the work on primary forest
- the sustainable use of forest products
- forest restoration and afforestation, and
- for the first time, environmental justice (or equity, diversity and inclusion) -- that is how countries are addressing environmental programming and services for historically underserved or vulnerable communities – was also raised.

I see from the summary document that these priorities overlap in large part with other regional commissions, which is a welcome development.

The backbone of the NAFC remains its 8 working groups, where collaborative research helps inform policy in all three countries. Working group topics range from invasive species to forest genetic resources to wildland fire and silviculture. Their work directly contributes to the Global Forest Goals, the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and more recent commitments such as the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use.

A final point of interest was the high level of attention on forests internationally – we are in unprecedented times with respect to the level of concern regarding forests and forest management, and we welcome that attention. At the same time, a proliferation of initiatives aimed at halting deforestation risks duplication of effort or dilution of key messages. This is where FAO and the CPF can play an important role – as both a bridge between the forest and agriculture sectors as well as program delivery agents with open channels of communication.

We cordially invite other regional commission chairs to sit in on NAFC Commissioner or Board of Alternate meetings to improve collaboration across regions.