

## **Response to the UNFFS questionnaire on behalf of FAO and its Regional Forestry Commission Secretariats**

### **Introduction**

The six Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) and the Committee on Forestry (COFO) are regularly discussing the outcome of UNFF sessions in order to give guidance for their member countries and FAO on how best facilitate and support the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the Forum. In addition, in accord with UNFF's Multi-year Programme of Work, COFO made regular contributions to the UNFF sessions. Among these are proposals inviting the Forum's attention to issues identified by the Committee and to major contributions, such as the analyses contained in the State of the World's Forests reports or the finding of the Forest Resources Assessments, for facilitating the Forum's considerations on key developments.

COFO and the RFCs are having biennial sessions in alternating years with COFO sessions held in even years. RFCs are having their biennial meetings in the period of November 2015 – February 2016. Each Commission has on its agenda one common item, "Global Policy Processes" which deals with major global developments including the outcome of UNFF11. In addition to discussing the last session of UNFF and its outcome, the secretariat note for this agenda item also presents the outcomes of the UN Sustainable Development Summit in particular the 2030 Agenda, as well as the outcome of the UNFCCC COP21. The detailed account of the RFCs considerations is available in the report of each session at the Commissions' website: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/46199/en/>.

### **Replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in paragraph 1 (b) of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests with an appropriate reference to the sustainable development goals and targets**

The Commissions that have met so far noted the relevance of the SDGs and an overarching framework for sustainable development. They also noted importance of extending the time horizon of the International Arrangement on Forests until 2030 and the strengthening of its various components. They underlined the importance of future work supporting the implementation of the SDGs and of the four Global Objective on Forests contained in the UN Forest Instrument. It was further noted that the contribution of forests to the achievement of the SDGs should be fully explored, understood and communicated within and beyond the forest sector.

Strengthening the linkages to the SDGs and establishing the conceptual linkage between the SDGs and the UN Forest Instrument is an important step, therefore the recommendation for replacing the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in paragraph 1 (b) of the UN Forest Instrument with an appropriate reference to the sustainable development goals and targets, as contained in paragraph 44. (a) of the UNFF Resolution, is much needed and fully supported.

Although it is not stipulated specifically in the UNFF11 Resolution, in the future, considerations could be given to whether the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in the 2<sup>nd</sup> preambular paragraph of the UN Forest Instrument would require appropriate rephrasing in order for it to remain fully in accord with paragraph 1. (b), would the latter be changed as recommended.

### **The strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020**

The RFCs did not consider the strategic plan (SP) and the quadrennial programme of work in particular, but the need for developing both was duly noted. Since RFCs are composed of the same member states as UNFF itself it appears more appropriate if these Commissions, as intergovernmental bodies, would remain responsive to the global dialogue rather than providing concrete recommendations for the SP, this role could best be left for member States.

We would like to recall however that RFCs have biennial work plans and so does FAO, together with a medium term plan of four years (the current Medium Term Plan being established for 2014-2017). This architecture offers opportunities for stronger future harmonization both in setting the agendas for intergovernmental deliberations on forests and in implementing the outcome of those deliberations. In this context we would like to recall the submission made by the RFCs during the IAF review where it was noted that:

“Depending on the desire of the member States and on the future focuses of the international arrangement on forests (IAF) the RFCs can provide a platform for both stronger coordination of regional actions aiming at the implementation of the NLBI or any regional dialogue within the IAF. ... FAO, as secretariat of the RFCs, is very open to discuss possible arrangements that ensure streamlining of international meetings that are attended by the same or similar constituencies and help avoid dispersion of related meetings and increased travels as this would be fully consistent with the main recommendation of the 2012 Strategic Evaluation of FAO’s program and work in forestry.”

A Strategic Plan of such a long timeframe is definitely a considerable challenge. Preferably, such a plan should give a broad direction for key actions while maintain the flexibility for addressing key issues that may emerge during the plan’s timeframe. The Plan should provide a broad guidance on how IAF’s key functions, listed in paragraph 1. (d) of the Resolution, will be performed.

The Plan could usefully build on the different nature of the sessions in odd and even years, basing the odd-year sessions on performing tasks stipulated in 6. (f) and 6 (g) of the Resolution. The thematic focus of the odd-year sessions could be determined according to the policy focus of the even-year sessions, and coordinated with other major global processes with implications for forests, so that it remains responsive to various developments. The even-year sessions should be able to provide continued policy guidance for achieving the objectives of the IAF. The Plan should also specify the role of the different components of

the IAF, and ideally should allow for UNFF to strengthen interaction and collaboration with other global processes and in particular the governing bodies of CPF member organizations.

In order for the Strategic Plan to maintain flexibility and responsiveness the introduction of a rolling mechanism could be recommended by which an opportunity would be given to review the Strategic Plan at the end of each quadrennial period allowing for the four-year work plans to provide a feedback to the Plan which could then be adjusted accordingly. In addition, such a mechanism would allow the SP to remain responsive to developments in other fora with impact on forests, forestry and/or the IAF itself.

Regarding the first quadrennial programme of work, priority should be given to exploring the full gamut of forests' contribution to achieving the SDGs and implementing the 2030 Agenda in general. Similarly, thorough consideration of the Paris Agreement and its implications for forestry would be needed for any future programming. In this context we would like to recall the outcomes of the recently held World Forestry Congress, in particular the Durban Declaration – 2050 vision for forests and forestry as a major contribution to the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development in general. The three key areas of this vision, i.e. the contribution to food security and improving livelihoods, the integrated approaches to land use and the contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation seem to be perfect input to the first quadrennial programme of work.

By addressing these items the first session of UNFF could establish a solid basis for the thematic focus or future sessions and quadrennial programmes of work. It could also consider discussing specifically the various land use challenges and consider basing these discussions on, among others, the key findings of FRA2015 and SOFO2016. Addressing forest and landscape restoration within the same cluster could also be beneficial.

Noting that the Commission on World Food Security will address “Sustainable forestry for food security and nutrition” in 2017 the work programme could also build on the potential synergies and pay specific attention to this aspect in discussing forest's contribution to the SDGs.

With these focus areas the first quadrennial programme of work could be instrumental in laying the foundation for future work programmes and also in making contributions to enhancing work on Global Objective 1 and Global Objective 2 of the UN Forest Instrument.