



## COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

### Seventeenth Session

Rome, Italy, 15-19 March 2005

## REPORT

### OPENING OF THE SESSION (Item 1)

1. The Seventeenth Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) was held at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, from 15 to 19 March 2005.
2. The session was attended by delegates from 124 Members of the Committee, observers from 4 other Member Nations of FAO, from 2 United Nations Member States and the Holy See, representatives of 6 United Nations Agencies and Programmes and observers from 28 intergovernmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations. The list of participants is provided in *Appendix B*.
3. Ambassador Flávio Miragaia-Perri, outgoing Chair, opened the session and invited the Under-Secretary of Agricultural Policies, Ministry of Agricultural and Forestry Policies of the Government of Italy, to take the floor. The Under-Secretary thanked the Director-General for convening the Ministerial Meeting on Forests, which took place on 14 March 2005, and provided the opportunity to discuss major issues, relating not only to forests but also to overall sustainable development.
4. Mr David A. Harcharik, Deputy Director-General, welcomed delegates and delivered opening remarks.
5. Mr Jacques Diouf, Director-General, introduced the Prime Minister of Finland, H.E. Matti Vanhanen, and invited him to address the session. He then invited Madame Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2004, to speak to the Committee.
6. The Committee recommended that FAO should inform the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests of the outcome of the Ministerial Meeting on Forests held on 14 March 2005 and of the 17th Session of the Committee.

## **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (ITEM 2)**

7. The Agenda (*Appendix A*) was adopted. The documents considered by the Committee are listed in *Appendix C*.

## **ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND DESIGNATION OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE (Item 3)**

8. The Committee elected Mr Abdelazim Mirghani Ibrahim (Sudan) to the Chair, Mr David Rhodes (New Zealand) as First Vice-Chair, and as Vice-Chairs:

Mr Felix Dakouo (Mali) Africa

Mr Liu Hong Cun (China) Asia

Mr Aarne Reunala (Finland) Europe

Mr Carlos Manuel Rodríguez Echandi (Costa Rica) Latin America and the Caribbean

Mr Dale Bosworth (United States) North America

9. The following member countries were elected to the Drafting Committee for the COFO report: Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Canada, Congo, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco, Netherlands and Pakistan . The representative of Armenia, Ambassador Zohrab V. Malek, was elected to chair the Drafting Committee and the representative of Australia, Mr Rodney Keenan, was elected vice-chair.

## **STATE OF THE WORLD'S FORESTS 2005 (SOFO) (Item 4)**

10. The Assistant Director-General of the Forestry Department presented a brief overview of the sixth edition of the *State of the World's Forests 2005* (SOFO), copies of which had been distributed in five languages. The Assistant Director-General welcomed feedback on the publication and invited members of the Committee to submit suggestions for SOFO 2007. The Committee noted the particular relevance of this edition's theme – *realizing the economic benefits from forests*. It welcomed coverage of several key topics of interest, including opportunities and challenges associated with enhancing the economic benefits from forests; experiences and lessons learned on enhancing benefits of agroforestry; the economics of wood energy; invasive species; and the links between violent conflict and forested regions in many parts of the world. It also noted the involvement of a number of external collaborators in the preparation of SOFO 2005 and congratulated the Forestry Department for adopting this approach.

## **REGIONAL FORESTRY COMMISSIONS IN ACTION (Item 5)**

11. The Committee agreed that the Regional Forestry Commissions are a vital component of FAO's work and provide effective mechanisms to enhance regional and sub-regional cooperation and to support member countries' efforts to implement sustainable forest management. They facilitate the exchange of experiences and lessons learned, build capacity, support networks on issues of regional importance, strengthen countries' capacity to participate effectively in international forest-related policy fora, and enhance linkages among national, regional and global processes.

12. The Committee encouraged FAO, working in collaboration with member countries and other partners, to take action to implement the recommendations made by the six FAO Regional Forestry Commissions in their sessions in 2004, as well by the recent sessions of the Expert Panel on Forest Genetic Resources, the International Poplar Commission and the Advisory Committee on Paper and Wood Products.

13. The Committee recommended that FAO increase the allocation of resources and support for the work of the Regional Forestry Commissions, including strengthening the FAO Regional Offices to this end.

14. The Committee recommended that the Regional Forestry Commissions address, *inter alia*, the following key issues in their future work: a) collaboration on forest fire management; b) regional forest policy dialogue; c) forestry's contribution to poverty alleviation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; d) valuation of environmental services; e) combating the threats of invasive species; f) forests and water; g) illegal logging and associated trade of forest products; and h) elevating the importance of forestry on the political agenda.

15. The Committee appreciated the achievements of regional and thematic working groups established by Regional Forestry Commissions on such issues as forest fire management, invasive species, wildlife management and bushmeat, forestry education and illegal logging, and recommended that such working groups be used to further facilitate action and dialogue at regional and sub-regional levels.

16. The Committee recommended that the Regional Forestry Commissions continue to facilitate country implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) and to provide information on developments in the international dialogue on forests. The role of the Regional Forestry Commissions in this regard was considered particularly valuable for smaller countries unable to participate in all global fora related to forests.

17. The Committee recommended that the Regional Forestry Commissions build synergies with other regional and international organizations and processes to increase cross-sectoral activities, avoid duplication, fill gaps and maximize results.

18. The Committee recommended that the Regional Forestry Commissions continue to provide the framework for effective conduct of regional forestry sector outlook studies.

19. The Committee recommended that relevant Regional Forestry Commissions increase support to low forest cover countries (LFCCs) in implementing actions under the Tehran Process.

20. The Committee urged FAO to support the reactivation of the AFWC/EFC/NEFC Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions "*Silva Mediterranea*".

## NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON FOREST FIRE PREPAREDNESS (Item 6)

21. The Committee expressed its appreciation to FAO for including the issue of forest fire on the agenda of this session of the Committee on Forestry, and of the Ministerial Meeting on Forests, which took place at FAO on 14 March 2005.

22. The Committee commended FAO on the Secretariat Note, whilst noting that additional emphasis could have been placed on the different roles played by fire in various forest types. The Committee highlighted that fire is often used in the boreal region as an instrument for forest regeneration. While many fires in tropical forests, although often being controlled or managed, in the absence of good regeneration programmes, may have irreversible consequences in the long-term for the conservation of forest ecosystems and biodiversity.

23. The Committee noted that many countries have a complex array of social, economic and environmental values in fire prone landscapes that require protection from fire.

24. The Committee highlighted the fact that while fire is an important ecological process and land management tool, it can also have negative social, economic and environmental impacts and can contribute to forest degradation, thereby simultaneously representing a useful instrument and serious threat for sustainable forest management.

25. The link between forest fire and global climate change was highlighted, as were links between effective forest fire management and poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation. Mention was made of specific problems related to, *inter alia*, refugee camps; the existence of land mines; fires, haze and smoke across borders; and the risk of fires arising from the agricultural sector.

26. The Committee took note that the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference is to be held in Spain in 2007.

27. The Committee noted that effective fire management required prevention, including public education, preparedness, suppression and rehabilitation. It further noted that stakeholder involvement and community-based forest fire management were essential components of an effective forest management strategy.

28. The Committee further noted that, fire management was a national responsibility. It called on FAO to facilitate enhanced international cooperation on forest fires and requested FAO, in collaboration with countries and other international partners, including the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, to develop a strategy to enhance international cooperation on wildland fire. It noted that the template for international cooperation in wildland fire management, as presented at the International Wildland Fire Summit in Australia in 2003, could be used by countries wishing to cooperate in this area.

29. The Committee commended FAO for its current work related to forest fire management, in particular regarding the sharing of information and experiences, training, mobilizing partners and supporting regional and sub-regional networks related to forest fires.

30. The Committee noted different views on the proposal for FAO to facilitate development of an international accord on forest fire.

31. The Committee concluded that it was vital to strengthen existing mechanisms for collaboration on forest fire, and that the existing bilateral and regional agreements, are a valuable basis for international cooperation.

32. The Committee requested FAO to provide support for countries to develop and consolidate their national fire management systems and to build the technical and operational capacity required to engage in effective international cooperation.

33. The Committee recommended that FAO enhance its role in fire management, including through: (i) advocating fire management within the context of an integrated approach to forest management; (ii) promoting awareness that forest management is an effective means of fire prevention; (iii) underscoring the role of fire as a management tool in both agriculture and forestry; (iv) providing technical support for improved management of fuel loads in forests; (v) helping design and implement training, education and awareness raising programmes on forest fire management, especially at the local level; and (vi) strengthening its efforts to monitor and manage information on forest fire management and disseminate such information especially at the regional and sub-regional levels.

34. The Committee noted that the special needs which developing countries would face in the area of forest fire management and recommended that they include forest fire management in their dialogue with the international assistance agencies of developed countries, with the World Bank and with the regional development banks.

35. The Committee also recommended that FAO should inform the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests of the importance attached by the Ministerial Meeting on Forests and by the 17th Session of the Committee to international cooperation on forest fire management.

## **THE ROLE OF FORESTS IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (Item 7)**

36. The Committee recognized the vital role of forests, trees outside forests and sustainable forest management in the fulfilment of commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed development goals, and underscored the need to strengthen efforts to demonstrate this important contribution.

37. In this context, the Committee acknowledged FAO's active role in demonstrating the importance of forests in achieving development goals and welcomed its work on guidelines for enhancing the contribution of forestry to poverty alleviation and food security.

38. The Committee also noted that the current programme of work of FAO contributes significantly to the achievement of these development goals.

39. The Committee recommended that FAO strengthen its technical support to countries to integrate national forest programmes in their respective Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and other national development strategies and urged FAO to promote the contributions of forests to rural development.

40. The Committee recommended that FAO strengthen its technical assistance to countries to improve governance, strengthen institutional frameworks and promote sustainable community based forest management.

41. The Committee recommended that FAO, with other members of the CPF, strengthen activities in collecting, analyzing and disseminating relevant data on forests in order to demonstrate and raise awareness of the contribution of forests to development goals and to ensure that related reporting arrangements are effectively harmonized.

42. The Committee also requested FAO to assist its member countries to quantify and capture the economic values of environmental services of forests.

43. The Committee further recommended that FAO assist countries' efforts to improve intersectoral cooperation and coordination at the national level.

44. The Committee recommended that FAO provide a strong forest-related input to the Millennium Review Summit that will take place at the United Nations in New York in September 2005.

45. The Committee noted the strong linkage between development goals and the IPF/IFF proposals for action to achieve sustainable forest management.

46. The Committee noted that the XXII World Congress of IUFRO will be held in Brisbane, Australia in August 2005 and invited all members to participate actively in this event.

#### **DECISIONS OF FAO GOVERNING BODIES OF INTEREST TO THE COMMITTEE (DOCUMENT COFO/2005/05) (Item 8)**

47. The Committee noted the recommendations of the 32nd Session of the FAO Conference and the 124th and 127th sessions of the FAO Council, in particular those related to FAO's work: to facilitate countries' efforts to achieve the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed development goals and to implement sustainable forest management; to strengthen national capacities; and to support international forestry processes.

48. The Committee also took note of the recommendations relating to forestry from the FAO Regional Conferences held in 2004.

#### **SHAPING AN ACTION PROGRAMME FOR FAO IN FORESTRY (Item 9)**

49. The Committee recommended that FAO continue to undertake global and regional forest sector outlook studies, if possible at five-year intervals, to support national strategic planning.

50. The Committee agreed that bioenergy, including fuelwood, was an important topic and fully supported an integrated approach in addressing related issues.

51. The Committee requested that FAO continue its leadership role in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). It welcomed efforts of CPF to consider how to strengthen its role under a future international arrangement on forests to accelerate implementation of sustainable forest management on the ground, and to the fulfilment of relevant commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed development goals.

52. The Committee recommended that FAO continue to provide technical assistance to member countries in improving forest management policies and practices, *inter alia*, for implementation of the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol.

53. The Committee recommended that FAO continue its support for regional and national networks to combat fire as well as insects and disease, in collaboration with relevant organizations such as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Global Wildland Fire Network, and further requested that FAO work with partners to develop voluntary guidelines on the prevention, suppression and recovery from forest fire.

54. The Committee strongly supported the continued focus of FAO on technical advice, capacity-building and knowledge dissemination on best practices, including on such topics as planted forests and trees outside forests.

55. The Committee recommended that FAO accord priority to key programme and topic areas, including, forests and water, forests and climate change, forests and combating desertification and halting land degradation, forest and drought, forests and bioenergy, forests and biodiversity, agroforestry, as well as poverty alleviation and food security, and participatory forestry and sustainable livelihoods.

56. The Committee supported the FAO work plan regarding the conservation of forests and fragile ecosystems and invasive species.

57. The Committee requested FAO to increase assistance to countries to develop and implement national forest programmes, including in partnership with the National Forest Programme Facility.

58. The Committee emphasized the need for policy frameworks and institutional arrangements that foster the participation of civil society in forest decision-making and improve cooperation across sectors. In this regard, it requested FAO to assist countries to better incorporate forestry in poverty reduction strategies, to enhance forest law enforcement, including affected wildlife, and to strengthen capacity for conducting national forest assessments and building forest information systems.

59. The Committee requested FAO to strengthen its activities in the area of monitoring, assessment and reporting on forests and intensify assistance to countries for activities in this area. It further requested that FAO continue efforts to link the global Forest Resources Assessment with reporting on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.

60. The Committee requested FAO to help minimize duplication in international forest reporting and, thus, reduce the reporting burden on countries by working together with other CPF members to continue to develop an information framework on forest-related reporting.

61. The Committee requested that FAO continue to work in collaboration with other agencies, to clarify key forestry concepts and harmonize forest-related terminology.

62. The Committee requested that FAO increase the allocation of resources in its work programme for the activities of the Regional Forestry Commissions.

## **XII WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS (Item 10)**

63. The Committee noted the outcome of the XII World Forestry Congress in 2003, held in Quebec City in September 2003, and highly commended the Government of Canada and FAO on the successful implementation of this event.

64. The Committee noted that in July 2004 the Director-General invited governments interested in hosting the XIII World Forestry Congress to communicate their formal offer to the Organization.

65. Two countries submitted formal offers in response to this invitation: Panama and Argentina. The Committee acknowledged the two offers and recommended that the offers by Panama and Argentina to host the XIII World Forestry Congress be forwarded to the FAO Council for consideration at its next session in June 2005.

#### **FOREST SECTOR AND POST-TSUNAMI REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION** (Item 11)

66. The Committee welcomed FAO's assistance to countries affected by the 26 December 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean and recommended that it increase its forestry-related efforts in this regard. The Committee encouraged FAO to play a lead role through its regional offices in forest-related rehabilitation activities in collaboration with countries, international organizations, regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations and to promote an integrated approach to coastal area management and livelihoods in all sectors.

#### **DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION** (Item 12)

67. The Committee agreed to hold its next session in Rome in early 2007.