



SUMMARY OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING ON FORESTS AND THE SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE FAO COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY: 14-19 MARCH 2005

The Ministerial Meeting on Forests and the seventeenth session of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Committee on Forestry were held at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 14-19 March 2005. The meetings attracted over 600 participants from governments, intergovernmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations. Also in attendance at the Ministerial Meeting were over 40 ministers, as well as the President of the Republic of Congo, Denis Sassou-Nguesso, and 2004 Nobel Laureate, Wangari Maathai from Kenya.

At the Ministerial Meeting on Forests, ministers addressed issues relating to international cooperation on forest fire management and maintaining commitment to sustainable forest management, and agreed to a Ministerial Statement.

At the FAO Committee on Forestry, delegates addressed issues relating to the 2005 State of the World's Forests report, Regional Forestry Commissions, needs and opportunities for international cooperation in forest fire preparedness, the role of forests in contributing to the Millennium Development Goals, and the World Forestry Congress.

The seventeenth Committee on Forestry was also the stage for twenty-one side events, which covered a range of topics, including forests and conflict, the role of civil society in implementing national forest programmes, international cooperation on forest fire, forests and climate change, forest law and compliance, and the integration of forestry into the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FAO COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

The Committee on Forestry (COFO) is the most important of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Forestry Statutory Bodies, which also include the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs), the Advisory Committee on Paper and Wood Products, the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions (*Silva Mediterranea*), the International Poplar Commission, and the Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources. The biennial sessions of COFO, held at FAO headquarters, bring together

heads of forestry services and other senior government officials to identify emerging policy and technical issues, seek solutions and advise FAO and others on appropriate action. This is achieved through: periodic reviews of international forestry problems and appraisal of these problems; review of the FAO forestry work programmes and their implementation; advice to the Director-General on the future work programmes of FAO in the field of forestry and on their implementation; reviews of and recommendations on specific matters relating to forestry referred to it by the FAO Council, Director-General or member States; and reports to the FAO Council. Membership in COFO is open to all FAO member States wishing to participate in its work.

COFO12: COFO's twelfth session convened in 1995 to discuss the role of the FAO in forestry, particularly with regard to sustainable forest management (SFM). It considered the development of criteria and indicators (C&I) for SFM, trade and environment, and a possible FAO role in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development's (CSD) Intergovernmental Panel

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on Forests (IPF). Delegates negotiated the Rome Statement on Forestry, later adopted by a ministerial meeting; and discussed FAO's medium-term perspectives (1996-2001) and long-term priorities (1996-2010).

COFO13: At its thirteenth session in 1997, COFO continued discussion of progress towards sustainable forest management (SFM), and recommended the implementation of the IPF proposals for action. It tackled the issue of COFO's role and that of Regional Forestry Commissions. In addition, it considered implications for forestry of the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit, addressed conservation and sustainable utilization of forest genetic resources, and called for additional financial resources for the 1998-2003 Medium-Term Plan (MTP).

COFO14: Discussions at COFO's fourteenth session in 1999 addressed the work of the CSD's Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), global forest sector outlook, and national and international challenges to forest policies for sustainability. COFO14 also reviewed FAO's programmes in the forestry sector, and its Strategic Framework (2000-2015) and medium-term implications for the forestry programme.

COFO15: In 2001, COFO's fifteenth session focused on forest information and knowledge management, criteria and indicators for sustainable development of all types of forests, and implications of certification and trade for SFM. It reviewed FAO's forestry programmes, including results of the Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2000, the 2002-07 MTP, proposals for global FRA, and key forest-related issues of climate change and the Kyoto Protocol.

COFO16: COFO16 convened in March 2003 to discuss: forests and freshwater; national forest programmes (NFPs) as a mechanism to implement the key outcomes of the World Food Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD); review of FAO programmes; and the FAO medium-term planning process, particularly regarding forests, poverty and food security, forest governance and forest biodiversity.

REPORT OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING ON FORESTS

Michael Martin, FAO, opened the session on Monday, 14 March 2005, by inviting delegates to elect Eliot Morley, Minister of Environment for the UK, and Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Minister of Environment and Energy for Costa Rica, as Co-Chairs. Delegates then elected the nominated Co-Chairs and adopted the agenda (FO:MM/05/1/Rev.1).

FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf said that international forest policy is at a delicate stage of development and that forests are crucial to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Noting dangers associated with forest fire, he called on the ministers to strengthen international forest fire management. He then highlighted FAO's contribution to the implementation of international commitments relating to SFM.

Denis Sassou-Nguesso, President of the Republic of Congo, recalled FAO's assistance in helping the Republic of Congo establish its national forestry action plan, which has been a reference for forestry development. Noting that ministers reiterated a strong commitment to rational and sustainable management of forests at the February 2005 Conference of Ministers in Charge of Forests in Central Africa (COMIFAC),

President Sassou-Nguesso said US\$2 billion is necessary to implement SFM in the region. He indicated that actions to implement SFM should be monitored and evaluated, but emphasized that at present real political resolve is lacking to implement and monitor SFM. Stressing the importance of constant dialogue and solidarity, President Sassou-Nguesso suggested that FAO strengthen its coordination with international and regional bodies and mechanisms.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON FOREST FIRE MANAGEMENT

Co-Chair Carlos Manuel Rodriguez invited ministers' comments on international cooperation on forest fire management (FO:MM/05/2).

South Africa noted the establishment of its domestic fire rating system, and endorsed the proposal for a global forest fire accord that includes appropriate means of implementation. **China** said that more domestic, regional and international cooperation is needed to improve fire management, and said that a global agreement on forest fire could be created in the future.

Japan said it is committed to tackling forest fire in developing countries through technology transfer, and noted that the proposed forest fire accord should continue to be examined, as no consensus exists on it yet. **Canada** discussed new approaches to fire suppression and risk mitigation, but did not support the proposed international accord. The **US** complimented the work of the **Global Wildland Fire Network (GWFN)**, and emphasized its commitment to disaster assistance, mentioning President Bush's request to Congress for over US\$950 million in funding for tsunami recovery. He said a negotiated international accord on forest fire was unnecessary, and urged support for bilateral emergency assistance negotiated agreements to facilitate rapid disaster response.

Australia highlighted its success using bilateral accords. The **Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)**, on behalf of the **UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR)**, the **Wildland Fire Advisory Group (WFAG)** and the **GWFN**, said the development of an "International Wildland Fire Accord" did not refer to a legally binding instrument (LBI), but to a consensus to coordinate and strengthen international cooperation in wildland fire management. **Guatemala** said it would support an international agreement on forest fire. **Pakistan** said an LBI on forest fire would be difficult to implement, and emphasized the importance of using emergency agreements and sharing information and technologies.

Malaysia said fire is one of the main ways forests are cleared for agriculture, and cautioned that wildfire can be a major cause of forest degradation. He called on FAO to develop a forest fire early warning system and a fire-prevention training programme. **Costa Rica** said fire prevention investment is effective if the underlying causes of fire are understood and addressed. He also highlighted intersectoral cooperation between the agriculture and environment sectors, noting that the enhancement of forest-related environmental services helps prevent fire.

Ireland explained a series of wildlife studies being undertaken in the EU aimed at better understanding: causes; approaches to prevention, detection, and early warning; and experience with cooperative arrangements with local communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). **India** said that people are



the problem but also the solution to forest fires, and welcomed FAO efforts to facilitate the exchange of international experience. **Spain** said that forest fire is the result of a build-up of flammable materials in rural areas, emphasizing that fire policy must be directed at changing peoples' attitudes regarding fire use. He also noted that Spain would host the next International Wildland Fire Conference in Madrid in 2007. **Cyprus** called attention to rural depopulation and increased use of forests for recreation as increasing the threat of forest fire.

Indonesia highlighted a new decentralized priority effort launched in 2002, which established fire brigades in the most fire prone provinces. **Turkey** said that, even though the number of fires has not been reduced, greater efforts at capacity building and cooperation with local communities has reduced by half the amount of damage caused by forest fires. **Honduras** also discussed the need to include fire management in the context of its efforts to decentralize forest management authority to the local level.

Burkina Faso said its evaluation of past experience with fire led to replacing a regulatory approach with an ecological approach to natural resource management based on community-level consensus, which is being tested in approximately 300 communities. **Ghana** said international support for community-based and participatory forest fire management is needed and should be implemented through regional and subregional institutions. He also called for a subregional database, better fire control, national coordination programmes and fire suppression.

Luxembourg, on behalf of the European Union (EU), highlighted efforts to place forest fire management as an integral component of all natural resource management systems and the importance of international cooperation. **France** discussed: local planning efforts targeted at high-risk areas; linking SFM and fire prevention; and international cooperation in the development of common standards and procedures. **Portugal** said cooperation should begin at the national level, mentioning the recent establishment of a domestic stakeholders' advisory group to help develop a holistic, decentralized approach to fire forest management.

The **Republic of Korea** described its recently acquired real-time, internet-based, global information systems forest fire warning system, which is used to supplement efforts in training, acquiring suppression equipment. He also urged support of both GFMC efforts to build 12 forest fire networks and WFGA efforts. **Algeria** spoke of its use of satellite imaging and global positioning systems to enhance monitoring and increase community-level consultation and the development of rapid response mechanisms.

Thailand said that even though the forest fire department can reach only 35% of the forested area, progress has been made in national awareness raising, training in prevention and suppression techniques and increased interagency cooperation. **Mali** explained its development of early warning systems and agreements with local populations. **Syria** discussed positive results from its investment in training, technology and bilateral agreements.

MAINTAINING INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

Co-Chair Morley highlighted the importance of work on global forest restoration, drawing attention to the upcoming Forest Landscape Restoration Workshop in Brazil in April 2005, and noted that failures of governance and forest law enforcement constrain the implementation of SFM (FO:MM/05/3).

Malaysia called on the FAO to help rehabilitate mangrove forests and continue to play a leading role through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) to implement the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action (Pfa).

Luxembourg, on behalf of the EU, said measurable targets under a future international arrangement on forests (IAF) are key to SFM implementation, and noted the need to link SFM to meeting the MDGs.

Tunisia noted the need for an integrated system for monitoring forest information and for financial assistance.

Norway suggested that the FAO should contribute to strengthening the CPF at the global and regional levels and to the implementation of NFPs.

Japan said that countries should: make available information on forests by applying C&I for SFM; intensify efforts to curb illegal logging; and coordinate trade efforts with World Trade Organization.

Calling attention to the eroding financial resource base to implement SFM, Kenya suggested establishing a regional body to coordinate environmental matters.

The UK said that governments already agreed to an overarching objective on forests under the Millennium Development Goal on environmental sustainability, and that the resultant overarching goal for forests in a new IAF could be to "integrate the principles of SFM and reverse the loss of forest resources." St. Vincent and the Grenadines said new opportunities to generate forest-based income could emerge from the handicraft sector, tourism and forest certification.

Zimbabwe noted the need for technical assistance to help plant and protect fast growing trees and that addressing food security and energy use can help support the MDGs.

Angola noted the necessary components to achieve SFM at the national level, including the need to train and empower forest managers and encourage support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

China highlighted: the importance of taking into consideration a binding international instrument; the need to increase efforts on illegal logging and illegal wood trade; and the importance of establishing priorities in forestry legislation.

Sweden highlighted the importance of participatory partnerships coupled with the establishment of targets at the national level.

Benin said forestry is a domestic priority on par with health, education and poverty reduction.

South Africa underscored the importance of forests for health, medicines, food security, spiritual values and mitigating climate change. The US highlighted policy priorities for achieving the MDGs, including combating illegal logging and supporting forest partnerships. India stressed the linkage between forests and community livelihoods, and called for increased financing, noting that the existing IAF has been weak in this regard.



The Czech Republic emphasized the importance of the decision on a future IAF to be taken at the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-5) in May 2005, and said that, as a donor country, it is gradually increasing its official development assistance (ODA). Indonesia said its domestic forest policy prioritizes, *inter alia*, combating illegal logging, rehabilitating the forest sector, including community participation, rehabilitating the forest resource, strengthening the economic development of forests and stabilizing forestlands.

Timor-Leste said that illegal logging needs to be addressed forcefully, noting that it has placed a ban on sandalwood logging. Mozambique said it is committed to good governance and poverty reduction, noting that forests provide food and flood control for rural communities. Burkina Faso highlighted its effort to decentralize the forest sector by transferring control of forests to the local level. Uganda emphasized the need for a robust funding mechanism for forestry and encouraged the international community to compensate developing countries for the environmental values contained within their forests.

Australia noted that easily identifiable, quantifiable targets, like those in the Montreal Process, could help achieve SFM.

Brazil identified the fight against deforestation as a priority, and said the main objective of a future IAF should be to expand SFM and further implement the IFF/IPF PFAs.

Ghana called for the management of biodiversity in forest reserves, harmonizing under the NEPAD framework the various donor conditionalities related to SFM implementation, and increased use of certification and tracking systems.

Stating that the FAO should provide support for SFM implementation, Denmark indicated its support for coherent development of NFPs.

Although he recognized the need for a forest convention, Canada indicated that in the near term, targets could be used to strengthen the UNFF and financial resources should be mobilized at the national and international levels.

The Netherlands suggested enhancing concrete actions through national and regional policy frameworks, demonstrating how forests contribute to meeting the MDGs.

Costa Rica reiterated its commitment to SFM, emphasized the need to control illegal logging and forest fire, and voiced its preference for a legally binding instrument for forests and forestry. Pakistan said that forests are important for the maintenance of watersheds and are linked to food security and poverty alleviation. He also highlighted a new domestic forest policy based on integrated and participatory processes.

Pekka Patosaari, Coordinator and Head of the UNFF Secretariat, said that in recent years deforestation has been surpassed in importance by social issues such as poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS and terrorism, and said that strengthening the IAF would ensure that forests remain on the international agenda.

The Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe said its efforts on cross-sectoral issues of forestry, illegal logging and C&I for SFM could be used as examples for forest work in the future.

NGOs said they stand to work as partners to create the necessary political climate to achieve sustainable forestry at the international and national level.

CLOSING SESSION

Co-Chair Rodriguez reminded delegates that the Ministerial Statement is not international law, but represents a statement of intention. Delegates then approved the Statement of the Ministerial Meeting. In the Ministerial Statement, the ministers committed themselves to, *inter alia*:

- improving forest management and intersectoral cooperation;
 - enhancing regional and international cooperation to achieve SFM;
 - enhancing the contribution of SFM to the fulfillment of the MDGs;
 - improving domestic forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG);
 - enhancing international cooperation on forest fires; and
 - enhancing FAO's leadership role on forests internationally.
- The ministers also call on FAO to, *inter alia*:
- develop a strategy to enhance international cooperation on wildland fires;
 - develop studies on the design and implementation on projects for payment for environmental services from forests; and
 - promote integrated and cross-sectoral approaches in its programme of work to help achieve SFM and thereby contribute to the fulfillment of the MDGs.

COFO17 REPORT

The seventeenth session of the FAO's Committee on Forestry was opened on Tuesday, 15 March 2005, by Flavio Miragaia Perri (Brazil). Paolo Scarpa Bonazza Buora, Minister of Agriculture and Forest Policies for Italy, identified several social issues that contribute to the degradation of forests, such as urbanization, illegal logging and fire, and argued that mitigating the effects of these requires a multilateral approach. He also said that FAO has an important role to play in implementing SFM through the CPF and the NFPs.

David Harcharik, FAO Deputy Director-General, stressed the importance of several issues to be dealt with at COFO17, including: FAO's role in post-tsunami reconstruction in the Indian Ocean region; SFM and the MDGs; multilateral and inter-sectoral cooperation; forest fire prevention and mitigation; the action programme for FAO in forestry; and the World Forestry Congress. He also mentioned that monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR) is crucial to effective decision-making, but said it continues to be weak in many countries.

Matti Vanhanen, Prime Minister of Finland, noted his country's long history of forest preservation, and said there are more protected forest areas in Finland than in any country in the EU. He indicated the importance of four international forest policy topics: SFM; the MDGs; NFPs and their role in mobilizing financing; and the role of science-based information in development. Saying that a flexible legal instrument would help bring the concept of SFM into practice and that development funding is coordinated to promote the MDGs, he indicated the challenge was to realize how forests could best achieve these goals and practices. He explained Finland's NFP, and said that NFPs should be linked to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and other national policies. Prime Minister Vanhanen drew attention to the current independent evaluation of the FAO, and hoped the results would increase



FAO's performance. Noting that Finland was once an impoverished country devastated by slash and burn activities, he said that forestry has become an important pillar of Finland's economy.

Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai (Kenya) noted her recent appointment as Goodwill Ambassador for the Congo Basin, and said the international community must respond together to promote SFM in the area. Maathai warned about the continued destruction of forests, saying that the trend would continue in the absence of action and commitment of financial resources. She indicated that representatives to the second Central African Heads of State Forest Summit in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, *inter alia*: worked to develop further partnerships in the Congo Basin to coordinate efforts on forest management; designed a Plan of Convergence for 11 countries to jointly manage forest resources; committed to finance 40% of the Convergence Plan through debt cancellation; strengthened forest ecosystem management through the NEPAD; and promoted new wood products through the African Timber Organization. Maathai noted the recent devastation caused by the Indian Ocean tsunami, and questioned why so many "silent tsunamis" in Africa pass completely unnoticed by the international community, even though a large amount of human life is lost. Maathai suggested the development of a trust fund to combat corruption, and hoped that G8 members would agree to fund conservation of forests, in particular the Congo Basin.

FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf thanked Maathai for her call for international cooperation on peace and justice, and told her that FAO would initiate a collaborative process for developing guidelines for increasing international cooperation.

The Committee then adopted the agenda (COFO 2005/1/Rev.1), and elected Abdelazim Mirghani Ibrahim (Sudan) as Chair and David Rhodes (New Zealand) as First Vice-Chair. Delegates also elected Aarne Reunala (Finland), Dale Bosworth (US), Felix Dakou (Mali), Liu Hongcun (China) and Carlos Manuel Rodriguez (Costa Rica) as Vice-Chairs. The Committee also elected the following States to the Drafting Committee: Australia, Canada, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Congo, Indonesia, Pakistan, Guatemala and Argentina.

STATE OF THE WORLD'S FORESTS

Hosny El-Lakany, FAO Assistant Director-General for Forestry, introduced the 2005 State of the World's Forest Report (SOFO 2005), which focuses on realizing the economic benefits from forests, and made the point that unless forests are seen as economically viable they will never be able to fulfill their environmental, social and cultural functions. The first section focuses on the situation of, and recent developments in, the forest sector, including, *inter alia*: carbon stock changes; secondary forests in the tropics; new woods and fiber; threats from invasive species; the economics of wood energy; international trade in non-wood forest products (NWFPs); and the global forest policy dialogue. The second section addresses challenges and opportunities in realizing the economic benefits from forests, such as: forests' declining contributions to national incomes; North/South disparities in value-added production; the increased exports of secondary processed wood products from tropical countries, such as Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, the

Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and China; tariff and non-tariff barriers, such as certification systems and sanitary and phyto-sanitary requirements; and forests and armed conflict.

During the discussion, many delegates welcomed the report as a timely and topical contribution. Luxembourg, on behalf of the EU, reinforced the need for more effective valuation systems for environmental services and better information on NWFPs. Australia emphasized the importance of accurate knowledge of the resource base, agreed-upon C&I, and suggested closer linkages with the FRA. The US highlighted the need for communities to feel a sense of ownership of their forests, and complimented FAO for involving and being responsive to stakeholders in the preparation of the report. Malawi welcomed the inclusion of the growing problem of invasive species. Nigeria urged FAO to support the development of better natural resource accounting systems to give policy makers a clearer picture of the real value of forests.

REGIONAL FORESTRY COMMISSIONS IN ACTION

On the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) in action, Wulf Killman, FAO, noted that the RFCs identified a number of common issues that require action, including: collaboration on forest fires; forestry, poverty alleviation and the MDGs; value of NWFPs and environmental services; awareness of invasive species; forest law compliance; broadening forest sector outlook studies; and training in forest information systems (COFO 2005/2).

Tamer Otracrier (Turkey) presented the conclusions of a side event on the RFCs, saying that the RFCs provide an important link between the high-level forestry dialogue and action at the country level. Noting that RFCs could be more effective, Otracrier indicated that they could help elevate forests on the political agenda, develop codes of practice, build synergies with other regional institutions and hold regional workshops on specific topics immediately before or after RFC meetings.

N.K. Joshi (India), Vice-Chair of the Asia Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC), said that major initiatives of APFC include the development of a code of practice for harvesting, establishment of a collaborative network for forest species issues and identification of exemplary practices in the forest arena. He noted that three studies had been conducted by the APFC on the effectiveness of logging bans in protecting forests, the role of incentives in establishing forest plantations and the devolution of forest management to local communities.

Ghattas Akl (Lebanon), Secretariat of the Near East Forestry Commission (NEFC), noted that its landmark achievements include: the elaboration of forestry as a science through education, research and extension; initiation of plantation forests; and introduction of certain tree species. He indicated that the NEFC had also initiated a process for revising forestry curricula and forest legislation and policies with an emphasis on participatory approaches

Raúl Solórzano (Costa Rica), Vice-Chair of the Latin America and Caribbean Forestry Commission, highlighted the five priority areas of its workplan, which include: international cooperation on fire management and woodland fires; information management; forestry education; control of illegal logging; and environmental services. He hoped that COFO could find new sources of funding for RFC activities.



Noting the key achievements of the Africa Regional Forestry Commission, A.S.K. Boachie-Dapaah (Ghana), Commission Chair, said it is becoming a site of excellence on SFM, fostering regional cooperation and networking and establishing a regional commission on bushmeat. He noted that RFCs could be strengthened by providing better monitoring, facilitating capacity building to help developing countries develop negotiation skills and assisting with small island developing States issues.

Brian Emmett (Canada), Chair of the North American Forestry Commission (NAFC), suggested RFCs could be a forum for science and help raise the profile of forests on the political agenda. He noted that NAFC was undertaking a review of the Commission to evaluate if its benefits outweigh its costs.

Jan Ilavsky (Slovakia), Chair of the European Forestry Commission (EFC), discussed the EFC's main events over the biennium, which include contributing to achieving SFM through the sound and legal use of wood throughout the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, work on the European Forestry Sector Outlook Study, development of the second regular strategic review of FAO/ECE integrated programme of work for 2005-2006 and policy-relevant market analysis. He indicated that the recent major outputs of the EFC included the State of Europe's Forests report using indicators of SFM and a forest products annual market review.

The US, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, the Republic of Congo and South Africa called for strengthening the RFCs.

The US noted that its experience with the regional working group on fire management has been effective, and encouraged its use by others. Saudi Arabia informed the committee that it had concluded its five-year forest survey, has developed and is adopting a national forest strategy, and has implemented a domestic forest rehabilitation project. Australia said the RFCs are often the only fora in which small countries can voice their views. Supported by Japan, he also urged FAO to implement the recommendations of the APFC on, *inter alia*, illegal logging, invasive species, forests and water and the valuation of forest environmental services.

Luxembourg, on behalf of the EU, noted that more work on definitions related to illegal logging should be undertaken, and recognized the continued importance of regional cooperation. Slovakia announced its interest in hosting the next EFC meeting in May 2006. Gabon noted that its NFP aims to increase value-added production, which has generated employment and increased household incomes. He said the NFP consists of two components: the development of rules and regulations for processing, wildlife management and a differentiated tax system; and a social and economic dimension designed to, *inter alia*, ban illegal logging, increase benefits to local communities and consolidate forest information into a database.

New Zealand emphasized the need to focus on cross-sectoral issues and forest partnerships. He also said that New Zealand is developing a policy on illegal logging and that FAO can help quantify the impacts of illegal logging, and supported enhanced international cooperation on forest fire through an FAO fire strategy. The Republic of Congo commended Latin American countries for their work on the payment for environmental services, and requested that a workshop on this issue be

conducted in Africa. He also announced the development of a Pan-African certification system. Costa Rica noted that global challenges include the prohibition on natural forest production demanded by civil society. He also noted that forestry must be recognized as a development issue that promotes not only timber value but social and environmental values as well. Japan emphasized that water is embedded in the MDGs in the areas of disease prevention and reduction of child mortality, and encouraged FAO to participate in the next World Water Forum to be held in Mexico in 2006. Benin called for a forestry fund to help support the implementation of its NFP.

Turkey noted the influence of FAO support in the development of C&I, participatory approaches and the need for intersectoral cooperation and to deal with cross-cutting issues. Iran noted the many commonalities shared by participants in the RFCs, suggested that FAO move from the international cooperation method to the partnership method, and proposed a study of international environmental agreements to identify lessons for forestry. Indonesia asked that FAO review efforts to combat illegal logging, utilize watershed management approaches such as protection up-stream/down-stream incentive mechanisms, and asked for more work on non-wood values and mechanisms for marketing environmental services.

Algeria expressed interest in the use of local communities in solving fire-related challenges, welcomed FAO's strategy on cooperation in information exchange and endorsed the idea of an FAO fire strategy. Croatia said that fire results from rural depopulation and a build-up of unmanaged, flammable biomass in rural areas. He also said fighting fire in rural areas is difficult because of land mines. Luxembourg, on behalf of the EU, said forest fires would increase as the climate changes, noting that international cooperation on forest fire policy, facilitated by FAO, is essential. Portugal said fire is a serious issue in her country, highlighting that domestic, interagency coordination on fire is a high priority.

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN FOREST FIRE PREPAREDNESS

José Antonio Prado, FAO, opened the session saying that while fire can renew boreal forests, it can be devastating in the tropics. He said that human action causes approximately 90% of fires and that intersectoral cooperation is therefore necessary, and noted political will, intersectoral policy, regulatory reform and effective enforcement of new and existing laws is required. Prado also said that local communities must feel ownership of and benefit from SFM (COFO 2005/3; COFO 2005/Inf.10).

Mali spoke of changing policy from one that banned all fires to a system of controlled burning to preserve grazing lands. Canada, joined by the US and Mexico, supported the principles and the institutional recommendations of the 3rd International Wildland Fire Conference in Sydney, particularly ideas for incident command systems and agreement templates for their development. He said bilateral and regional cooperation should be continued. He said the forest services of Canada, the US and Mexico stand ready to help deal with the wildfire problem. Thailand said that during the 25 years it has worked in isolation, it has learned many positive and negative lessons, which it would be happy to share with others. He also said Thailand would be happy to share its lessons learned and looks forward to learning



from others. **Argentina** said it was necessary to consolidate internal fire management capacities. **Guinea** reviewed experience with communal management of community forests, called attention to the challenge of dealing with refugees, and asked FAO to develop approaches for use by neighboring countries.

Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Minister of Environment and Energy for **Costa Rica**, identified several policy needs associated with forest fire, including: standardized criteria; rules that integrate agriculture, environment and forests into fire management; emergency preparedness; and education. He also stressed the importance of involving rural workers and indigenous people in fire management, and advocated a forest fire framework through the FAO.

Indonesia said the effects of fire are cross-sectoral and an international agreement and action plan would stimulate cooperation. **Brazil** endorsed the negotiation of voluntary guidelines on forest fire, but opposed the need for an agreement. The **Republic of Congo** said his country lacks the means to fight fire, and stressed the need to involve local people in fire management and to develop a substitute to slash and burn methods of agriculture. **Ghana** proposed a comprehensive database on forest fire, the promotion of forest fire control, support for the development of national forest fire laws and national coordination centers and sharing experiences with community-based forest fire management. **Mexico** expressed its interest for an international forest fire strategy or agreement, and highlighted that when communities are involved in forest fire management the incidence of fire declines.

GFMC, joined by GWFN and UN-ISDR, emphasizing the importance of good information for policy development, asked FAO to develop standards for measurement. He also reiterated that the call for a wildland fire accord was for a non-binding accord that would, *inter alia*, include a number of other UN agencies.

THE ROLE OF FORESTS IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Susan Braatz, FAO, presented an overview of the ways in which forestry contributes to the achievement of the eight MDGs, which increasingly provide the framework for development plans and programmes (COFO 2005/4). She indicated that forests and forestry contribute to all the MDGs but most directly to those on eradicating poverty and on environmental sustainability. Braatz noted that many of the links between forest resources and environmental and socioeconomic well being, especially of the 250 million poor people living in forested areas, are obvious and well known. She explained that others were less obvious and include: the role of forest bushmeat; the ways in which trees outside forests support small farm income; the importance of rural nutrition; employment in the formal and informal sectors; wood-based substitutes for more energy-intensive products; soil and water conservation; and protection of coastal areas. She recalled suggestions by delegates to increase forestry contributions to achieving the MDGs, including by: removing barriers so that the poor can share in the benefits of forests; securing payment for environmental services; and intensifying intersectoral coordination. Noting that FAO has taken a number of actions including creating the interdivisional task force on poverty within the Forest Department and FAO's

Livelihood Support Programme, Braatz suggested future FAO support for the MDGs may: provide technical inputs to intergovernmental dialogue on forest-related global targets; assist countries to address the MDGs in their NFPs; integrate forestry issues into their PRSPs and programmes; and provide continued assistance to the United Nations in achieving the MDGs.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) said forests in the DRC represent 58% of forests the Congo Basin, and noted that its 2003 forestry code is linked to the MDGs. He said the DRC needs support for forest research and management. The Republic of Korea highlighted the link between SFM, food security and biodiversity. Chile said forests are not simply a source of timber, but provide environmental services and NWFPs as well, and noted the link between forests and food security. The Republic of Congo said that limited financing is the main constraint to SFM, and stressed the need to finance village plantations and pay for NWFPs. Ghana said that strategies to implement SFM through PRSPs are weak because forests are seen as cross-cutting, and cautioned against making the poor overly dependent on forests.

Canada stressed the importance of linking forests to all the MDGs, not simply the eradication of poverty and environmental sustainability. He also said that Canada is increasing ODA and that forest issues should be reflected in country funding requests. Nigeria said that FAO should assist in capacity building in forestry, and should provide technical inputs into intergovernmental dialogue in advance of the September review of the MDGs. Norway said the link between SFM and poverty eradication needs to be clarified, and said FAO should provide inputs into the development of global targets. Syria urged the development of income-generating activities in local communities.

The US noted its support of FAO's future work in meeting the MDGs, providing technical assistance to NFPs and helping to integrate forests and agroforestry into PRSPs. Kenya called on FAO to increase capacity at the country level and linkages to the MDGs. Uganda encouraged FAO to assist in exploring the linkages between forests and poverty eradication, and addressed how FAO could increase its work on forests and conflict. Turkey said that the way in which forests contribute to the MDGs is undervalued, forestry can play a role in minimizing the effects of disasters, and that FAO should work to strengthen cooperation with other international organizations.

Saying that the objectives of the MDGs have been at the heart of the FAO mandate since early discussions on sustainable development, Australia requested that FAO indicate clearly how its work contributes to the IFF/IPF PfAs and the MDGs, especially in documents submitted to UNFF-5. Afghanistan indicated that more people living outside than inside the forests are dependent on trees and that more attention should be given to NFPs. He said that more money should be allocated to forestry protection, food security and conservation of forests and fragile ecosystems in the 2006-07 Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) to help achieve the MDGs.

Luxembourg, on behalf of the EU, noted that the PWB has an important contribution to make to the MDGs and that FAO should strengthen intersectoral cooperation. He suggested that countries include forests in PRSPs and that addressing good governance is essential. Thailand called on FAO to draft and



support community forestry law in countries. Bangladesh noted the difficulty in acting strategically to obtain resources at the multilateral level, illustrating that in some countries forestry contributes a small percentage to the economy, which decreases forests' importance on the national agenda. Switzerland said that property rights have to be recognized and that participatory practices are necessary when striving for poverty eradication.

Saudi Arabia noted that FAO should garner greater support for the Forestry Department and that FAO should focus on regional programmes in rural areas and other communities that work on forests. Indicating that FAO should work in cooperation with UNDP and other agencies to address poverty, Iran asked FAO to raise awareness on forests and environmental services to halt deforestation and forest degradation. Mexico called for greater recognition of environmental services, and said SFM can help solve the problem of regional development, including through the marketing of NWFPs.

Hosny El-Lakany, FAO Assistant Director-General for Forestry, noted that forests can help achieve all the MDGs and that implementation of the new PWB will require greater financial and human resources.

IN-SESSION SEMINAR ON MAINTAINING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT TO SFM

On Wednesday, the Committee convened in an in-session seminar on maintaining the international commitment to SFM, chaired by Mary Coulombe, American Forest and Paper Association.

Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Minister of Environment and Energy for Costa Rica, said that from the 1940s to the 1980s Costa Rican forests were in decline, but that this has changed with the advent of a payment system for soil uses that conserve carbon. He said that revenues generated from a tax on fossil fuel consumption are used to compensate landowners for conserving the soil. He also said that an additional benefit of this system is US\$1.4 billion in annual tourism revenues and that the next challenge for environmental service payments is water conservation.

Bashir Ahmed Wani, Ministry of Environment of Pakistan, highlighted challenges and opportunities relating to SFM in Pakistan. He explained the challenges to SFM, which include: the small forested areas; the low political priority of the forest-issue area; tenure; weakly enforced, outdated regulations; weak institutions; overgrazing; and unsustainable fuelwood collection. He identified opportunities, which include: rural employment; medicinal plants; SFM in participatory watershed management programs; and farmland plantations.

Manuel Rodriguez (Colombia) presented on securing international commitment to SFM, noting progress made since the Rio Summit. He contrasted this success by identifying, *inter alia*, the lack of commitment to combating the underlying causes of environmental destruction and degradation. Rodriguez suggested that SFM implementation can be strengthened by: improving coordination through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; decentralizing agreements to the regional and subregional levels; allocating new financial resources; creating new partnerships; and addressing the key underlying causes of deforestation.

Fred Kafeero, Environmental Alert, discussed the role of civil society in the formulation and implementation of NFPs in Uganda. He said civil society is active in the formulation of forestry policy, forest law and the implementation of the NFPs. He highlighted, *inter alia*, that: partnerships between government and other stakeholders have the potential to bridge policy and action; the multi-operational level of civil-society organizations (CSOs) is a strength in implementing NFPs; and CSOs need to continuously build their research and analytic capacity to support NFPs.

In the ensuing discussion, delegates discussed: how environmental services could be used in plantation and natural forests; sustainable funding and support from NGOs to implement NFPs; the need for capacity building for forest management outside central forest reserves in Uganda; and how central governmental budgeting might increase investment in human resource development in order to reduce deforestation.

DECISIONS OF FAO GOVERNING BODIES OF INTEREST TO THE COMMITTEE

Hikojiro Kaltsuhisa, FAO, noted that the thirty-second session of the FAO Conference held in November-December 2003 suggested intensification of monitoring, evaluating and reporting on FAO work relating to the Millennium Declaration and the importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives into FAO operations (COFO 2005/5). The 124th session of the FAO Council held in June 2003 stressed the importance of FAO support on: NFPs and capacity building; information and knowledge management; establishment of C&I for SFM; FRA and forest fire management; international forest processes such as UNFF, CPF, IPF and IFF; and strengthening the interface between forest management and watershed management.

Recommendations came from the Regional Conferences, which include: from the African RFC, increased attention to the production of bushmeat where it is important in local diets; from the Asia-Pacific RFC, increased support for effective action plans, codes and guidelines for sustainable forestry and fishery practices; from the Latin American and Caribbean RFC, institutional development in the context of the decentralization process and support for the Barbados Programme of Action for the sustainable development of small island developing States; and from the Near East RFC, the development, promotion and adoption of adapted technological packages on water demand and watershed management.

SHAPING AN ACTION PROGRAMME FOR FAO IN FORESTRY

Dan Rugabira, FAO, reviewed FAO actions over the last year in the context of the recommendations of COFO16 (COFO 2005/6). This included work by the Forest Resource Programme in documenting successful practices in well-managed forests in Africa and supporting model forest development in Asia. He indicated support was also provided to conservation efforts focused on fragile mountain forests in Asia, wildlife management in protected ranges in Africa, studies of forest economics and products in Europe and West Asia, and in the preparation of 17 national reports in Latin America. He also stated that FAO



provides support to countries' forest policy and programme development through the NFP Facility, including through 42 partnership agreements and over 80 technical assistance projects.

Hosny El-Lakany, FAO Assistant Director-General for Forestry, presented the proposed 2006-07 PWB for FAO's Forestry Programme (COFO 2005/8). Noting that the PWB is guided by the FAO MTP 2006-11, he said that the proposed Forestry PWB responds to countries' and RFCs needs. El-Lakany explained key work proposed under each component of the Forestry programme: forest resources; forest products and economics; forestry information and liaison; and forestry policies and institutions. Drawing from FAO's objective in key cross-cutting areas (COFO 2005/7), he indicated that the priorities for the 2006-07 PWB include: forests and bioenergy; Forestry Sector Outlook Studies; MAR; a future IAF; and small island developing States.

Luxembourg, on behalf of the EU, suggested that: the FAO Forestry Department undertake a five-year instead of a ten-year review of its work; work on bioenergy and climate change should be a crucial part of the 2006-07 PWB; the CPF should be strengthened under a future IAF; and under-represented but priority areas of poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods should receive extra-budgetary support. Cameroon indicated the need to update information on African countries in SOFO 2005, and hoped for the systematic increase of C&I implementation in the neediest countries.

Brazil stressed that country sovereignty should not be infringed upon in achieving sustainable development and noted the FAO could make a contribution within a future IAF, which would include a strengthened UNFF and not an international legal instrument.

Noting its concern about the lack of increased financial resources for RFCs and conservation of forests and fragile ecosystems, Afghanistan said it hoped FAO could provide extra-budgetary resources and increase the amount of money made available to countries via trust funds.

Syria suggested that increased FAO support to RFCs, greater work on forests and energy and increasing field data on forests would help countries implement SFM.

Australia noted that FAO should play an essential role as the Chair of the CPF under the future IAF, assist countries with NFPs, integrate MAR with C&I and conduct work on invasive species. He also requested that a zero nominal growth budget scenario be reflected in the 2006-07 PWB.

Egypt drew attention to FAO's important role in addressing forest fires, drafting NFPs and helping countries to achieve their desired objectives in forest-related action plans.

Chile supported the areas of prioritization of forests in the FAO MTP, and suggested FAO focus more on issues of forests and climate change, food security and poverty.

Portugal proposed that FAO conduct more work on bioenergy and desertification.

The Republic of Congo indicated that FAO should increase cooperation with other partner organizations, focus on its role in achieving the MDGs, take stock of certification issues and give greater attention to reporting in the 2006-07 PWB.

Indonesia highlighted that FAO could assist countries with their reporting requirements to the UNFF, strengthen assistance

in the area of information reporting and assessment and increase its support to areas affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Suggesting that a future IAF be set up under FAO's auspices, Mexico noted that countries should have access to a trust fund under the new arrangement. Regarding the 2006-07 PWB, he noted that further information and statistics should be gathered on wood and bioenergy, and called on FAO to collect case studies and replicate successful experiences of forest projects, especially in low-forest cover countries.

Canada suggested that SFM could help contribute to all seven of the MDGs. He suggested that FAO take a lead role in addressing forest fires, in developing a strategy on wildland fires, and plan for activities using a 2006-07 budget scenario less than zero real growth.

Gabon invited FAO to promote lesser-known species of trees, develop policy implementation mechanisms that promote SFM and work on the replanting of forests.

Nigeria requested the FAO to prepare an action plan on bushmeat, and hoped FAO could prepare a Sector Outlook Study in the country. He noted that the PWB should be based on real growth assumptions and accommodate programmes that address the MDGs.

Norway stressed the importance of the NFP Facility, suggesting that the NFP Facility promote: civil society participation; enhanced cooperation to reduce poverty; compliance; and national capacity for forest assessments. He also emphasized the importance of transparent, comparable data. Iran said that in the future IAF, FAO's assistance for capacity building and the facilitation of NFPs will guarantee SFM in support of the MDGs. He also said that the NFP Facility could address desertification and land degradation. Lebanon stressed that FAO should work on conservation and desertification and on pest management.

Regarding a medium-term study, Saudi Arabia said it looked forward to reports on forests and water, combating desertification, climate, drought, and capacity building. The US applauded FAO's work on forest law enforcement and its collaboration with the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). He said that work on, *inter alia*, non-timber values, environmental services, invasive species, and forests and water is important. He also called for developing capacity in the area of combating illegal logging and associated trade, including wildlife trade. Sri Lanka mentioned the importance of forests and home gardens in post-tsunami coastal reconstruction and restoration. Switzerland stressed the importance of clearly defining resource rights for the rural poor, noting in particular that governance and decentralization are critical. He also said FAO has a role to play in providing technical inputs for measuring the achievement of targets at the global level. The Confederation of European Forest Owners said the removal of biomass from forests could reduce the incidence of forest fire and contribute to the income of small forest owners.

XIII WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

The Secretariat reviewed the process of selecting host countries for the next World Forestry Congress to be held in 2009 (COFO 2005/Inf.5). Both Panama and Argentina have offered to host the event.

**FOREST SECTOR CONTRIBUTION TO POST-TSUNAMI RECONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION**

Patrick Durst, FAO, reviewed FAO's response to the tsunami disaster, and emphasized the challenge of dealing with recovery and rehabilitation (COFO 2005/9). He noted that in the context of large donor assistance flowing to the affected area, coordination, planning, and technical assistance are needed. He also mentioned that special emphasis was placed on mangroves and coastal zone forests and that priority must be given to the restoration of occupational opportunities and environmental services, including the protective services offered by mangroves and coastal forests. There is also a concern that the strong demand for wood to use in rebuilding may lead to overuse of existing resources.

Luxembourg, on behalf of the EU, said the EU was channeling assistance through several UN agencies and the World Bank to minimize duplication and competition. He highlighted the importance of restoring protective forests and the rehabilitation of fisheries and the mangrove forests on which they depend. Japan said it would be happy to share its long history dealing with tsunamis, including their experience and expertise with coastal zone protective forests.

CLOSING PLENARY

On Saturday, 19 March, the Committee decided that the next session would be held from 12-16 March 2007, at FAO headquarters in Rome. The Committee also adopted the meeting's draft report (COFO 2005/REP). First Vice-Chair David Rhodes (New Zealand) gavelled the meeting to a close at 12:00 pm.

COFO'S REPORT OF THE MEETING

The report of COFO17 addresses the following topics:

STATE OF THE WORLD'S FORESTS 2005: COFO recognized the particular relevance of the report's theme – realizing the economic benefits from forests – and welcomed key topics of interest, including: experiences and lessons learned on enhancing benefits of agroforestry; the economics of wood energy; and the links between violent conflict and forested regions in many parts of the world.

REGIONAL FORESTRY COMMISSIONS IN ACTION:
COFO, *inter alia*:

- agreed that the RFCs are a vital component of FAO's work and provide effective mechanisms to enhance regional and subregional cooperation and to support member countries' efforts to implement SFM;
- encouraged FAO, working in collaboration with member countries and other partners, to take action to implement the recommendations made by the six RFCs and other FAO statutory bodies;
- recommended that FAO increase the allocation of resources and support for the work of the RFCs;
- recommended that RFCs address issues in their future work, including collaboration on forest fire management, regional forest policy dialogue, forestry's contribution to poverty alleviation and achievement of the MDGs, valuation of environmental services, illegal logging and associated trade of forest products and elevating the importance of forestry on the political agenda;

- recommended that regional and thematic working groups established by the RFCs, including those on forest fire management, invasive species and wildlife management and bushmeat, be used to facilitate action and dialogue at the regional and sub-regional levels;
- recommended that the RFCs continue to facilitate country implementation of the IPF/IFF PFAs and provide information on developments in the international dialogue on forests;
- recommended that the RFCs build synergies with other regional and international organizations and processes to increase cross-sectoral activities, avoid duplication, fill gaps and maximize results;
- recommended that the RFCs continue to provide the framework for effective conduct of regional forestry sector outlook studies;
- recommended that the relevant RFCs increase support to low-forest cover countries in implementing the Tehran Process; and
- urged FAO to support the reactivation of the joint RFCs on Mediterranean Forestry Questions "*Silva Mediterranea*."

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON FOREST FIRE PREPAREDNESS:

COFO, *inter alia*:

- 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 SFM;
- highlighted the link between forest fire and global climate change, as well as links between forest fire management and poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation;
- noted that fire management is a national responsibility and requested FAO to work in collaboration with other international partners to develop a strategy to enhance international cooperation on wildland fire;
- noted different views on the proposal for FAO to facilitate development of an international accord on forest fire;
- concluded that it was vital to strengthen existing mechanisms for collaboration on forest fire and that existing bilateral and regional agreements are a valuable basis for international cooperation;
- 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;
- recommended that FAO enhance its role in fire management, including through advocating fire management within the context of an integrated approach to forest management, providing technical support for improved management of fuel loads in forests and in helping design and implement training, education and awareness raising programmes on forest fire management, especially at the local level;
- recommended that developing countries include forest fire management in their dialogue with the international assistance agencies of developed countries; and
- recommended that FAO inform UNFF-5 of the importance attached by the Ministerial Meeting on Forests and COFO17 on international cooperation on forest fire management.



THE ROLE OF FORESTS IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: COFO, *inter alia*:

- noted that the current programme of work of FAO contributes significantly to the achievement of the MDGs;
- recommended that the FAO strengthen its technical support to countries to integrate the NFPs in their respective PRSPs and other national development strategies;
- recommended that FAO strengthen its technical assistance to countries to improve governance, strengthen institutional frameworks and promote sustainable community-based forest management;
- recommended that FAO, with other members of the CPF, strengthen activities in collecting, analyzing and disseminating relevant data on forests;
- requested FAO to assist its member countries to quantify and capture the economic values of environmental services of forests;
- recommended that FAO assist countries' efforts to improve intersectoral cooperation and coordination at the national level;
- recommended FAO provide strong forest-related input to the "Millennium Review Summit"; and
- noted the strong linkage between development goals and the IPF/IFF PfAs to achieve SFM.

DECISIONS OF FAO GOVERNING BODIES OF INTEREST TO THE COMMITTEE: COFO, *inter alia*: noted the recommendations of the 32nd session of the FAO Conference and the 124th and 127th session of the FAO Council, in particular those related to the FAO's work on facilitating countries' efforts to achieve the commitments contained in the UN Millennium Declaration, strengthening national capacities and supporting international forestry processes. COFO also noted the recommendations related to forestry from the FAO Regional Conferences held in 2004.

SHAPING AN ACTION PROGRAMME FOR FAO IN FORESTRY: COFO, *inter alia*:

- recommended that FAO continue to undertake global and regional forest sector outlook studies, if possible at five-year intervals, to support national strategic planning;
- agreed that bioenergy, including fuelwood, was an important topic and fully supported an integrated approach in addressing related issues;
- requested that FAO continue its leadership role in the CPF;
- recommended that the 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;
- recommended that FAO continue its support for regional and national networks to combat fire as well as insects and disease, and work with partners to develop voluntary guidelines on the prevention, suppression and recovery from forest fire;
- strongly supported the continued focus of FAO on technical advice, capacity building and knowledge dissemination on best practices;

- recommended that FAO accord priority to key programme and topic areas, including, forests and water, forests and combating desertification, poverty alleviation and food security and participatory forestry and sustainable livelihoods;
- requested FAO to increase assistance to countries to develop and implement NFPs, in partnership with the NFP Facility;
- requested FAO to better incorporate forestry in PRSPs, to enhance forest law enforcement, including affected wildlife, and strengthen capacity for conducting national forest assessments and building forest information systems;
- requested FAO to strengthen its activities in the area of MAR and continue efforts to link the global FRA with reporting on C&I for SFM;
- requested FAO to help minimize duplication in international forest reporting and reduce the reporting burden on countries by continuing to develop an information framework on forest-related reporting; and
- requested that FAO continue to work in collaboration with other agencies, to clarify key forestry concepts and harmonize forest-related terminology.

WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS: COFO, *inter alia*: noted the outcome of the XII World Forestry Congress in 2003, and highly commended the Government of Canada and FAO on the successful implementation of this event; and indicated that two countries have submitted formal offers in response to the Director-General's invitation to host the XIII World Forestry Congress – Panama and Argentina – and that the offers would be forwarded to the FAO Council for consideration at its next session in June 2005.

FOREST SECTOR AND POST-TSUNAMI REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION: COFO welcomed FAO's assistance to countries affected by the 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and recommended that it increase its forestry-related efforts in this regard, and encouraged FAO to play a lead role through its regional offices in forestry-related rehabilitation activities in a collaborative manner and promote an integrated approach to coastal area management and livelihoods in all sectors.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION: COFO agreed to hold its next session in Rome in early 2007.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF COFO17

RAISING AWARENESS OF FORESTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA

Over the last few years, countries attending political fora such as the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the International Tropical Timber Council have indicated that forests have been low on the international agenda. However, the Ministerial Meeting on Forests and the seventeenth session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) suggest that high-level political attention on forests, in fact, does exist at the international level, supported by the presence of 90 heads of forestry agencies, a Nobel Laureate, the Prime Minister of Finland, the President of Congo, and a significant number of ministers from developed and developing countries. Also, the technical information supplied during meeting's numerous side events and the launch of FAO's technical products, such as the State of the World's Forests (SOFO) 2005 report, suggest



that the FAO is attempting to strike a balance between being a political and a technical body. This is important because it raises a question about its implications for future forest work in the FAO and in meeting broader political goals such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and those under a future international arrangement on forests (IAF). This analysis examines COFO17 and the positioning of the FAO to continue its technical work on forestry and secure high-level political support for forests, despite continued financial and operational challenges.

ARBOREAL ROOTING IN THE UN SYSTEM

Ever since the disappointing outcome of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) of the 1990s, the FAO Forestry Department has undergone a number of administrative and programme-oriented changes to improve its image in the international community. In spite of this, however, FAO continues to receive criticism for its highly bureaucratic structure, leading some to suggest that it should function more like other, smaller organizations in the forestry arena, such as the International Tropical Timber Organization. In an attempt to make the organization less bureaucratic, FAO decentralized its operations, including by establishing Regional Forestry Commissions, which many have said has facilitated programme implementation, information sharing and stakeholder engagement.

FAO also improved inter-agency cooperation on forests within the UN system, in part through its chairmanship of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). Such cooperation has helped improve the quality of FAO information documents, such as SOFO 2005, where information provided by governments as well as other international organizations enabled the FAO to capture and analyze emerging themes such as forests and conflict. This is an important point, since some have argued that the UN Forum on Forests should be the central mechanism in the UN system for addressing new and emerging issues related to forestry. However, SOFO 2005 and some of the other FAO technical documents released at COFO17 demonstrated that the FAO is fully capable of addressing such technical issues at the international level, a point reinforced during delegate interventions throughout the week. For example, FAO's strengths were validated by the Prime Minister of Finland, who noted his country's success stories using FAO's services in forestry, and by Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai, who stressed that forests and violent conflict were intricately linked and in urgent need of FAO's attention.

RHIZOMATIC CONNECTIONS

During the week, countries and partner organizations encouraged greater attention to such emerging issues, especially in sessions devoted to the proposed 2006-07 Programme of Work and Budget (PWB). This document helps set FAO's policy and programme work for the coming biennium, and the discussion of the draft PWB clearly conveyed the key successes and future promise of FAO's technical work. During these discussions, countries emphasized the need to reformulate FAO's proposed PWB so that it clearly reflected forests' role in meeting the MDGs. This, so the argument goes, would attract more political attention to forest concerns, and with it, donor financing. However, this is an argument common to other issue areas,

which suggests that while linking forest work to the MDGs may be a promising idea in theory securing increased financing will require much more calculation in practice. All the same, linking the MDGs to forestry can complement FAO work on poverty and local livelihoods, two thematic areas raised at COFO16.

The issue of linking FAO forestry work to the MDGs was an important dimension of the COFO17 discussions, it was, nevertheless, not the main point of the meeting. The point of the meeting was to share information on FAO's existing forestry programmes, some of which already take a holistic approach to poverty reduction, and to signal the direction that future FAO Forestry work might take. To do so, the FAO Forestry Department convened a number of side events in conjunction with its partner organizations and regional offices. Noteworthy in this regard were two such events, an FAO/ITTO co-sponsored event on forest law and compliance, and another on the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which even attracted the attendance of FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf. While some said that holding so many side events was a questionable use of time, others thought this new practice gave the impression that the FAO Forestry Department was attempting to become less bureaucratic by allowing for informal discussions to take place in technical side events and corridor discussions. This information-sharing process not only reminded participants of the many unresolved issues in tackling sustainable forest management, but also helped spur new ideas and new requests for FAO technical work, especially in using forestry to meet the MDGs.

NOURISHING FORESTRY PROGRAMMES

Due to the variety of priorities identified throughout the week, the obvious challenge facing the FAO is how to meet country requests in a context of diminishing financial resources from the FAO regular budget. While the FAO Director-General requests that funding for forest-related activities come from the FAO Regular Budget, which currently allocates 4.2 % to forestry activities, many COFO representatives pointed out that this is insufficient and that the FAO Forestry Department must rely on extra-budgetary resources for the bulk of its programmatic funding.

In keeping with a key theme of how to reduce poverty and increase of funding levels for forests through meeting the MDGs, one of the strategies suggested for increasing funding for forests was through integrating forest work into the World Bank/IMF's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Some suggest doing this may increase levels of aid at the country level. Additionally, strengthened CPF coordination may also help achieve cost-effectiveness in meeting multilateral strategic goals at the central organizational level, which is one of the reasons why some countries working to design a new, improved CPF under the future IAF.

Although COFO only meets biannually, there is no sign that doing so has decreased its importance on the political agenda. If anything, interest by high-level representatives has strengthened and new opportunities for sharing information among FAO partner organizations, such as those in the CPF, has significantly increased. This raises important considerations for other organizations like ITTO, which holds Council sessions twice a year, and UNFF, which holds annual sessions. Despite this, the significant level of support for FAO forestry activities, which



has been displayed through the PWB, the number of side events and the presence of high-level representatives at the Ministerial and COFO meetings, holds promise for the future of the FAO Forestry Department. FAO leadership will continue to play a key role in implementation of the NFPs, cooperation through the CPF and in other technical assistance work. FAO technical expertise and political commitment for FAO technical work seems likely to continue in the coming years and will complement whatever international arrangement on forests is decided at UNFF5.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT MEETING ON INNOVATIVE FINANCIAL MECHANISMS: SEARCHING FOR VIABLE ALTERNATIVES TO SECURE A BASIS FOR THE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF FORESTS:

This country-led initiative in support of UNFF-5 will convene from 29 March to 1 April 2005, in San Jose, Costa Rica. Meeting outcomes are expected to include: an exchange of successful experiences on financial and economic instruments and mechanisms to enhance SFM; the identification of mechanisms to further enhance and promote North-South and South-South cooperation; and the identification and consolidation of partnerships among interested parties to promote the use of innovative financial and economic instruments. For more information, contact Ricardo Ulate, UNFF Focal Point, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Government of Costa Rica; tel: +506-257-8475; fax: +506-258-1614; e-mail: rulate@fonafifo.com; internet: http://www.fonafifo.com/paginas/reunionExpertosIng.htm

GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION: This workshop will be held from 4-8 April 2005, in Petrópolis, Brazil. Organized by the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration, this event is a country- and organization-led initiative in support of the UNFF. The workshop seeks to contribute to implementation of the work programmes of other international and regional policy processes, including the conventions on biodiversity, climate change and desertification, the ITTO and the WSSD. For more information, contact: Carole Saint-Laurent, Coordinator, Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration, IUCN; tel: +1-416-763-3437; fax: +1-416-763-3437; e-mail: CarSaintL@bellnet.ca; internet: http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/restoration/globalpartnership/

2005 PLUM CREEK SYMPOSIUM ON KYOTO, FORESTS, AND LIVING TREE MARKETS: SCIENCE AND LAND USE POLICY IN CARBON SEQUESTRATION: This symposium will be held from 13-14 April 2005, in Missoula, Montana, US. The University of Montana's College of Forestry and Conservation will host this meeting on the latest scientific findings regarding the role of forests and land use decisions in sequestering carbon, and the linkages between carbon forestry initiatives and environmental and social co-benefits. For more information, contact: University of Montana's College of Forestry and Conservation; tel: +1-406-243-5521; fax: +1-406-243-4845; e-mail: carbonconference@forestry.umt.edu; internet: http://www.forestry.umt.edu/kiosk/Conference/Carbon/default.htm

ITTO WORKSHOP ON PHASED APPROACHES TO CERTIFICATION: This ITTO workshop, scheduled to take place from 19-21 April 2005, in Bern, Switzerland, will seek to promote the use of phased approaches to certification in tropical timber exporting developing countries. For more information, contact: Manoel Sobral Filho, ITTO Executive Director; tel: +81-45-223-1110; fax: +81-45-223-1111; e-mail: itto@itto.or.jp; internet: http://www.itto.or.jp

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: The third session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification will be held from 2-11 May 2005, in Bonn, Germany. For more information, contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2802; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; internet: http://www.unccd.int/cop/cric3/menu.php

SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON LEGAL ASPECTS OF EUROPEAN FOREST SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: This symposium, organized by International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), will be held on 11-15 May 2005, in Mt. Zlatibor, Serbia. For more information, contact: Peter Herbst; tel: +43-42-425-2471; fax: +43-42-426-4048; e-mail: hp@net4you.co.at; internet: http://iufro-down.boku.ac.at/iufro.net/d6/wu61300/zlatibor2005-1st-announcement.doc

UNFF-5: The fifth session of United Nations Forum on Forests will be held from 16-27 May 2005, at UN headquarters in New York. This meeting represents the conclusion of UNFF's five-year mandate. For more information, contact: Elisabeth Barsk-Rundquist, UNFF Secretariat; tel: +1-212-963-3262; fax: +1-917-367-3186; e-mail: barsk-rundquist@un.org; internet: http://www.un.org/esa/forests

ITTC-38: The 38th session of the ITTC and Associated sessions of the Committees will convene from 19-22 June 2005, in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. **Note:** The dates for this conference have been changed. For more information, contact: Manoel Sobral Filho, ITTO Executive Director; tel: +81-45-223-1110; fax: +81-45-223-1111; e-mail: itto@itto.or.jp; internet: http://www.itto.or.jp

UN CONFERENCE FOR THE NEGOTIATION OF A SUCCESSOR AGREEMENT TO ITTA, 1994, THIRD PART: Delegates will continue negotiations leading to a successor agreement to the ITTA, 1994 from 27 June-1 July 2005, in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, contact: UNCTAD Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-5809; fax: +41-22-917-0056; e-mail: correspondence@unctad.org; internet: http://www.unctad.org

XXII IUFRO WORLD CONGRESS: This Congress will be held from 8-13 August 2005 in Brisbane, Australia. The theme of the congress is Forests in the Balance: Linking Tradition and Technology. For more information, contact: The Congress Manager; tel: +61-7-3854-1611; fax: +61-07-3854-1; e-mail: iufro2005@ozaccom.com; internet: http://www.iufro2005.com