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Item 7(f) of the provisional agenda

FAO global activities

Preparations for the XIV World Forestry Congress**Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. The XIV World Forestry Congress will be held in Durban, South Africa from 7 to 11 September 2015. This is the first Congress to be held in Africa.
2. The Congress serves as a unique opportunity for people from all countries, regions and sectors – public, private, educational, NGO, and research – to exchange ideas and their experience about the key policy and technical issues that affect forests and the people who depend on forests. The Congress organizers are seeking input with respect to priority themes to be addressed from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. FAO Regional Forestry Commissions are invited to participate in this process to ensure that the Congress addresses the priority concerns of each region of the world.
3. The World Forestry Congress is held approximately once every six years. The first Congress was held in Italy in 1926. FAO has helped host countries to organize the Congress since 1954. Responsibility for the organization and financing of each Congress lies with the host government, with FAO playing an advisory role and providing administrative and technical support.
4. The Congress is a forum for the exchange of views and experiences on all aspects of forests and forestry which may lead to the formulation of broad recommendations applicable on a national, regional or global basis. The Congress also provides a periodical opportunity for the sector to produce an overview of the state of forests and forestry, in order to discern trends, adapt policies, create awareness in decision-makers, and influence public opinion. Given the significant amount of participants (several thousands in each conference), it is a viable forum to strengthen the role of forests and forestry as such as well as in the context of critical environmental, economic and social issues.

5. The Congress is not an intergovernmental meeting; it has no formal constituencies or country delegations. The Congress provides an opportunity for collaboration among all interested stakeholders in all geographic regions. The implementation of recommendations is a matter for those to whom these are addressed - governments, international organizations, scientific bodies, forest owners, etc. - in the light of their own particular circumstances. The outcome of the Congress may be brought, through the Committee on Forestry, to the attention of the FAO Conference and FAO Regional Forestry Commissions, usually through a resolution or declaration from the Congress.

6. The Congress consists of registered participants who are involved or interested in forestry. Irrespective of whether a participant belongs to a government organization, NGO, private company, scientific or professional body, a forestry society, or is attending in a personal capacity, each participant expresses his or her personal opinion. Past congresses have been recognized for the high quality standard of the papers and the deliberations and for the broad consensus backing authoritative, although not binding, policy and technical advice to governments and international organizations.

7. The value and utility of each congress rests also in the opportunity offered to the world's foresters, stakeholders and decisions-makers to analyze and expose their technical convictions and experiences, to discuss and exchange ideas and thinking, and to broaden their perspectives by sharing their common as well as diverse problems. The XIV Congress will recognize that forestry is becoming more and more a topic with international linkages and implications, as well as multi-sectoral dimensions and implications.

8. Exchanges of knowledge within the forest sector, and between the forest sector and other sectors, benefits all countries, especially those with need for more forestry development. The diffusion of scientific and technical advances as well as the human contacts promoted by these congresses contribute to a better global understanding about forests and forestry.

II. Congress Organization and Format

9. The Government of South Africa will designate a lead government organization and appoint the Secretary-General and support staff who have lead responsibility for organizing and operating the XIV World Forestry Congress. The FAO Director-General has appointed the Associate Secretary-General and support staff who serve as advisors to the Secretary-General, assisting with Congress administration and technical support, including editing and review of technical papers. The host country and FAO collaborate on key responsibilities including the identification of themes, programmes, and sub-programmes; and the review and editing of technical papers which are presented at the Congress.

10. The World Forestry Congress is a high level gathering that is addressed by the Head of State of the host country and the FAO Director-General. Invited speakers are acknowledged leaders, senior experts and advocates in their respective fields. Topics addressed during the Congress cover a wide range of interests from field level concerns to national, regional and global policies.

11. In order to effectively plan and manage the Congress, the Government of South Africa and FAO will solicit input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. FAO will establish an internal World Forestry Congress Task Force and an external World Forestry Congress Advisory Committee. These groups, together with the host country, will develop a technical programme and appoint Technical Secretaries who will be responsible for specific subject areas to be considered by the Congress.

12. Financing a successful World Forestry Congress requires collaboration and commitment from the host country, FAO, and all participating countries and organizations. A trust fund will be established to help support broad geographic participation, in particular to pay for travel expenses for participants from developing countries, students, and other groups. Governments and organizations who are committed to promoting sustainable forest management will be encouraged to support the Congress.

III. Points for Consideration

13. The Commission may wish to:

- invite countries to support the Congress and to encourage the widest possible attendance and participation from all sectors within the Region;
- identify the highest priority issues and concerns of the Region, and to bring them to the attention of organizers to ensure that national and regional concerns are adequately addressed by the Congress;
- propose themes and topics that could form the basis of technical sessions at the Congress;
- invite people from the region to submit papers to be presented at the Congress;
- identify regional networks, institutions or individuals in the Region that would be important Congress contact points for the Congress organizers, as well as potential speakers at the Congress;
- convey information needs about the Congress, to ensure the information provided to the public is thorough and well-presented.

14. Member countries are encouraged to participate in the Congress at a high level, to broadly promote the Congress within the national forestry community, and if appropriate, to support the Congress financially by contributing to the Congress trust fund.