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EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION
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FAO EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION ISSUES

**FAO ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST TO THE REGION, INCLUDING THE FAO
STRATEGY FOR FORESTRY**

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The note introduces key events and processes involving the FAO forestry programme, inviting guidance and input from delegates.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This document introduces key events and processes involving the FAO forestry programme, including the XIII World Forestry Congress and the development of a new FAO strategy for forestry. *Delegates are invited to provide guidance on the specific points outlined in the sections below.*

II. NEW FAO STRATEGY FOR FORESTRY

2. The forestry sector is affected by the rapid pace of global changes, including economic globalization, acceleration of climate change, and the dynamism of global communications. In response to these changes and at the request of the Committee on Forestry (COFO), FAO is

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updating its strategy for forestry. The review is carried out in the context of ongoing United Nations and FAO reforms, and the Independent External Evaluation of FAO.

3. Following an extensive stakeholder consultation process between November 2007 and April 2008, including discussion by the three Regional Forestry Commissions that met in the early part of 2008, a draft strategy has been developed. Comments on the draft strategy are being solicited from FAO Members and other stakeholders through the Regional Forestry Commissions; through direct mailing to countries and organizations; and on the FAO web site. Based on feedback, the draft strategy will be revised and presented to FAO members for consideration during the 19th Session of COFO in Rome 16 – 20 March 2009.

4. The COFO Steering Committee, composed of Chairs of the Regional Forestry Commissions is expected to review a draft strategy at its meeting on 18 – 19 September 2008. *The European Forestry Commission will be briefed on the outcome and delegates are invited to share any additional views.*

III. GLOBAL FOREST RESOURCES ASSESSMENT (FRA 2010)

5. FRA 2010 will provide a comprehensive report on the extent of forests and other wooded land, their condition, management and uses, covering the seven “thematic elements of sustainable forest management.” Moreover, FRA 2010 will provide forest-related information for monitoring progress towards the 2010 Biodiversity Target of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Global Objectives on Forests of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the Millennium Development Goals, as endorsed by COFO. FRA 2010 was launched during a global workshop in Rome, 3 to 7 March 2008 in which more than 260 resource assessment specialists participated including representatives from 154 countries.

6. In addition to the collection of country information through questionnaires and thematic studies, a complementary global remote sensing survey will be carried out in partnership with countries and other organizations. The remote sensing survey will provide additional knowledge about land use change dynamics, including deforestation, afforestation and natural expansion of forests. FAO will offer training to strengthen countries’ capacity to determine historical trends in rates of deforestation and to monitor future rates, thus helping readiness to benefit from a potential instrument of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to reduce deforestation in developing countries.

7. Within the FRA process, FAO is committed to strengthening the existing global and regional networks of national correspondents and to further harmonizing forest reporting with other organizations. The UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on “*Monitoring forest resources for SFM in the UNECE Region*” supports the regional contribution to the global FRA and assists in the preparation and review of the next report on the State of Forests in Europe, for the Oslo Ministerial Conference. (www.fao.org/forestry/fra2010; www.unece.org/trade/timber/fratos/welcomeFRA.htm)

8. *Members of the Commission are invited to support their national correspondents to FRA 2010 and supporting teams to enable preparation of country reports and participation in the remote sensing survey and any special studies that may cover their country.*

IV. STATE OF THE WORLD'S FORESTS (SOFO) 2009

9. The State of the World's Forests (SOFO) is published by FAO every two years. The next edition, SOFO 2009, will be released at the 19th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry in Rome in March 2009. The theme of SOFO 2009 is "Society, forests and forestry: adapting for the future."

10. Part I of SOFO 2009 will outline how the future of forests and forestry is unfolding in the context of the larger societal changes drawing upon the ongoing and completed global and regional forest sector outlook studies, including the European Forest Sector Outlook Study (2005). Projections made earlier on demand have been updated. Part II will focus on adaptations in (a) institutions and (b) science and technology. A number of authors, including from Europe, are contributing to the preparation of SOFO 2009.

V. STATE OF THE WORLD'S FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

11. The FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has approved the inclusion of forest genetic resources in its Multi-Year Programme of Work. A State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources Report will be prepared for review in 2013, preceded by a scoping paper in 2009. COFO and the Regional Forestry Commissions will be involved in this process. The report will draw on FRA and other existing information such as national reports and outcomes of a series of regional forest genetic resources workshops that have been organized since the mid-1990s and that FAO and other partners continue to support (www.fao.org/forestry/site/fgr).

VI. XIII WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

12. The next World Forestry Congress will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 18-25 October 2009. It will provide a forum for the exchange of experiences and for discussions on various topics related to the theme, "Forests in development – a vital balance." Congress sessions will include keynote speeches, round-table discussions, poster presentations, numerous information events sponsored by organizations, exhibits and study tours.

13. The deadline for submitting abstracts for voluntary papers is December 2008. The Congress Secretariat is seeking donors to provide financial support for the participation of experts who produce the most relevant papers, with a broad regional representation to ensure that this is truly a "world" congress (www.wfc2009.org).

14. *The Regional Forestry Commissions, through their Executive Committees, are encouraged to assist in organizing regional specific activities of the Congress programme.* The chairs of the Regional Forestry Commissions have been invited to participate as members of the External Advisory Committee of the Congress.

VII. CPF STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ON FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

15. In April 2008, all the 14 members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) convened at FAO and agreed to develop a “CPF Strategic Framework for Coordinated Response of the Forest Sector to the Climate Change Agenda.” It aims to facilitate countries in the preparations for the post-2012 climate regime through information; contribute to the implementation of the UNFCCC, UNFF and other relevant agreements; and enhance coordinated action on the ground, including integration of relevant climate change aspects into sustainable forest management in cross-sectoral manner. The strategy will include both mitigation and adaptation. It will give particular attention to the specific needs related to reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) as expressed in the UNFCCC Bali Action Plan. The strategy will be made available at the UNFCCC COP 14 (December 2008), COFO (March 2009), UNFF 8 (April 2009), as well as meetings of the governing bodies of other CPF member organizations. (www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-climatechange)

VIII. INTERNATIONAL YEARS RELEVANT TO FORESTRY

16. Three forthcoming international years declared by the United Nations General Assembly feature forestry-related themes:

(a) International Year of Natural Fibres 2009 aims to foster international partnerships among various natural fibre industries. It intends to emphasize the value of these fibres to consumers while helping to sustain the incomes of farmers. Fibres from wood as well as from non-wood forest products can be important inputs, the latter particularly at the local level. FAO will facilitate implementation of the Year, together with partners.

(b) International Year of Biodiversity 2010 will coincide with the 2010 biodiversity target. It aims to raise awareness of biodiversity for sustaining life on earth and to mobilize the international community for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from its use. The Secretariat of CBD serves as the focal point for the Year and has created an inter-agency advisory committee, including FAO, to guide and maximize the activities.

(c) International Year of Forests 2011 aims to raise awareness of sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. Governments and other stakeholders are expected to promote related activities, including creating national committees. The Secretariat of UNFF serves as the focal point for the Year. FAO will collaborate with countries, the UNFF Secretariat and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) to support the Year.

17. All of the International Years will have global awareness-raising campaigns with a number of activities and information materials. These can be adapted for regional situations and will also support the preparation of national actions. ***Delegates are invited to consider the ways their countries could support and link activities at all levels to these three years, and the type of support FAO could provide, especially to the International Year of Forests (IYF).***

Annex

Summary of FAO activities in the region

1. Forestry Department activities addressed issues related to forest management for sustainable development in the Region. FAO activities focus on the impacts of political and economic transition on the forest sector in Eastern Europe. FAO works in close collaboration with relevant partners in the Region, namely the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Ministerial Conference on Protection of Forest in Europe (MCPFE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). FAO contributed, as in the past, to the implementation of the Joint Work Programme of the FAO European Forestry Commission and the UNECE Timber Committee. Ten workshops were organized by the Eastern European and Central Asian Subregional Offices in which most of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Central Asia participated and which addressed: policy options for wood energy, capacity-building for policy reforms in the forest sector of Eastern Europe, nature-oriented silviculture approaches in the light of the potential impact of climate change, instruments for the harmonization of forest management policies in the Carpathian region, the potential and options for assistance to private forestry and capacity-building on forest management in the Caucasus region, among others. The existing cooperative networks between the countries in the Region within the context of the UNECE/FAO integrated programme made a considerable contribution.

2. The Forestry Outlook Study for West and Central Asia (FOWECA) covering a number of Timber Committee and European Forestry Commission members was released in 2006. It addresses the degradation of forests and the provision of environmental services as the primary objective, as well as the declining importance of industrial wood production. The strengthening of national forest programmes, institutional improvements, capacity-building in strategic planning and improvements in the information base are seen as options for sustainable forest management.

3. The Thirty-Third FAO European Forestry Commission (Zvolen, 2006) addressed the challenges in sustainable forest management in Eastern Europe. Following the restitution of forests from the State to their previous owners in many countries of Central Europe holdings are frequently too small for efficient management. The session emphasized capacity-building on the basis of experiences in other European countries. It also pointed to the need for increased efforts to combat forest fires and for support to forest law enforcement. Fire Management projects, with a strong focus on community based fire management were undertaken in Bulgaria, Croatia and under preparation in Belarus. The 4th International Wildland Fire Conference was held in Seville, Spain in May 2007 at which the international partnership “The Fire Management Actions Alliance” was launched with 40 founding members, with the Secretariat at FAO, Rome.

4. The Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea* of the European Forestry Commission, African Forestry and Wildlife Commission and the Near East Forestry Commission held its 20th session in April 2008 in Sofia, Bulgaria. It recommended that:

- Cooperation between Mediterranean forestry researchers should be strengthened.
- Studies should be undertaken on to the impact of climate change on Mediterranean forests.
- The FAO/Blue Plan collaboration should be continued during the second phase of Project “Mediterranean Forests and Sustainable Development”.

5. A list of FAO projects carried out in the region will be made available at the time of the joint session in October.
