



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
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联合国
粮食及
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Food
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Agriculture
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the
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Nations

Organisation
des
Nations
Unies
pour
l'alimentation
et
l'agriculture

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY COMMISSION

Item 11 of the Provisional Agenda

TWENTIETH SESSION

Nadi, Fiji, 19-23 April 2004

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY COMMISSION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. The first meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) Executive Committee was held in Bangkok, Thailand, 3-4 December 2003. The purpose of the meeting was to review the Commission's work since the nineteenth session in Ulaanbaatar, deliberate on recent developments in forestry in the region and to discuss preparations for the twentieth session in Fiji. The main objective of the meeting was to recommend ways to strengthen the Commission's work.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING THE COMMISSION'S WORK

2. The meeting conducted an analysis of APFC strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Key strengths included the Commission's neutrality and flexibility, a motivated Secretariat, strong FAO support, and a diverse membership of developed and developing countries that cover a wide geographic area, encompassing nearly all forests of the region. Other strengths are:

- potential for strong partnership and synergy among members
- strong track record in information dissemination
- solid mechanisms for sharing experiences, resources and ideas
- institutional stability and tradition through more than a half-century of existence
- consistent involvement of high-ranking government officials
- some (but not enough) committed donors and sponsors
- willingness of member and partners to contribute in-kind resources to carry out activities.

3. The Executive Committee and Secretariat highlighted the following challenges facing APFC:

- low profile vis-à-vis other organizations and initiatives
- diversity of membership, making it difficult to identify priorities
- limited country leadership to plan and advance APFC initiatives
- weak coordination and linkage with other networks (e.g., Asia Forest Partnership, Asia

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- Forest Network, Asia Forest Law Enforcement and Governance, ASEAN)
- lack of a clear vision for its future role
 - difficulty in addressing the region's most challenging or controversial issues
 - overdependence on a single organization (FAO) for support
 - perception by member countries that FAO has funds for all activities and meetings
 - limited participation by the private sector and NGOs
 - low capacities within several member countries.
4. The Executive Committee emphasized that APFC should be governed and managed by member countries themselves and that this would require increased roles and responsibilities. Recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of the Commission and the opportunities that exist, the Executive Committee made a number of suggestions to strengthen APFC, as summarized below:
- a) Enhance the profile of APFC by
 - i) defining a clearer vision and future role;
 - ii) increasing opportunities for the Chair and Vice-Chairs to represent the Commission at relevant meetings, including in global and regional fora;
 - iii) organizing more activities, including opportunities for member countries to regularly discuss and debate global and regional forestry issues;
 - iv) producing more publications and distributing information more widely in local languages;
 - v) keeping the website up-to-date;
 - vi) disseminating news and activities to a wider range of newsletters and journals.
 - b) Enhance the involvement of member countries in APFC activities by
 - i) encouraging greater input in developing agendas for main sessions;
 - ii) seeking higher-level participation in sessions, including directors-general and ministers;
 - iii) identifying and clarifying the roles of APFC focal points in each member country;
 - iv) establishing more working groups, networks and informal mechanisms to facilitate inter-sessional activities;
 - v) encouraging countries to assume expanded leadership roles in coordinating working groups, networks, task forces, regional studies and other initiatives.
 - c) Increase the participation of the private sector and NGOs in APFC activities by
 - i) inviting a broader range of organizations and individuals to participate in APFC sessions and activities;
 - ii) developing a programme of activities relevant to the private sector and NGOs;
 - iii) conducting more activities in partnership with private sector associations and NGOs.
 - d) Increase funding to support APFC activities by
 - i) encouraging working groups and networks to develop their own proposals for donor support and fund raising;
 - ii) increasing partnerships with other organizations that share common interests;
 - iii) seeking increased contributions in cash or in-kind from member countries;
 - iv) linking more activities with the FAO Programme of Work and Budget;

- v) reminding member countries of their obligation to secure funding to attend main sessions.
- e) Streamline and clarify the way APFC functions by
 - i) reviewing the constitution and rules to ensure the Commission is relevant and responsive to developments in forestry;
 - ii) assessing and clarifying the roles and functions of the Secretariat, the Executive Committee, and country focal points, for example.
- f) Increase the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee by
 - i) clearly defining its composition (membership);
 - ii) convening at least one meeting between each session of the Commission;
 - iii) giving it greater authority to guide the activities of the Commission.
- g) Strengthen the APFC Secretariat by
 - i) seeking to recruit an Associate Professional Officer to provide full-time support;
 - ii) exploring the possibility for member countries to loan staff to the Secretariat for various periods of time to work on specific tasks.

ISSUES TO BRING TO THE ATTENTION OF THE 20TH SESSION OF APFC

5. The APFC Executive Committee would like to draw the attention of the full APFC membership to the recommendations in paragraph 4. Delegates may wish to demonstrate their support for these recommendations or provide alternative guidance.
6. The First Meeting of the APFC Executive Committee was considered very productive and useful. Delegates may therefore consider recommending the establishment of the Executive Committee as a regular functioning component of the Commission. Membership could include the current APFC Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons, at least one member of the outgoing bureau, a designated official from the country hosting the next session of the Commission, and the FAO Senior Forestry Officer for Asia and the Pacific (ex-officio).