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**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations****Economic Commission for Europe****Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry****Seventy-fifth session**

Warsaw, Poland 9-13 October 2017

Item 4(k) of the provisional agenda

FAO European Forestry Commission matters:**Contributions to FAO Governance****Food and Agriculture Organization****European Forestry Commission****Thirty-ninth session**

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Contributions to FAO Governance**Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

The Commission will be requested to recommend topics to be considered at the thirty-first session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) and the twenty-seventh session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) in 2018. Delegates will be informed about relevant information from the fortieth session of the FAO Conference and FAO Council. The Commission will also identify its regional priorities for the FAO Forestry programme.



I. The role of regional – global interaction in FAO and beyond

1. Strengthening regional – global interaction has been a major objective of FAO governing bodies since the adoption of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal. Since 2011, the Committee on Forestry (COFO) and the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) have been working through a coordinated mechanism to provide input to the Regional Conferences, to the agenda of the Committee and to the programme priorities for forestry in FAO. The coordination mechanism has evolved over the years and has become a major vehicle of influencing the focus of global dialogues on forest within FAO and in certain cases even beyond.

2. In addition to receiving input from the Commissions, COFO regularly provides opportunities for interactive dialogues to review progress on the regional level. In its discussion at the twenty-third Session, COFO not only welcomed the accomplishments and contributions of the Commissions, but also suggested the exploration of further opportunities in this regard. It further recognized the role of the Commissions in setting programme priorities¹.

3. The COFO recommendation is well reflected in the Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee for 2016-2019 (MYPOW) where the interaction with the Commissions plays a key role both in strategy, priority setting and budget planning as well as in developing advice on global policy and regulatory matters. Furthermore, this interaction constitutes an important element of the Committee's working method. According to the MYPOW "The Committee shall maintain close coordination with the Regional Forestry Commissions, including in aligning agendas, identifying common items and developing meeting calendars to allow for timely input to the Regional Conferences and to the Committee."²

4. The Regional Forestry Commissions often consider global developments outside FAO, such as the dialogues within the Rio Conventions and the International Arrangement on Forests and in this latter case provide their input to both the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). In addition to contributing to reviews prepared for UNFF³, the Commissions also offer an opportunity to discuss UNFF matters of global relevance in a regional context and to enhance regional/sub-regional involvement in the work of the Forum⁴.

5. While the regional – global collaboration has been repeatedly acknowledged and welcomed by member countries and the Organization alike, experiences show further opportunities for improvement in some areas. The collaboration in, and contribution to developing the COFO agenda appears to be the best functioning element; though there is still room for enhancing the contribution to the Regional Conferences and to the programme priorities of FAO.

¹ COFO/2016/REP paragraph 43.

² COFO/2016/10 paragraph 29.

³ E.g. http://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2016_AHEG_INF1.pdf page 86-88.

⁴ COFO/2016/REP paragraph 53(b).

II. Opportunities for enhanced input to the Regional Conferences

6. Considerable differences exist among FAO regions regarding the share and role of forests in both the natural and socio-economic environments, consequently, forest-related discussions play different roles in the different agendas. While these differences should be well understood and appreciated, still there is a need for giving appropriate attention to forests in each region. This attention should be relative to forests' importance in achieving FAO's global goals and in contributing to making progress in major global objectives, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda and major agreements under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and UNFF.

7. Considering the broad topical coverage of the Regional Conferences, identification of forest-related topics with strong cross-sectoral dimensions and integrated approaches are key to encourage other sectors' involvement in the related discussions. The Executive Committees of the Regional Forestry Commissions, with support from the secretariat, could play an important role in identifying such topics in the intersessional period and present recommendations in this regard for the consideration of the forthcoming session of their Commission.

8. It should also be born in mind that a considerable logistical challenge is arising from the meeting calendars in channelling the Commissions' input to the Conferences. In spite of careful planning, time is often short between the Commission and Conference sessions, and if discussions on including forest issues only start after the conclusion of the Commission session, then there may be little chance to shape the decision on the Conference's agenda.

9. The Executive Committees of the Commissions considered this challenge at their last joint meeting in 2016 and stressed the need for active and early collaboration between the Executive Committees and the Bureaux of the Conferences, and for such collaboration be replicated at the secretariat level. In this context, the Commission may wish to note the calendar of RFC and Regional Conference sessions:

Session	Date	Location	Note	RC
NAFC 28	19 to 21 September 2017	Edmonton, Canada	Workshop on 18 September	IRC tbc
ACFC 29	24 to 29 September 2017	Tegucigalpa, Honduras		5 to 9 March 2018
EFC 39 (joint with COFFI)	9 to 13 October 2017	Warsaw, Poland	EFW4	May 2018 tbc
APFC 26	23 to 27 October 2017	Colombo, Sri Lanka		30 April to 4 May 2018
AFWC 20	tbc	tbc		19 to 23 February 2018
NEFRC 22	11 to 15 December 2017	Beirut, Lebanon	NEFRC3	23 to 27 April 2018

III. Enhancing the priority setting function of the Commissions

10. Experiences show that identifying priorities and in particular identifying areas of de-emphasis have been difficult for a set of reasons. However, in the absence of such guidance from the Commissions, the COFO Steering Committee is also experiencing a complex challenge when advising the secretariat in developing the recommendation for programme priorities in forestry.

11. In order to avoid the creation of constantly growing list of requests for actions, which, in the absence of similarly growing human and financial resources would prove to be unrealistic or unfeasible, attention should be given to also identifying the level of priority of the recommended actions. Similarly, when reviewing progress in the implementation or past decisions, the Commissions may wish to pay attention to identifying areas where, based on the progress made, less involvement of the Organization seems desirable in the future.

12. In order to facilitate the Commission's thinking in this regard, the secretariat should, when reporting on progress, provide an evaluation of the progress against the mandate, indicating whether further work is needed. In providing such an evaluation, the secretariat may also seek the opinion of the Executive Committee in preparing for the session.

13. Furthermore, during the sessions, the secretariat should support the Executive Committee by translating the outcome of the discussions into an established template on a daily basis. The Executive Committee may wish to consider this compilation regularly and decide to distribute it regularly as an in-session document, for continued consideration by members in preparing for the discussion of the agenda item on programme priorities.

IV. Format of the input

14. The Commission may wish to formulate its recommendations using the following templates:

RFC recommendations for the attention of COFO (Annex 1)

15. The Commission may wish to identify the topic, the suggested action by COFO and, to the extent possible, the follow-up action recommended for the Committee and/or FAO. Making reference to recommendations of other Commissions is strongly encouraged to increase coherence and coordination.

16. To facilitate the Commission's thinking in this regard, the Executive Committee may wish to be involved actively in the formulation of the recommendations in the course of the session, to ensure that a draft set of recommendations be presented to the Commission towards the conclusion of the session.

RFC recommendations for the attention of the RC (Annex 2)

17. The Commission may wish to identify priority issues for the consideration of the Regional Conference (RC) taking into account the discussion under the section "Opportunities for enhanced input to the Regional Conferences" above.

RFC recommendations for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry related to the agenda of the current session (Annex 3)

18. The secretariat, under the guidance of the Executive Committee, regularly translates the outcome of the discussions of the different agenda items, distributes it regularly, and presents a complete set for the Commission's final consideration. The reference to the

Strategic Objectives can, but does not necessarily have to, be established during the session, it could be a task left for subsequent action by the secretariat.

19. In order for the Commission to be able to build more strongly on synergies, the set of recommendations made by other Commissions will be made available as miscellaneous documents prior to the session.

V. Points for consideration

20. The Commission may wish to:

- Develop its recommendations for the draft agenda of COFO, for the attention of the Regional Conference and for the programme priorities for FAO in forestry;
- Request the secretariat to share these recommendations with other RFCs;
- Invite the Chairperson of the Regional Conference to give adequate attention to the recommendations of the Commission in the agenda of the Conference.

Annex 1**RFC recommendations for the attention of COFO (issues to be considered for inclusion in the Agenda)**

<i>Priority issues for COFO to consider</i>	<i>Expected outcome (information/discussion/decision)</i>	<i>Possible follow up activities for COFO and FAO</i>	<i>Reference to other RFC recommendation</i>

Annex 2**RFC recommendations for the attention of the RC**

<i>Priority issues for the RC to consider</i>	<i>Expected outcome (information/discussion/decision)</i>	<i>Possible follow up activities for FAO)</i>

The Executive Committee may wish to prepare a recommendation based on the results of the intersessional work and on collaboration with the RC bureau. The recommendation should be amended in light of the discussions during the session.

Annex 3**RFC recommendations for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry related to the agenda of the current session**

<i>Area/action for FAO programme of work</i>	<i>Priority (High, Medium, Low, De-emphasis)</i>	<i>Type (new, continued)</i>	<i>Level of action (sub-regional/ regional./global)</i>	<i>Strategic Objective (1-5)</i>

This table is expected to be pre-filled during the session by the secretariat. It should summarize actions recommended by the Commission in discussing the various agenda items.