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

Engelberg, 2-6 November 2015

Item 8(c) of the provisional agenda

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

Engelberg, 2-6 November 2015

Contributions to FAO Governance**Note by the secretariat****I. Formulating the agenda for COFO and identifying priorities**

1. In response to the recommendations of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal (IPA) the Committee on Forestry (COFO) had taken several steps to strengthen the internal oversight function of the Committee as a FAO governing body, and to enable the regional forestry commissions (RFCs) to play a more proactive role in providing input to the FAO governance through the Committee and the Regional Conferences.

2. To facilitate these functions a coordination mechanism was introduced in 2011 to enable RFCs to make recommendations for the forthcoming sessions of their respective Regional Conferences, for the draft agenda of COFO, and for the priorities for the FAO Forestry programme. As a result, the draft agenda of the COFO sessions was based on these recommendations, and the RFC recommendations for the programme priorities had been presented to COFO in the respective session documents (COFO/2012/9.3 and COFO/2014/7.1). COFO appreciated the input from the RFCs and endorsed their recommendations providing guidance on areas of priority in the context of the Strategic Framework, allowing FAO Forestry work to contribute more effectively to achieving the three global goals of FAO.

3. It has been repeatedly acknowledged that the COFO-RFC interaction provides a unique vehicle of regional-global collaboration and policy and programme coordination. The system elevated the coordination and the input to FAO governance and program of work and budget (PWB) planning to new levels. While it has been continuously improved on the basis of the experiences, the COFO Steering Committee noted the need for and the

challenges in prioritizing the rich set of recommendations of the RFCs to avoid an ever expanding list of actions and suggested that the secretariat seek ways for strengthening the system in this regard. Corresponding with the conclusion of the Steering Committee the Independent Review of the FAO Governance Reform noted that in the absence of proper instruments for exercising an internal oversight function, programme priority discussions in the Technical Committees tend to result in long “shopping lists”.

4. Based on the experiences and the guidance from various sources the following broad recommendations were presented for and approved by the COFO Steering Committee:

- The tables be simplified and less ambitious in terms of describing the implications of the suggested actions. Any recommendation for FAO action should consider the Strategic Framework and the Strategic Objectives as the overarching management framework.
- RFCs should kindly indicate the relative importance of the actions recommended, so that they could provide stronger guidance for the secretariat in developing recommendations for the PWB. Furthermore, Commissions may wish to give their guidance also on areas of de-emphasis to help keep balance between work programme and budgetary resources.
- RFCs should kindly link their recommendations to those of other Commissions wherever such relationship exists.

5. On this basis the Commission may wish to formulate its recommendations using the following templates:

- **RFC recommendations for the attention of COFO (Annex 1):**

The Commission is kindly invited to indicate the topic, the suggested action by COFO (information, discussion or decision), and, as much as possible, the follow up action expected from COFO and/or FAO. Commissions may also wish to make reference to similar or identical recommendation of other RFCs. While the set of recommendations is expected to emanate from the Commission's discussions the Executive Committee may wish to be engaged in its formulation early on by developing, in the course of the session, a draft set of recommendation for the Committee's consideration towards the conclusion of the session.

- **RFC recommendations for the attention of the RC (Annex 2):**

The Commission is kindly invited to identify priority issues for the consideration of the Regional Conference. While report of the session as a whole will be presented to the Regional Conference as an information item, the Commission may wish to highlight issues which would require specific policy guidance from the Regional Conference, or which are expected to be brought to the attention of other governing bodies, in particular the Council and the Conference, on a track parallel to COFO.

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

These recommendations would be compiled by the secretariat, under the guidance of the Executive Committee, from the outcome of the discussion of the different agenda items, and presented as a complete set for the Commission's final consideration. In order to enhance the priority setting function, the Commission is kindly invited to identify the suggested level of priority (high, medium, low or de-emphasis); the reference to previous priorities (new or continued). The Commission is further invited to indicate the scope of the action (regional or global) thereby giving guidance on how and where to include it in the PWB. The reference to the SOs can, but does not necessarily have to be established during the session, it could be a task left for subsequent action by the secretariat.

6. 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. The Commission may wish to note in this context the calendar of RFC and Regional Conference session:

Commission	Date	Location	RC
Europe (joint with COFFI)	2-6 November 2015	Switzerland	2-5 May 2016
Latin America and Caribbean	9-13 November 2015	Peru	29 Feb.-3 March 2016
Near East	13-17 December 2015	Algeria	18-22 April 2016
North America	11-16 January 2016	Mexico	
Africa	1-5 February 2016	Tanzania	4-8 April 2016
Asia-Pacific	22-26 February 2016	Philippines	7-11 March 2016

II. Strengthening the focus on the reviewed Strategic Framework

7. FAO's current Strategy for Forests and Forestry (Strategy) had been adopted by the 19th session of COFO in 2009. The Strategy was developed in the broader context of FAO's vision and Global Goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Global Objectives on Forests adopted by the UN General Assembly. The Strategy was foreseen to be a dynamic document with an anticipated timeframe of 10 years and with direct links to the Medium Term Plans (MTP) and the program budget process.

8. Several important developments have taken place since the adoption of the Strategy. Most notably, FAO had introduced its reviewed Strategic Framework 2010-2019 and had set out truly cross-cutting and interdisciplinary Strategic Objectives (SOs) leading to thinking and taking actions in a cross-sectoral manner with traditional topical boundaries removed.. The MDGs are due for review in 2015 and be replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) setting a whole new international development agenda for the post-2015 period. Furthermore, the world is also preparing for a far-reaching agreement on climate change in 2015.

9. These fundamental developments offer an excellent opportunity for reconsidering and strengthening the contribution of forests and forestry to sustainable development and may necessitate the revision of the Strategy so that it could support fully the achievement of the Strategic Objectives and strengthen the contribution to the implementation of the SDGs. A revised Strategy could also help consider FAO's work in forestry in the broader context of the Organization's reviewed Strategic Framework, and focus it on this basis, as requested by COFO and the FAO Conference.

III. Points for consideration

10. The Commission may wish to:

- develop its recommendations for the draft agenda of COFO, for the attention of the Regional Conference and for the program priorities for FAO in forestry;
- request the secretariat to share these recommendations with other RFCs;
- recommend COFO and through it to FAO to initiate the revision of the Strategy for Forests and Forestry.

11. The Commission may wish to 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>

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>

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.