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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

## Thirty-sixth Session

**Dhaka, Bangladesh, 8-11 March 2022**

## Report of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC)

### Executive Summary

The 28th Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC-28) was held from 17 to 21 June 2019 in Incheon, Republic of Korea. The Commission was convened as the core event of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2019, which attracted more than 2 000 participants and included 100 events organized by FAO and partner organisations.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 29th Session of the APFC was delayed and is now scheduled from 22 to 25 February 2022. It will be hosted by Mongolia under the theme "Forests and Green Recovery". This Information Note summarizes the action taken on the recommendations of APFC28 and the progress related to organizing the 29th Session, including the outlook on strengthening the collaboration between the Regional Forestry Commission and the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO).

### Suggested action by the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference is invited to recall the recommendations of APFC28 and advise FAO on the steps to be taken in the countries of the region. Key outcomes consisted in requests to FAO to:

- a. advance the role of forest products in addressing climate change, and pursue opportunities to promote and implement the work of the Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World initiative in Asia and the Pacific region;
- b. continue to expand efforts to support climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, including building resilience against natural disasters;
- c. support member countries to promote the carbon-storage properties of forest products;
- d. support regional and national capacity-building on conflict management and dispute resolution in forestry;
- e. continue to provide support to developing community forestry programmes, including community enterprise development;

- f. continue to provide support to forest and landscape restoration, including for capacity-building and to national and regional programmes;
- g. conduct a review of the use of technology in forestry, including identifying prerequisites for creating enabling environments for technology development and uptake; and
- h. conduct further work based on the third Asia-Pacific Forest Sector Outlook Study (APFSOS III) publication to develop supporting issues-based materials, targeted at specific stakeholder groups and tailored for various media distribution mechanisms.

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## Introduction

1. Created in 1949, the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) is one of the six regional forestry commissions established by FAO. It is an Article VI Statutory Body with the secretariat provided and supported by FAO. Its main functions are to: discuss and assess technical and policy issues and trends relevant to forestry in the region; develop and advance mechanisms for regional and subregional cooperation in addressing forestry problems; and advise FAO on policy formulation and priorities for its forestry programmes in the region. The Commission currently counts 34 members.<sup>1</sup>
2. The 28th Session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC28) was held from 17 to 21 June 2019 in Incheon, Republic of Korea.<sup>2</sup> It was attended by 20 Members and four United Nations (UN) organizations, together with observers and representatives from 22 regional and international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.
3. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 29th Session of the APFC could not take place in 2021 as planned and is now scheduled from 22 to 25 February 2022, and will be hosted by Mongolia. This Information Note summarizes the progress along main themes related to the 14 recommendations of APFC28, including the review of APFC governance modalities and the outlook for strengthening collaboration between the Regional Forestry Commission and the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO). The Commission was convened as the core event of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Week 2019, which attracted more than 2000 participants and included 100 events organized by FAO and partner organizations.
4. The APFC recognized the need for governments, key stakeholders and FAO to continue to advance work in a number of areas, including regional and national capacity-building on conflict management and dispute resolution; forest and landscape restoration; community forests, trade and markets; impacts of technological advances on forests and forestry; biodiversity; supporting the implementation of key recommendations coming from the Third Asia-Pacific Forest Sector Outlook Study (APFSOS III); and forests and climate change.
5. APFC28 elected the Republic of Korea as the Chairperson of the APFC Executive Committee until the 29th APFC Session; Australia, Indonesia and Nepal as Vice-Chairpersons; and Thailand as Rapporteur. Mongolia informed the APFC of its expression of interest to host its 29th Session.

## Progress to date

6. The presentation of progress to date is summarized around the main themes related to the recommendations of APFC28: climate actions; forest and landscape restoration; and the follow-up to the Third Asia-Pacific Forest Sector Outlook Study (APFSOS III).
7. **Climate actions:** Various national activities have advanced in the context of REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation plus the sustainable management of forests, and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks), notably the UN-REDD programme. Since 2020, a new UN-REDD programme was launched in the Lower Mekong Region (SFT-FGL) in Cambodia, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam), in close collaboration with the Asia component of the global European Union-FAO Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Programme. FAO has continued to support countries in achieving high-quality emission reductions from deforestation and forest degradation, and in enhancing and conserving tropical forests and other high-carbon ecosystems – for example, through the development of accurate

<sup>1</sup> Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russian Federation, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, and the United Kingdom (observer status).

<sup>2</sup> APFC/2019/REP.

and transparent forest monitoring, including in peatland and mangrove ecosystems, and community forestry actions. A short note on carbon storage in harvested wood products was prepared.

8. **Forest and landscape restoration:** The Asia-Pacific Landscape Restoration Mechanism (APLRM) is a multi-stakeholder partnership led by the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC) in collaboration with UN Environment Programme of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Under the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism, restoration activities advanced in several countries (Cambodia, Fiji, Pakistan, Philippines and Vanuatu). An informal Asia-Pacific working group on forest and landscape restoration was established and two meetings were held to promote regional cooperation. An Associate Professional Officer from Sweden has also joined FAO to support forest and landscape restoration in the region. A regional technical cooperation programme is being implemented to support member countries in the development of national landscape restoration plans, as well as to foster capacities, create regional communication platforms and establish a regional consortium on forest and landscape restoration. The Third Asia-Pacific Urban Forestry Meeting, co-organized with the Royal Forest Department of Thailand, was held to advance the Seoul Action Plan.

9. **Forest governance:** Through the Asia-Pacific component of Phase III (2016-2021) of the FAO-European Union Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Programme, FAO supported nine tropical timber-producing countries to strengthen legality frameworks, legality assurance systems and legality compliance in support of a more sustainable and transparent timber sector and improved market access. Since 2020, the new UN-Lower Mekong Region (SFT-FGL) initiative focuses on addressing illegal logging through the development of national standards, systems and capacities for verification of legal and sustainable timber, including through forest certification.

10. **Follow up to the APFSOS III:** Given the importance of forestry in the economies of the Pacific Island countries, a specific forest sector subregional outlook study was initiated with a focus on climate change and resilience. The study had the active support and collaboration of APFC member countries and partners. In collaboration with the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), other work includes the development of: (i) a roadmap on the status, trends and outlook of primary forests in Asia and the Pacific and key policy and concrete actions for their conservation; and (ii) a roadmap to promote the use of new technologies in sustainable forest management.

### Review of the APFC governance modalities and coordination with COFO

11. During its 25th Session, held from 5 to 9 October 2020, the Committee on Forestry (COFO) requested FAO to consult with the Regional Forestry Commissions on ways to help facilitate their contributions to international processes and goals;<sup>3</sup> and invited FAO to explore options for further linking the work of these Statutory Bodies to the work of the Forestry Division and other policy areas with relevance for forestry, in order to increase their relevance and efficiency and to create synergies and enhance participation.<sup>4</sup>

12. Regarding the review of the APFC governance structure, it was decided that the review would be undertaken in three phases, aligned with the calendars of COFO and future APFC sessions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiation of the first phase – the preparation of a first scoping document – has been delayed.

### Conclusions

13. The commitment that members made at APFC28 to continue to work together with key stakeholders and FAO to improve sustainable forest management in the region remains a highly relevant ambition that is gaining even greater urgency in the context of a green recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 35, C 2021/24.

<sup>4</sup> Paragraph 40, C 2021/24.

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14. The 29th Session of the APFC will be hosted by Mongolia and will take place in virtual mode on from 22 to , / @ lo ls , , q ab tb tb g @l mm h Al hL i p ls (