

Summary of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry: 3-7 October 2022

Celebrating its 50th anniversary and the first meeting in person since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee on Forestry (COFO) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations successfully tackled a packed agenda of 17 topics, providing guidance to FAO bodies and others on emerging policy and technical issues.

Among other things, the Committee discussed the implications and follow-up of the findings of FAO's publication, "The State of the World's Forests 2022," and the XV World Forestry Congress held in May 2022 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. COFO also considered how FAO should proceed with work on linkages between agriculture and forestry and climate change. It examined preparations for the 2025 edition of the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA), the role of remote sensing in the Assessment, and how to define "forest degradation" for the purposes of the FRA. Delegates discussed sustainable production of wood and non-wood forest products and their value chains, and the role of such products in combating climate change, including the draft action plan for implementing FAO's newest Strategy on Climate Change.

The 26th session of COFO was held in hybrid format from 3-7 October 2022, with the in-person segment held at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, and with members unable to attend in person due to COVID-19 travel restrictions able to attend virtually. Approximately 760 people participated in person or online, representing 109 Member States. Alongside COFO, the [8th World Forest Week](#) convened, featuring a series of special events to discuss pressing forestry issues. The theme of World Forest Week was "Growing a better planet."

A Brief History of COFO

COFO is the highest of the FAO Forestry Statutory Bodies, which also include the Regional Forestry Commissions, the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions, the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries, and the International Poplar Commission. COFO's biennial sessions bring together heads of forest services and other senior government officials to identify emerging policy and technical issues, to seek solutions, and to advise the FAO and others on appropriate action. Membership in COFO is open to all FAO Member States wishing to participate in its work.

Recent Highlights

COFO 21: Convened in September 2012, COFO 21 focused on translating the results of the June 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development ("Rio+20") into action and strengthening forestry's many cross-sectoral linkages.

COFO 22: In June 2014, COFO 22 reviewed the state of the world's forests and examined forest policy measures that promote sustainable production and consumption; access to resources, markets and financing; equitable benefit sharing; and the valuation of forest products and services.

COFO 23: COFO 23 convened in July 2016 to address how forests and sustainable forest management (SFM) can contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly regarding livelihoods, food security, jobs, and gender equality, as well as contribute to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

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COFO 24: Meeting in July 2018, COFO 24 discussed:

- the contributions that forests can make to achieving the SDGs and other internationally agreed goals;
- ways and means to accelerate progress, in particular, towards SDG 15 (life on land);
- actions for implementing Committee on World Food Security's policy recommendations regarding the contributions of forests to food security and nutrition;
- opportunities and challenges for urban and peri-urban forestry; and
- implementation of FAO's climate change strategy and specific tasks related to forest resilience, health and forest fires.

COFO 25: Postponed and then switched to a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic, COFO 25 convened in October 2020 to review the State of the World's Forests 2020 (SOFO 2020) and the Global Forest Resource Assessment 2020 (FRA 2020), and discuss, among other things:

- impacts of COVID-19 on the forest sector and how to respond;
- the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors;
- forests as a nature-based solution for climate change;
- the role of forests in transforming food systems;
- contributions to the UN Decades on Family Farming and on Ecosystem Restoration; and
- preparations for the fifteenth World Forestry Congress (WFC XV).

COFO 26 Report

COFO 26 opened on Monday, 3 October 2022. FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu underscored the importance of the messages in the [State of the World's Forests 2022](#) report and the XV World Forestry Congress' [Seoul Declaration](#). He welcomed COFO's discussion on agriculture/forestry linkages as an important step to identifying opportunities to improve complementarity between the sectors and strengthen coordinated policy responses on synergies and trade-offs.

Stressing the power of nature-based solutions, Princess Basma bint Ali of Jordan, FAO's Goodwill Ambassador for the Near East and North Africa, said forests are the key to addressing challenges in climate change, food security, land degradation, and biodiversity loss.

Cécile Ndjebet, African Woman's Network for Community Management of Forests and Wangari Maathai Forest Champion 2022, highlighted the challenges the world faces from climate change and biodiversity loss and encouraged delegates to work together on restoration and reforestation programmes. She stressed the strength, power, and determination of rural communities and smallholders (small-scale farmers) as a driving change in conservation from the ground up.

Anali Bustos, Youth Forest Change-maker 2022, suggested nature is itself the best factory of solutions to global environmental challenges and encouraged COFO members to invest in research and training programmes in SFM. She said youth are ready to aid transformation, "spread hope, and change history."

Italian artist Erica Boschiero closed the opening ceremony, performing her latest song "Respira" (Breathe) about the inseparable relationship between humans and the forests that provide humans oxygen to breathe and live.

The plenary then adopted the provisional agenda ([COFO 2022/1 Rev.1](#)).

First Vice-Chair Glenn Hargrove (Canada) explained that in the absence of the Chair, under Rule 1 of the COFO Rules of Procedure, he would be serving as acting Chair throughout COFO 26. He announced that the Regional Forestry Commissions had nominated their Chairs as COFO Vice-Chairs. The following COFO officers were nominated and elected by acclamation: Liubov Poliakova (Ukraine), Ainsley Henry (Jamaica), José Ilanga (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Oyunsanaa Byambasuren (Mongolia), and Alaa Azouz (Egypt) as Co-Vice-Chairs.

In addition, delegates elected Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Czechia (representing the European Union – EU), Ethiopia, Japan, and the Russian Federation as members of the Drafting Committee.

State of the World's Forests 2022: Forest Pathways for Green Recovery and Building Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Economies

On Monday, Chair Hargrove introduced the introductory document on the State of the World's Forests 2022 (SOFO 2022) ([COFO/2022/2 Rev.1](#)), which explores the potential of three interrelated forest pathways for achieving green recovery and tackling multi-dimensional planetary crises:

- halting deforestation and maintaining forests;
- restoring degraded lands and expanding agroforestry; and
- sustainably using forests and building green value chains.

The introductory document also explains that SOFO 2022 presents evidence on the feasibility and value of these pathways and outlines initial steps for pursuing them.

SOFO 2022 was discussed on Monday and Tuesday. Delegates welcomed, supported, or praised SOFO 2022. Kuwait, on behalf of the GROUP OF 77 (G-77) AND CHINA, welcomed the report's key findings. He called on COFO members to consider SOFO 2022 a "living document," open to updates to help reflect the contextual situation of all Member States. Furthermore, he encouraged the FAO to develop a strategic framework based on science, while responding to countries' specific needs and challenges.

BRAZIL encouraged FAO to focus more on the economic aspects of forest management while noting the need for increasing payment for environmental services and addressing the capacity needs of small-scale farmers.

AUSTRALIA asked that "green" production references in SOFO 2022 be replaced with "sustainable" production.

Nigeria, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, noted that FAO's expertise is critical in helping countries improve food systems and transform toward green economies. He advised FAO to explore different financial mechanisms to ensure outreach to poor and marginalized people. He highlighted the African Great Green Wall initiative.

MALAYSIA and COSTA RICA encouraged FAO to highlight the health and climate-related benefits of forest conservation and the linkages between forest conservation and communities' livelihood needs. They emphasized the importance of FAO assistance to developing countries in developing innovation strategies to ensure success.

UKRAINE expressed concern that the report does not reflect on the situation in Ukraine caused by the Russian invasion and its impact on forest management and the timber trade. BELARUS

highlighted that the report does not cover the recent fencing by Poland on the border between Belarus and Poland, which affects transboundary forest management and wildlife movement.

Czechia, for the EU, MOLDOVA, TÜRKIYE, and UKRAINE, stressed forest value chains in the circular economy and agroforestry. He urged replacing harmful policies with incentives for SFM.

The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC underscored access to credit, land ownership, capacity, innovation, and technology for local communities. She linked FAO forest work to sustainable food systems. MEXICO stressed FAO's promotion of investment in forests, urging direct FAO funding for women, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted the WFC XV's Seoul Forest Declaration and a Korean Forestry Service direct on-site payment programme for multiple forest benefits. AFGHANISTAN, supporting the G-77/China's statement, said Taliban neglect of forest and biodiversity has harmed livelihoods and economic development.

JAMAICA noted 70% of Jamaican forest is private, risking conversion and unregulated extraction and timber. She said gross domestic product (GDP) does not reflect grossly undervalued ecosystem services and urged the FAO to work on augmenting green economies. IRAN noted it possesses the Dizmar Protected Area, a UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site, and requested FAO help on natural resources and watershed management to mitigate land degradation.

INDIA said SOFO 2022 shows protecting forests addresses climate change, biodiversity loss, and disease. NEW ZEALAND called for growing food where best environmentally supported while minimizing food insecurity-producing trade barriers and subsidies. She condemned the Russian aggression in Ukraine. INDONESIA announced its State of Indonesian Forests 2022 report.

The US requested dissemination of SOFO 2022 to all decisionmakers who influence forests and a reference in SOFO to forest damage from the current war in Ukraine. THAILAND called for private finance to address public financing gaps and for more FAO finance and technical assistance.

JAPAN emphasized sustainable wood production and consumption and balanced application of the pathways in each nation. He also condemned Russian aggression in Ukraine. TÜRKIYE underscored forests' economic benefits, including for poverty reduction, and SOFO 2022's data accessibility.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION said deforestation is being caused by land use changes in Australia and timber exports in Ukraine. She bemoaned Poland's actions in the Białowieża Forest, a UNESCO World Heritage site bordering Belarus. VENEZUELA urged using multilaterally-agreed language and changing the global mercantilist model.

BURUNDI noted forests' significance in its updated national determined contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement on climate change, requesting FAO support for implementation. ETHIOPIA mentioned the Green Legacy Initiative, a flagship reforestation project launched by the Prime Minister.

CANADA supported the SOFO 2022 recommendations and condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its impacts on human life, forests, and the environment. She said Canada's forest cover has remained stable and noted plans to plant 20 billion trees over the next four years.

PERU also supported the SOFO 2022 recommendations and noted there is need for greater cost/benefit analysis of forest management. CHINA stressed interlinking restoration of grasslands and forests. He reported that China has made concerted efforts to conserve forests, water and mountains through large-scale restoration projects.

FRANCE asked the FAO to distribute the SOFO report widely to raise awareness about actions to achieve forest sustainability and economic and social objectives. He noted that France has banned imports of products produced through deforestation. PANAMA called for enhancing funding for the forestry sector, saying all countries need access to greener funding tools to achieve their national goals on land degradation.

The Chair introduced his draft summary of the Committee's conclusions on Tuesday. Most of the discussion about the summary was concluded Tuesday, although disputed provisions on technical cooperation and the war in Ukraine were postponed until Thursday pending informal consultations to seek compromise language.

The EU suggested adding reference to the three interrelated pathways to a paragraph noting SOFO 2022 findings. BRAZIL, supported by CAMEROON, suggested referring to global "challenges" rather than global "crises."

CAMEROON, supported by ZAMBIA, asked to remove "halt deforestation" from a paragraph of SOFO 2022 findings. CONGO suggested referring to "limiting" deforestation. The EU pointed out "halt deforestation" is agreed language, including in COFO. CAMEROON conceded it was previously agreed language but said "the agreement was several years ago" and "and things have evolved." He opposed language "halting" or "limiting" deforestation, saying it would be a red line issue for his country.

MADAGASCAR suggested referring to "managing deforestation." CANADA, supported by NEW ZEALAND and the US, favored retaining "halt deforestation" and cautioned against lowering ambition on deforestation. The Chair proposed a compromise using language borrowed from the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use: "work collectively to halt forest loss and degradation." BRAZIL suggested adding "restore degraded lands." SOUTH AFRICA urged adding "restore drylands."

ARGENTINA proposed an amendment calling for Members to "use" SOFO 2022 findings "as appropriate," rather than disseminating SOFO 2022 findings widely, saying SOFO 2022 is not a text negotiated by Members and not all its conclusions are suitable for everyone. Chair Hargrove pointed out that many delegates advocated wide dissemination of SOFO 2022 findings in their statements, so some mention of dissemination should remain in the paragraph. ARGENTINA, with BRAZIL, agreed to "use and disseminate" SOFO 2022 findings "as appropriate." The EU called for "inviting" FAO to disseminate SOFO 2022 findings.

The EU suggested a new paragraph, opposed by ARGENTINA, BRAZIL and CAMEROON, highlighting that global deforestation is mainly caused by agricultural expansion and FAO plays an important role in finding out how to address the causes. ETHIOPIA suggested a new paragraph, saying a reference to "agricultural expansion" here is not necessary as long as another paragraph refers to using and disseminating SOFO 2022 findings.

BRAZIL, supported by INDONESIA, proposed an alternative "highlighting the need to scale up sustainable agricultural practices to contribute to forest conservation and sustainable use, minimizing

environmental degradation, increasing productivity, and unlocking the potential of science and innovation.” AUSTRALIA proposed alternative text highlighting that “FAO plays an important role in finding out how to address drivers of deforestation, including from the agricultural sector.” CAMEROON suggested focusing on “expansion of agricultural production” rather than agriculture generally.

The EU, supported by AUSTRALIA and UKRAINE, suggested another new paragraph about the impact of the war in Ukraine on global food security and agrifood systems, and stressing the important role of the FAO in addressing impacts of the war on the global forest sector. BELARUS and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION objected, arguing there was no consensus language within FAO on this subject, the matter was not discussed in SOFO 2022, and COFO should stick to technical matters.

The Secretariat explained that the war in Ukraine was not covered by SOFO 2022 because it was completed before the war started. ETHIOPIA suggested that if the war is not part of SOFO 2022, then it should not be referred to in the COFO conclusions on SOFO 2022. Chair Hargrove proposed bracketing the EU proposal under this agenda item and discussing the subject instead under FAO’s work in Forestry under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

On inviting members to strengthen technical cooperation, the US, with AUSTRALIA, proposed “on voluntary and mutually agreed terms.” BRAZIL and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION objected. This topic was referred to informal consultations.

On a provision inviting FAO supporting information, BRAZIL proposed adding for “science- and” evidence-based policy decisions and contributing to poverty eradication efforts “in a coherent manner according to and dependent on national context and capacities.” This was agreed.

BRAZIL’s proposal to delete “circular” bioeconomy from a subparagraph on the socio-economic role of forests also was accepted.

On Thursday, delegates returned to the provision on technical cooperation, with CANADA proposing a compromise borrowing already agreed language from the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy calling for “the voluntary sharing of knowledge and practices, research and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms.” The RUSSIAN FEDERATION said the paragraph on SOFO referenced technical cooperation, not technology transfer as the phrasing in the Strategy did. The US insisted the paragraph’s reference to “technical cooperation, including on access,” upon careful reading, is indeed about technology transfer and hence the need for “voluntary” and “mutually agreed terms.” The paragraph was eventually agreed with an addition by BRAZIL and ARGENTINA to support “sustainable use and management” of forests and the Chair’s suggestion, responding to CAMEROON, to refer to “interregional partnerships, including micro-, small, and medium producers.”

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- takes note of the key findings of SOFO 2022 and its three interrelated pathways, and recognizes the potential of forests to help mitigate the impacts of global challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- invites FAO and Members to use and disseminate SOFO 2022 findings, as appropriate, to work collectively to halt forest loss and degradation, restore degraded lands and drylands, and

enhance the sustainable management and use of forest resources, taking into account national priorities and circumstances, and to promote the important role of forests and their social, economic and environmental benefits, including as a contribution to achieving the SDGs and the Global Forest Goals (GFGs);

- highlights the technical role of FAO in supporting scaling up sustainable agriculture practices to contribute to conservation and sustainable use and management of forests, minimizing environmental degradation, increasing productivity, and unlocking the potential of science and innovation, with particular attention to addressing the main drivers of deforestation, as described in SOFO 2022;
- invites Members to strengthen cooperation on science, research, technology, and innovation to support conservation and sustainable use and management of forests and the production and use of forest products, including through the voluntary sharing of knowledge and practices, research and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms and through increased global, regional, and interregional partnerships including with micro-, small- and medium-scale producers;
- invites FAO to continue supporting the provision of sufficient, reliable information and knowledge, the development of innovative tools, as well as mobilization of finance on the topics covered in SOFO 2022, for science- and evidence-based policy decisions and effective programmes for forestry and agrifood systems transformation and development at national, regional and global levels and contributing to poverty eradication efforts, in a coherent manner according to, and dependent on, national context and capacities;
- invites FAO to continue raising awareness about the socio-economic role of forests, including on the role of forest-based value chains as an essential element in the development of a bioeconomy; and
- invites FAO to continue supporting Members’ efforts, upon request, to promote that small-scale producers, women, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities take an active and leading role in scaling up action on the ground on the forest pathways.

Forests and Sustainable Production of Wood and Non-wood Forest Products – Meeting Demands and Supporting Resilient Local Economies

On Tuesday, Chair Hargrove introduced the Secretariat’s introductory document ([COFO/2022/3 Rev.1](#)) discussing the sustainable use of forests and the role of sustainable wood and non-wood forest products (NWFP) value chains, as well as sustainable wood energy, in helping the world to meet the urgent need to achieve resilient and carbon-neutral economies. The document suggests actions to unlock the full potential of forests as suppliers of renewable carbon-neutral materials, in compliance with good practices regarding legality and sustainability standards.

The discussion on sustainable wood products and NWFPs opened with a high-level panel featuring Tetsuo Tanimoto, Forest Agency of Japan; Maria Patek, Ministry of Sustainability, Austria; and Tom Obong Okello, Executive Director, National Forestry Authority, Uganda.

Tanimoto said that through public-private partnerships, institutional arrangements, and financial mechanisms Japan has encouraged all stakeholders to use sustainably produced

wood. Patek stressed the importance of funding research, forest management, and use of innovative technologies, together with legal and institutional arrangements and financial mechanisms that enable and support smallholders, family farmers, and producer associations in enhancing sustainable production of wood and NWFPs. Okello noted that it is difficult for authorities in Uganda to assess the total value of NWFPs, but said they roughly estimate it as between USD 20-30 million annually. He said the use of non-wood and wood products is essential for local communities and contributes to food security, calling on Members to assist with solutions that help transform agrifood systems.

AUSTRALIA highlighted the importance of strengthening sustainable consumption and production. He supported ongoing efforts such the Collaborative Partnership on Forests' (CPF) Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World initiative. He advocated FAO cooperation with the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) on this issue and asked that the WFC's Call for Sustainable Wood be incorporated into the FAO Strategy on Climate Change.

The EU, with ALBANIA, TÜRKIYE, and UKRAINE, underscored the many benefits of sustainable wood products and NWFPs, including for achieving the SDGs. He asked FAO to improve coordination at all levels to maximize synergies and co-benefits. He also welcomed WFC outcomes.

The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC called for sustainable and inclusive financial mechanisms to strengthen sustainable wood and NWFP value chains. She stressed the importance of addressing land tenure security.

NEW ZEALAND supported FAO involvement and technical assistance in wood fields, including bioenergy, but noted tensions from increasing biomass production. She highlighted many opportunities in NWFPs, including in supplements, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics, and asked for FAO help in identifying nontraditional NWFPs.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted Korean initiatives on legally produced timber and sustainable wood, and noted their participation in the Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue. He encouraged FAO and Members to collaborate with the Dialogue.

JAMAICA strongly supported the four actions suggested in the document. He called on FAO to support small island developing states (SIDS) through technical support on traceability. He also supported pilot projects on the use of bamboo as fuel.

The US said innovation in wood products can be a game changer for achieving climate change goals, and discussed US use of nanocellulose in cement production. She called for adding a recommendation for analysis of ecosystem service trade-offs, and another for including sustainable production as part of NDCs and as a contribution to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

MALAYSIA highlighted the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme. BRAZIL emphasized the important role the bioeconomy has to play in achieving all SDGs, not just climate goals. He called for enhancing technical cooperation, capacity building and technology transfer, and disseminating good practices in sustainable wood in its social, economic and environmental dimensions.

PERU underscored that sustainable use of forests and developing value chains in wood products and NWFPs is linked to improving the quality of life of local communities. He highlighted Peru's use of permanent production forests and called for FAO technical

support in research and innovation in wood products and NWFPs. ECUADOR highlighted its programme to ensure people without land tenure benefit from NWFPs and preserve the national heritage.

INDONESIA confirmed its commitment to sustainable timber and NWFPs through public information and improvements in training and compliance. SUDAN stressed NWFPs, including beekeeping and medicinal products, and called for value chains to guarantee revenue for local communities.

MEXICO urged the CPF and others to broaden sustainable wood pathways for conservation and climate change mitigation, asking for FAO meetings for wood and NWFP producers and consumers. COSTA RICA stressed FAO's role in training and funding for sustainable wood and NWFPs and supporting value chains' benefits for sustainable forest activities.

INDIA favored trade in sustainable wood and NWFPs but cautioned against international sustainability standards becoming trade barriers. CHINA called for an international global network for sustainable management of wood and NWFPs and promoted the idea of an Asia training center to share best practices.

ARGENTINA, CONGO, KENYA, SEYCHELLES, TANZANIA, and UGANDA agreed with the report's recommendations. Uganda highlighted the need to add value in production and consumption of wood and NWFPs while exploring alternative livelihoods acceptable to communities dependent on forests. CONGO highlighted the importance of certifying forestry concessions and increasing the number of protected areas while diversifying wood products and NWFPs. SEYCHELLES called on FAO to provide technical and financial support for SIDS to be able to achieve sustainable use of forest resources.

The Chair introduced his draft summary of conclusions on Tuesday. In the ensuing discussion, minor editorial changes were introduced until delegates reached the provision on technology transfer, where members could not agree on a suggested amendment from the US about "mutually agreed terms." Further discussion on the summary was postponed until a compromise on technology transfer was reached.

On Thursday, CANADA proposed a compromise solution to the impasse on technology transfer similar to that used for the SOFO paragraph on technical cooperation, borrowing from already agreed language from the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy, calling for "the voluntary sharing of knowledge and practices, research and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms." Delegates agreed to the solution.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- takes note of the recommendations of the XV WFC, including the Ministerial Call on Sustainable Wood, to promote and scale up sustainable wood products as part of national strategies, support the promotion of multiple environmental objectives and achieve the SDGs, and to include them, as appropriate, in the NDCs and strategies, plans, and projects of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration;
- recommends that FAO support Members to promote the development and sustainable consumption and production of wood and NWFPs, contributing to improved livelihoods, including through building capacities of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities;
- encourages FAO to continue to support Members to enhance their ability to monitor and demonstrate legal and sustainable wood production and value addition as an essential contribution

to trade in legally harvested wood products and sustainable consumption of wood products.

- acknowledges the need to accelerate sustainable use of NWFPs and their value chains, including better access to technology, markets, and data, for improved food security, nutrition, health, and livelihoods;
- encourages FAO to promote awareness raising, capacity building, research and innovation, and to facilitate access to markets and investments—including through global, regional and national policy dialogues, as appropriate—and technical exchanges, for an effective contribution of sustainable wood products and their value chains to mitigate climate change and support climate adaptation, substituting carbon intensive products and increasing resilience to climate change, including through CPF’s joint initiative “Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World” and the inclusion of sustainable wood in FAO’s Climate Change Action Plan;
- recommends FAO to continue supporting Members with technical expertise to strengthen policies, inclusive financial mechanisms, transparency, legal and institutional arrangements, where possible, to enhance sustainability and increase the productivity of wood and non-wood forest products’ value chains from natural and planted forests for both domestic and international markets, as a contribution to a sustainable bioeconomy;
- recommends that FAO support Members to enhance and facilitate access of family farmers, producer organizations, and small and medium enterprises to markets, industries, innovation and finance for sustainable wood and non-wood forest products value chains, including through existing programmes such as the Forest and Farm Facility;
- invites FAO to consider collecting, assessing, and disseminating good practices of sustainable production and trade of charcoal and other forms of wood energy, with a view to supporting Members’ efforts and dialogue toward the transition to sustainable uses of wood fuels and meeting the SDG targets of sustainable energy for all by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050;
- encourages FAO to support Members to accelerate South-South and Triangular Cooperation, including through voluntary sharing of knowledge and practices, research, and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms with a view to promoting the development and use of sustainable wood and NWFPs and addressing the challenges faced by developing countries, including SIDS, on this issue;
- invites FAO to engage with Members and the public and private sectors on sustainable development in its three dimensions (economic, social and environmental) and to foster science and innovation;
- recommends FAO continue supporting, as appropriate, increased cooperation and coordination between international policies and activities related to wood and NWFPs, especially through the CPF, to maximize synergies and co-benefits; and
- encourages Members to promote, as appropriate, in line with national contexts and priorities, the analysis of ecosystem services trade-offs, especially those directly impacting women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities, when making decisions about increasing or continuing the sustainable production of forest products.

Agriculture and Forestry Linkages

On Monday, Chair Hargrove introduced the report ([COFO/2022/4](#)), responding to a 2020 request from the FAO Council requesting FAO to showcase and promote existing and complementary practices between agriculture activities and the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of forests, and requesting strengthened coordination between COFO and the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) on cross-sectoral matters.

In a high-level panel, COAG Chair Julie Emond (Canada) noted key COAG 28 conclusions resulting from their own debate on the report in July 2022, including to:

- acknowledge multiple linkages between agriculture and forestry;
- recommend FAO continue collecting and analyzing necessary science- and evidence-based data on agriculture and forestry interdependencies;
- invite FAO to support Members, upon request, to further identify opportunities and implement actions to improve complementarity between the agriculture and forestry sectors, and ways to decouple growth in agricultural production from forest and other biodiversity loss;
- invite FAO to conduct a global assessment of agroforestry ahead of COAG 29;
- invite Members to promote greater and inclusive policy coherence between the two sectors; and
- invite FAO to report regularly on the mainstreaming of biodiversity in the agriculture and forestry sectors.

Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya, Indonesia, discussed her country’s Forestry and Other Land Use (FOLU) Net Sink 2030 policy, set by decree, which emphasizes SFM, support for agroforestry and social forestry, and community conservation programmes.

Ambassador Carlos Bernardo Cherniak, Argentina, emphasized that:

- achieving the SDGs should be reconciled with Argentina’s global role as an agricultural producer;
- there is no such thing as a single production model; and
- forestry and agriculture cannot be discussed as if they are not interlinked sectors.

The PHILIPPINES stressed the need to better understand the linkages between fisheries and forestry. She underscored that ecosystems are connected, and when one end is affected, it affects the other end.

The EU, with MOLDOVA, TÜRKIYE and UKRAINE, supported the key findings of the report. He encouraged FAO and other UN agencies to continue collecting data on linkages between agriculture and forestry. He requested FAO to further identify the linkages and scale up its activities in the next FAO Strategic Framework.

The US said it is imperative to address linkages in a pragmatic way to achieve sustainable food security. She highlighted that forests also play an important role in water management and encouraged investing in nature-based solutions in landscapes.

The NETHERLANDS highlighted the need for the inclusion of financial instruments aimed at small scale farmers who contributed significantly to food security. He called for matching bankers with agroforesters so that agroforestry systems can help provide sustainable products.

AUSTRALIA supported the report and encouraged landscape management through a natural resources management-based approach. Kenya, for the AFRICAN GROUP, welcomed the report's promotion of policy coherence and land use planning balancing multiple stakeholders.

ARGENTINA said conservation and production is possible to do at the same time, in the same sector and same ecosystem, and cited examples from his country policies and practices.

JAPAN expressed hope FAO will take leadership on the interrelationship between agriculture and forestry, in cooperation with the ITTO, which has experience in this field. He underscored his country's support for the FAO taking an active role in relevant international fora, adding that this should specifically reference the CPF.

CONGO noted that its plan for sustainable agriculture had been unable to gain adequate financing, and its protected areas are also underfunded, and such a lack of funding poses risks for the country's forests.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION agreed with Brazil about the report's reference to linkage between deforestation and particular commodities and underscored that there is no internationally-agreed definition of forest degradation.

COSTA RICA urged FAO to strengthen related work, including detailed analysis on land tenure and sustainable production, and said achieving deforestation goals is not possible without taking a holistic policy approach to agriculture and forestry.

The Secretariat pointed out that the report's reference to deforestation and specific commodities came not from an FAO report, but rather the World Resources Institute's 2021 Global Forest Review. She also acknowledged the lack of an internationally-agreed definition of forest degradation.

The Chair presented his draft summary on this agenda item. Members debated several possible changes, involving:

- how best to refer to agroecology;
- which secretariats of other FAO Committees to share information on this topic with; and
- who FAO should engage in discussion to define forest degradation within the global FRA process.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee, among other things:

- underscores the need to achieve better synergies between agriculture and forestry through inter-sectorial approaches for more sustainable agrifood systems;
- requests that FAO continue actively identifying the important and mutual beneficial linkages between agriculture and forestry and scaling up its related activities in the relevant Programme Priority Areas of the FAO Strategic Framework;
- recommends FAO continue collecting and analyzing necessary science and evidence-based data on agriculture and forestry interdependence, including on the direct and underlying drivers of deforestation, by further enhancing consistency between agriculture and forest data sets and compiling case studies and good practices, which should be reported at COFO 27, and requests the Secretariat to share this information with the COAG and Committee on Fisheries (COFI) Secretariats, if relevant;
- invites FAO to support Members, upon request, to further identify opportunities and implement actions to improve complementarity between the agriculture and forestry sectors and

strengthen and coordinate policy responses toward the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recommending that these initiative do not create unnecessary barriers to trade and benefit the situation for small-scale producers who are key for global food production;

- invites FAO to conduct, subject to available extrabudgetary resources, a global assessment of the status and scaling-up potential of agroforestry, including agroecological principles and practices and other innovative approaches, to update FRA categories covering productive systems integrating trees and forests, and report on progress to COFO 27, and requests the Secretariat to share this information with the COAG and COFI Secretariats;
- recommends FAO to lead discussion with Members as well as international organizations, as appropriate, to define forest degradation within the global FRA process;
- encourages FAO to continue playing an active role in relevant international and regional fora by promoting open dialogue on enhancing and prompting sustainable agrifood systems and further working with other international partners, including all relevant stakeholders and particularly CPF members, to upscale synergies between agriculture and forestry;
- invites Members to promote greater and inclusive policy coherence between the agriculture and forestry sectors, including through integrated land use planning, landscape approaches and secured access to land, as well as support to small-scale producers, family farmers, women, youth, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples; and
- requests FAO and Members put greater emphasis on ways to decouple growth in agricultural production from forest and other biodiversity loss.

Forest Solutions for Combating Climate Change

On Tuesday, Chair Hargrove introduced the overview document ([COFO/2022/5](#)) reviewing the following issues:

- understanding and tackling drivers of deforestation and forest degradation;
- enhancing the role of forests in national climate policies;
- mobilizing finance for mitigation and adaptation;
- recognizing, supporting and rewarding Indigenous Peoples and local communities who protect and sustainably manage forests; and
- promoting transformational adaptation.

The EU, with ALBANIA, MOLDOVA, TÜRKIYE and UKRAINE, supported the actions suggested in the document. He noted agricultural expansion is the main cause of deforestation, thus contributing to climate change, and urged Committee conclusions in this regard. He also noted the potential climate contributions of sustainable wood products.

Burundi, for the AFRICAN GROUP, said planting and managing forests are urgent actions needed to mitigate climate change, and said recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports underscore the need to increase forest cover. He called for priority FAO Strategic Framework projects to favor African countries, and FAO to support African countries through coordinated technical assistance and, if possible, through financial support.

NEW ZEALAND supported FAO work on the contribution of wood products to carbon storage and how wood products can be better integrated into NDCs and on integrated risk management

approaches including on wildfire, pest and disease events. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted the Seoul Declaration, Glasgow Declaration, his country's enhanced NDC, and its intention to extend its support to REDD+ and establish a REDD+ capacity building programme. He offered to share Korean expertise and knowhow.

PERU stressed forest benefits "go far beyond" carbon sequestration and advocated enhancing the role of forests in national climate policies and recognizing, supporting, and compensating Indigenous Peoples undertaking transformative adaptation.

SWITZERLAND called for FAO to report on its follow-up to the Glasgow Declaration and additional initiatives and for support for adaptation and resilience to be strengthened and increased.

The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC called for COFO to urge FAO to broaden and strengthen its technical assistance, especially to SIDS. MALAYSIA noted its new forest policy approved in 2021, the current review of its biodiversity policy, and its trade certification scheme.

SLOVAKIA highlighted action on forest resilience within Forest Europe, highlighting the Bratislava Ministerial Resolution on Adapting Pan-European Forests to Climate Change, and Forest Europe's current work on a pan-European forest risk knowledge mechanism. FRANCE said adaptation of forests to climate change lies at the heart of a French policy launched in 2021. He said COFO should encourage FAO and Members to fully support all types of research and science promoting forest solutions to fighting climate change.

MEXICO cited its public policy incentivizing SFM, conservation, and enhancing forest carbon stocks to achieve zero deforestation by 2030 and requested FAO support for accessing climate funding.

BRAZIL noted only 2.2% of global greenhouse gas emissions come from forests and called for balancing mitigation and adaptation through new and additional funds, technology transfer, and capacity building, recalling the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Supported by KENYA, he defended the prevalence of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the main financial mechanism dedicated to climate change.

INDONESIA highlighted its goal of making forests net sinks by 2030 and urged facilitating communities' access to REDD+ finance for land restoration. INDIA reported mobilizing cost-effective climate finance through REDD+.

CANADA stressed assistance to Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and women. The US suggested FAO resources to increase national technical capacities and technical assistance for building capacities to access forest financing.

ECUADOR requested FAO support for information and verifiable data to measure progress on REDD+ and monitor national reforestation and afforestation. CHINA cited his country's new global network for forest management.

The Chair offered his draft summary of conclusions. Delegates offered some adjustments to the Chair's proposed paragraphs, such as changing "halting deforestation" to "halting forest loss and degradation, restoring degraded lands and drylands." The RUSSIAN FEDERATION proposed an additional paragraph asking FAO and Members to carry out an analysis on the role and scope of forests and forestry in NDCs, with FAO to report back on the subject to COFO 27. The US proposed, and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION agreed, to discuss this proposal under the agenda item on FAO's action plan for the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031.

The EU proposed a new paragraph on the importance of long-term forest prevention strategies and forest-based adaptation measures and strengthening regional networks. BRAZIL amended the EU proposal to emphasize integrated risk management.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- welcomes FAO's work on forests and climate change in the context of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031 and the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031;
- recommends FAO to continue its support for strengthening the role of forest ecosystems in global climate policy, and support Members, upon their request, in developing their capacities for forest-related climate action, facilitating access to climate finance, and scaling up action on the ground, and report back to COFO on this work, as appropriate;
- invites FAO to assist Members in optimizing the mitigation, adaptation and resilience potential of forests by halting forest loss and degradation, restoring degraded lands and drylands, and implementing SFM, taking into account national contexts, priorities, and capacities; and
- recommends FAO assist Members in implementing integrated risk management approaches and forest-related adaptation measures, including through relevant regional networks, as well as accessibility to supporting information.

Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031: On Wednesday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document on the Action Plan ([COFO/2022/5.1](https://www.fao.org/3/ah03022/ah03022en.pdf)). The FAO Council in April 2021 requested a new FAO Strategy on Climate Change and endorsed the resulting document in June 2022. The document reviews the action plan for implementing the new Strategy, with action organized by the three "pillars for enhanced action" suggested by the Strategy: strengthened global and regional climate policy and governance; developing countries' capacities for climate action; and scaling up climate action on the ground.

The EU, with ALBANIA, MOLDOVA, and TÜRKIYE, welcomed the new Strategy and the content of the proposed action plan. He encouraged FAO to promote science and evidence-based mitigation and adaptation solutions. He stressed the importance of addressing forest loss due to agriculture and its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

Cabo Verde, for the AFRICAN GROUP, recognized the need for the action plan. She highlighted the need for support to African countries to enhance preparedness for climate shocks, particularly regarding smallholder farmers and rural communities. She called for support to national and regional action plans for sustainable agrifood systems and implementation of the FAO action plan. She urged FAO to work with public and private partners to mobilize climate finance.

BRAZIL urged greater emphasis on providing the information to ensure action and the outputs envisioned in the action plan. He said he would submit written suggestions for amending specific points. MEXICO stressed more attention to carbon markets to ensure that they are inclusive, equitable and fair. He suggested FAO involvement in flexible funding schemes and underscored the value of the REDD+ approach.

The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC welcomed the action plan, its clear link with FAO's Science and Innovation Strategy, and its proposed actions focusing on vulnerable groups. He stressed that the action plan should reflect all strategic pillars, produce tangible

results, and take into account national development goals and the principle of leaving no one behind. He looked forward to seeing future proposals on targets and indicators.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA called for more FAO work on science and innovation in the plan. MALAYSIA welcomed the action plan but suggested making it more sector-specific. He stressed it should be considered “a living document” that can be updated as needed.

NEW ZEALAND supported work on agrifood systems, agriculture emission reporting, and carbon markets. The US recommended that the action plan set out clear FAO priorities at the sector level, particularly forestry. She agreed the plan should be a living document, although changes should be made in a transparent manner subject to discussion.

PERU said its national climate strategy prioritizes climate governance, forest governance, climate funding, deforestation monitoring, water harvesting, and resilient and sustainable agriculture.

The Chair presented his draft summary of conclusions. AUSTRALIA, supported by ARGENTINA and BRAZIL, suggested changing “forest-based” climate action to “forest-related.”

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION reintroduced its proposal for an additional paragraph asking FAO and Members to carry out analysis on the role and scope of forests and forestry in NDCs, with FAO reporting back on the subject to COFO 27. BRAZIL and SOUTH AFRICA said this concept was already discussed during the development of the new Strategy, so it should be re-opened when considering the action plan to implement that Strategy.

The EU proposed a new paragraph about multiple benefits of forests for climate mitigation and adaptation. ARGENTINA added a new phrase calling for FAO to employ an open, inclusive, transparent and timely consultation process in further development of the action plan.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26 (COFO/2022/draft report), the Committee:

- acknowledges the action plan will be a living document and will be complemented by a results framework and monitoring and reporting, aligned with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and the SDGs;
- highlights that apart from their carbon sequestration role, forests provide multiple other benefits to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and these benefits should be considered in the implementation of the action plan;
- recommends the action plan clearly sets out FAO’s priorities for climate action in agrifood systems at a sectoral level, including for the crop, forest, fisheries and aquaculture, and livestock sectors, at local, national, regional, and global levels, and takes into account synergies with work by other relevant UN agencies and international organizations;
- recognizes the importance of mobilizing additional resources to support the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 through its Action Plan, including for forest-related climate action, as well as promoting inclusive collaboration to adopt low-emission, good practices and innovative solutions, leaving no one behind;
- calls on FAO to continue to organize open, inclusive, transparent, and timely consultation processes, and to take into account

the guidance provided by Members in refining and further developing the action plan; and

- calls on FAO to provide regular updates on the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 through its Action Plan.

Forests Fires and the Global Fire Platform: On Wednesday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document ([COFO/2022/5.2](#)) on FAO’s Fire Management Strategy, focused on integrated fire management (IFM), and the Global Fire Management Platform (GFMP) being co-developed by FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Many delegations expressed support for the Fire Management Strategy and GFMP. Zambia, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, noted concern about the growth of forest fires in Africa and requested FAO to support the region through a systematic forest fire management approach developed in consultation with national authorities.

COLOMBIA, MALAYSIA, KENYA, ECUADOR, and JAMAICA supported the Strategy and urged FAO technical and financial support to countries to address the issue.

CANADA, JAPAN, NEW ZEALAND, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, and SWITZERLAND expressed support for FAO work on IFM. JAPAN highlighted the availability of funding through FAO for developing national capacities. SWITZERLAND emphasized the importance of raising awareness and education of vulnerable communities living in proximity to high risk of wildfires. CANADA underscored mitigating wildfires through a “whole of society” approach instrumented by strategic partnerships at national and international levels.

The EU, with ALBANIA, MOLDOVA and TÜRKIYE, noted linkages between basic commodities and forests and emphasized the need for developing country-level IFM systems. The US suggested that the Strategy needs to focus on analyzing the cost of forest fires to the environment and humans.

Supporting the Strategy and the need for IFM systems, UKRAINE noted that since the Russian invasion, her country has seen a 77% increase in forest fires, which have been caused by Russian shelling and landmines.

The Chair introduced his draft summary of conclusions on Wednesday. In the ensuing discussion, delegates accepted BRAZIL’s proposal referring to fires being driven “*inter alia*” by climate change and “unsustainable” land use change, and SOUTH AFRICA’s proposal referring to “the risks associated with” the increase in frequency and intensity of wildfires.

A paragraph welcoming the GFMP received many comments. UKRAINE requested reference to the initiative “including all relevant partners.” The EU proposed reference to the initiative “building on existing and emerging expert networks to avoid duplications and overlaps.” Discussion between the US, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, and UKRAINE focused on clarifying whether other relevant partners could be consulted or involved in development or implementation, and whether the Secretariat’s official document for this agenda item allowed for collaboration with other partners. The paragraph was eventually agreed, incorporating elements of both UKRAINE’s and EU’s proposals.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- notes with concern the risks associated with the increase in frequency and intensity of damaging wildfires around the globe, which are driven, *inter alia*, by climate change and unsustainable land use change;
- welcomes the FAO/UNEP GFMP to reduce the negative impacts of wildfires on livelihoods, landscapes, and the global climate, in consultation with, and building on, Members' expertise, existing processes and expert networks to avoid duplication and overlap;
- appreciates FAO's Fire Management Strategy and tools developed by FAO to strengthen forest fire management and recommends FAO continue to support Members in their efforts to implement IFM, as appropriate; and
- invites FAO to support coordinated efforts among Members in areas such as knowledge sharing, fire review and analysis, risk reduction, readiness, response and recovery, e.g., through fire management networks.

Progress in Implementation

Decisions and Recommendations of FAO Bodies of Interest to the Committee:

On Wednesday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document ([COFO/2022/6.1](#)), summarizing key decisions and recommendations from the FAO Conference, Council, Programme Committee, Regional Conferences, and Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA). He reminded the Committee that this was one of the three agenda items that was agreed beforehand would be subject to written procedure, whereby Members submitted written comments and questions, based on the related documentation and Secretariat introductions to agenda items, the Secretariat provided written responses, and all related submissions and responses were posted to the COFO 26 website.

The Chair presented his draft summary of conclusion, which were adopted without amendment.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee welcomes the decisions and recommendations of FAO bodies of interest to COFO. It also welcomes the strengthened cooperation between COFO and COAG and encouraged FAO to continue its intersectoral work.

Progress Report on the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity Across Agricultural Sectors and its 2021-23 Action Plan: On Wednesday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document ([COFO/2022/6.2](#)), which provides an overview of progress in implementing the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors adopted in 2019 and its 2021-2023 Action Plan approved in 2021, and presents a draft action plan for the 2024-2027 period. He reminded the Committee that this was one of the three agenda items which, it was agreed beforehand, would be subject to written procedure, so all general statements and Secretariat responses had been provided in writing and posted online.

In the ensuing discussion on the Chair's draft summary of conclusions, the US expressed reservations about the deliverable in the action plan on subsidies, suggesting this work is more appropriate for the World Trade Organization (WTO).

BRAZIL proposed language about consultation with Members for finalization of the new action plan. He also requested additional language on scaling up the sustainable use of forest biodiversity. SWITZERLAND asked to include a reference to biodiversity conservation.

The EU sought wording about simultaneously supporting biodiversity outcomes while meeting global wood demand. The US, supported by the EU and BRAZIL, suggested dropping specific references to "sparing and sharing" land management approaches. ARGENTINA and BRAZIL supported retaining references to sustainable intensification approaches.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- encourages FAO to continue to provide support to Members in their efforts to mainstream biodiversity, in particular on forestry-related actions;
- invites FAO to ensure that the 2024-27 action plan takes a balanced approach to mainstreaming biodiversity, taking into account the needs and priorities of Members, and requests FAO to continue open, inclusive and transparent consultations with Members for finalization of the action plan;
- recommends FAO reflect the importance of addressing deforestation, forest biodiversity loss, and sustainable use of forest biodiversity in the implementation of the 2024-27 action plan;
- recommends FAO support sustainable land management approaches within the implementation of the Strategy and the draft 2024-27 action plan, acknowledging that SFM and sustainable intensification approaches can play a role at the landscape level to simultaneously support biodiversity outcomes and help meet global wood demand, alongside agroforestry and other multiple-use forest management approaches; and
- recommends FAO finalize the 2024-27 action plan, taking into account other FAO Strategies, guidance provided by COFO, and further developments under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the CGRFA.

Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and Remote

Sensing Survey 2021-2022: On Wednesday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document ([COFO/2022/6.3](#)), providing an overview of the scope and other preparation for the FRA 2025, strengthening the FRA national correspondent network, harmonization of methods, and definition of forest data collection. The Committee discussed the agenda item on Wednesday and Thursday.

The EU, with ALBANIA, MOLDOVA, and TÜRKIYE, supported FAO's work on the FRA and its recommended actions in the document. He noted that agriculture expansion is the main cause of deforestation and contributes to climate change. He urged the Committee to consider this in the conclusions on this item.

CANADA noted that given discussion under SOFO 2020 on forest degradation, improved data is needed on primary forests, and recommended that FAO continue harmonization of assessment methods and data collection including on primary forests.

AUSTRALIA commended FAO for uploading country level data and supported recommendations made in the report. He requested that FAO ensure that the FRA also look into the nature of forest degradation. SWITZERLAND supported FAO for its series of regional workshops and welcomed strong collaboration with CPF members to enhance synergies. He noted that the visualization of data analysis with open data and access outside the timber sector is important, and reported that his country is developing machine readable data, thus reducing the burden of data management.

MEXICO supported the recommendations in the FRA 2020 and called on FAO to mainstream knowledge through local networks, endorsing his country's participation in the regional and sub-regional workshops scheduled by FAO. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted that capacity building for regional and sub-regional FRAs is important according to COFO, and confirmed her country's support to the process through a designated national correspondent.

Gabon, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, observed that the FRA provides essential information for countries to understand the importance of forests and their use. She congratulated FAO for leading the process and supported the use of remote sensing. She encouraged Members to take ownership in the process.

The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC recognized the excellent work of FAO and noted the importance of having FRA assessment tools for better understanding the scale of deforestation. She supported complementing the use of remote sensing in the FRA and appreciated FAO's regional and sub-regional workshops. JAMAICA commended FAO's continued support and supported the participation of Members in the FRA as a tremendous opportunity. She emphasized policy alignment and supported capacity-building programmes for Members.

JAPAN proposed that FAO organize concrete timelines related to assessment indicators. The US congratulated FAO for its remarkable work in improving the FRA reporting process and stressed the use of leveraged technology and innovation in the production of timely and accurate data. She encouraged FAO to improve the remote sensing survey with a focus on statistically sound data, as differences in data collection can lead to discrepancies.

FINLAND said his country will further support FAO to help countries strengthen their capacities in data analysis. MALAYSIA welcomed the initiative and highlighted the challenges of gathering data linked to socio-economic conditions of societies.

KENYA noted his country has benefited from the process and has helped strengthened relevant capacities. NEW ZEALAND welcomed the release of the FRA 2020 assessment with remote sensing and supported the ongoing work to improve data quality on land use and land use change.

PERU noted the importance of the FRA 2020 and said it has led to significantly better decision making on forest management. He supported the use of remote sensing, which is being used by regional monitors covering pasture, crop fields, and forest cover and has also helped with monitoring of mountain forests through satellite images. ECUADOR said that the use of technology is important, and data should be compatible. He asked FAO to help with financial assistance and technical support including remote sensing and satellite images.

The Chair introduced his draft summary of conclusions on Wednesday, although discussion on the summary did not conclude until Thursday. In the ensuing discussion, delegates approved a paragraph on developing and harmonizing methods and definitions for forest data collection, accepting BRAZIL's suggestion to refer to "further efforts" on the definition of forest degradation during FRA 2025.

PERU proposed a paragraph on networks of remote sensing monitoring specialists that was accepted after minor modifications.

A US proposal to reconcile country-submitted data with published remote sensing survey results was ultimately accepted after Chair Hargrove proposed compromise language.

MEXICO proposed a paragraph on inviting Members and relevant organizations in a position to do so to continue granting support to other Members for the development of new analysis tools and availability of new data sources. This was accepted after being modified to invite both FAO and its Members to do so "upon request."

An EU proposal for a new paragraph on highlighting the interplay between field inventory and remote sensing was eventually modified to refer to highlighting the importance of field inventory data in quality control and validation of remote sensing-derived results.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- welcomes the ongoing improvements of the FRA process, the recent FAO FRA Remote Sensing Survey, and the online platform for reporting and disseminating forest resources data;
- welcomes progress made in the preparations for the FRA 2025, and a flexible approach to voluntary reporting on key indicators;
- recommends FAO continue the development and harmonization of methods and definitions for forest data collection, including for primary forests, and recommends further efforts towards a definition of "forest degradation" during the FRA 2025 cycle. This includes using remote sensing and conducting related capacity development to help reduce the reporting burden, enhance information sharing, and increase transparency of forest-related data and reporting;
- stresses the need for Members to nominate or confirm FRA National Correspondents and their alternates for the compilation of the FRA 2025 country reports;
- invites FAO to further strengthen the network of remote sensing experts for sharing experiences and lessons learned during the FAO FRA Remote Sensing Survey for the monitoring of forest resources;
- invites FAO to develop, in collaboration with its Members, approaches towards reconciling regional results of FRA country reporting and the FAO FRA Remote Sensing Survey;
- invites FAO and its Members to continue the development and sharing of, upon Members' request, new analysis tools and inform the Members of the availability of new data sources;
- highlights the importance of field inventory data in quality control and validation of remote sensing derived results;
- recommends FAO continue and strengthen collaboration with the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ) partners, CPF members, and other partners, including UN entities, to reduce the reporting burden, enhance synergies, and increase transparency of reporting processes and resulting data; and
- recommends FAO continue, in coordination with CPF members, the promotion and dissemination of the Global Core Set of Forest-related Indicators, and improve their tier levels.

Finance and Investment in Forest Pathways: On Thursday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document ([COFO/2022/6.4](#)), providing an overview of key issues, priorities, and opportunities to scale up finance and investments for the forest pathways identified in SOFO 2022.

PERU, MOROCCO, JAPAN, ARGENTINA, MALAYSIA, TÜRKIYE, CHINA, and JORDAN supported the document's recommendations.

BRAZIL underlined the importance of the innovative payment system and the provision of financial resources for long-term

conservation of forests. He called upon developed countries to comply with their financial obligations to developing countries.

The EU, with MOLDOVA, TÜRKIYE, and UKRAINE, supported the report's recommendation, and called for increasing coherence and a shift in policies to help divert financial resources to forest conservation.

The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC called for integrating market-based approaches in national policies. MEXICO stressed the need to ensure funds reach Indigenous communities and focus on capacity building for small-scale producers, including on wood and non-wood products.

SWITZERLAND stated the need for mentioning clearinghouse information, the CPF finance initiative and the UN Forum on Forests' (UNFF) Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) in its recommendations. NEW ZEALAND noted support to strengthen capacity and assess effectiveness and efficiency of sustainable land policies.

GABON referred to forests as the heart of SDGs and stressed the importance of SFM in timber-led forest enterprises certification.

The Chair introduced his draft summary of conclusions on Thursday. BRAZIL proposed changing "forest-based solutions" to "forest-based actions." ARGENTINA suggested deleting reference to "domestic" government resources under sources of finance. The US suggested instead stopping the sentence at "all sources of finance" and not listing types, which delegates accepted.

BRAZIL asked to refer to the FAO compiling "empirical and scientific" evidence and good practices. CAMEROON asked to replace "halt deforestation" with "halting forest loss and degradation," as agreed in an earlier agenda item. After a reference to assessing the needs of local stakeholders, the EU asked to add "especially for long-term and risk-reducing financial tools to support all three forest pathways."

BRAZIL asked to add phrasing on promoting "innovative financial mechanisms to foster the valuation of conservation, restoration, and sustainable management actions, such as payments for environmental service schemes." SOUTH AFRICA proposed "ecosystem services" instead of "environmental services," to which BRAZIL agreed.

BRAZIL, supported by ARGENTINA, CHILE, and CONGO, proposed a new paragraph urging developed country members, consistent with "relevant international obligations" and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, to provide new and additional resources to support the conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management of forests and the development of sustainable forest value chains in developing country Members, and to enhance capacity building and technical and scientific cooperation.

AUSTRALIA, supported by the EU and CANADA, said this issue should be addressed in another forum, not COFO, and requested Brazil's proposed paragraph be "parked" or removed. Chair Hargrove suggested informal consultations on the proposal.

After the consultations, AUSTRALIA, supported by the EU, proposed an alternative encouraging FAO to support Members in formulating and implementing climate commitments in line with the provisions of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031. BRAZIL preferred its proposal.

The US suggested amending the Brazilian proposal to "invite" Members "in a position to do so" and to delete "new and additional resources." CAMEROON, supported by BRAZIL, preferred

"urge" rather than "invite" and opposed "in a position to do so." He suggested instead "consistent with agreed climate commitments," but BRAZIL preferred "taking into account" climate commitments.

Chair Hargrove offered a compromise encouraging Members, consistent with "relevant international obligations," to provide new resources "particularly in developing countries" to enhance capacity building, and technology and scientific cooperation. With AUSTRALIA's amendment recalling paragraphs 6 and 7 of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change, delegates agreed to the compromise.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26 (COFO/2022/draft report), the Committee:

- acknowledges that increased finance and investment are urgently needed for forest-related actions to address climate change, biodiversity loss, poverty and inequality, and that all sources of finance need to be mobilized;
- recalling paragraphs 6 and 7 of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 and relevant international obligations, encourages Members to provide resources to support the conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management of forests and the development of sustainable forest value chains, particularly in developing countries, to enhance capacity building and technical and scientific cooperation;
- recommends FAO support Members in their efforts to access finance opportunities for forest-related actions, including by building capacities to mobilize finance for forests and by integrating sustainable forest-related value chains into their climate and land restoration strategies, in complementarity and synergy with other initiatives and organizations, including the CPF and its initiatives and the GFFFN and its Clearing House;
- invites FAO to continue compiling empirical and scientific evidence and good practices and facilitate exchanges on innovative finance and investment models to halt and reverse forest loss and degradation, enhance restoration and increase the sustainable use of forests, taking into account the needs of local stakeholders, with a focus on long-term and risk-reducing financial tools to support all three forest pathways; and
- encourages Members to promote coherence across public finance policies and mechanisms, to consider increasing financial support to enhance the contribution of forests and trees to sustainable agrifood systems, and to promote innovative financial mechanisms to assign value to the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of forests, such as payments for ecosystem services.

Restoration and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

2021-2030: On Wednesday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document ([COFO/2022/6.5](#)) providing an update on the implementation of the Decade co-led by FAO and UNEP, with particular reference to the restoration of forested landscapes and seeking COFO guidance on the implications of addressing the restoration of these ecosystems for FAO policies and programmes.

COFO consideration of the agenda item began with a high-level panel featuring Jordan's Princess Basma bint Ali, Sandra Patricia Vilardy Quiroga, Vice Minister of Policies and Environmental Standardization, Colombia, and Robert Nasi, Director-General, Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

Princess Basma stressed the importance of identifying and showcasing successful restoration projects and cited the example of the Black Jaguar Foundation's work in Brazil. Vilardy outlined Colombia's policies and programmes to tie restoration to national

socio-economic priorities and its promotion of nature-based solutions. Nasi urged viewing landscape restoration not as an environmental problem, but rather as a people problem, saying if the emphasis is put on people-centered enterprises that tie restoration to benefits to local communities and their economies, restoration will happen.

During the discussion of the Secretariat document, there was general support for FAO's recommendations, with numerous countries highlighting already-ongoing restoration efforts.

The EU urged: prioritizing forest restoration in burned areas; targets for global restoration; and FAO funding. The US advocated prioritizing old growth forest, local economies, and sustainable forest products. Supported by BRAZIL, she urged incentivizing all groups. BRAZIL urged context-specific restoration policy.

NEW ZEALAND requested FAO expertise to scale up and showcase pioneering restoration projects. MEXICO called for local community's and Indigenous Peoples' access to funds, requesting FAO support for capacity-building tools for restoration. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC urged FAO to mobilize financing. Ethiopia, for the AFRICAN GROUP, noted Africa's climate impacts, urging international community support to scale up initiatives and political commitment by national leaders.

ECUADOR said its Constitution entitles nature to restoration and the means are provided by law. MALAYSIA cited involvement of Indigenous Peoples and committed to restoration until all areas are rehabilitated.

JAPAN said past overcutting caused natural disasters and flooding, necessitating nationwide reforestation, which motivated its current engagement in international technical cooperation. CHILE noted its first sectoral agricultural policy to fight climate change, expressing willingness to share its know-how. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA cited its restoration efforts to achieve the GFGs on forest restoration, citing its projects as flagships.

The Chair offered his draft summary of conclusions for discussion on Wednesday. CONGO, with MADAGASCAR, emphasized not limiting the ecosystem to forests. The EU, CANADA, and UKRAINE said it would be odd to remove forest ecosystems from a text of a committee on forestry. The Chair suggested "enhancing ecosystems in general and in particular forest landscapes," which delegates accepted.

CONGO suggested a reference to upholding commitments in climate negotiations, but BRAZIL reminded delegates this agenda item was not about international environment negotiations, so the proposal was withdrawn.

The EU suggested adding a reference to fostering synergies with the UN Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- welcomes FAO and UNEP co-leadership to promote the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030;
- encourages Members to support the activities of the UN Decade and enhance their ecosystem restoration efforts, in particular forest landscapes, and to share information and knowledge on successful restoration; and
- recommends that FAO support Members with tools, methodologies, and capacity development initiatives to strengthen their capacity to scale-up forest ecosystem restoration efforts, to share good practices and monitor progress, and to

facilitate access to finance in order to scale-up forest ecosystem restoration efforts and ensure the sustainability of restored areas, taking into account national contexts and capacities while fostering synergies with the UN Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028.

Dialogue with Statutory Bodies in Forestry: On

Thursday, Chair Hargrove introduced the Secretariat document ([COFO/2022/6.6 Rev.1](#)), presenting relevant FAO Council decisions and progress reports on relevant activities of:

- FAO's Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs)
- the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions (*Silva Mediterranea*);
- the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries (ACSFI);
- the International Commission on Poplars and Other Fast-Growing Trees Sustaining People and the Environment (IPC); and
- the Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems.

The EU, with MOLDOVA, TÜRKIYE, and UKRAINE, supported cross-sectoral work by the RFCs. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC welcomed continued consultations on improving the RFCs and expanding collaboration among stakeholders. She also noted with great interest the message from the ACSFI and said she valued the new strategy of the IPC.

BRAZIL asked for additional reporting on the work of the Statutory Bodies during the intersessional period. He welcomed the ACSFI's recognition of the importance of work on the bioeconomy, particularly regarding the potential of forests and renewable forest products to contribute to climate change mitigation through carbon storage in long-lived wood products and by substitution for more emission-intensive fossil-fuel based materials.

While generally supporting the suggested action points in the Secretariat's document, the US suggested adding a reference to achieving the SDGs to the bullet points on the RFCs. Regarding the suggestion that *Silva Mediterranea* support enhanced access by Members to climate finance opportunities such as the Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund, the US, supported by ITALY, suggested instead saying "assisting members in building capacity to access climate financing opportunities, particularly for post-fire restoration."

PERU emphasized the need to link the work of the Statutory Bodies with the FAO Forestry Department work, and to strengthen intersectional work by the bodies, especially on agrifood systems. He welcomed the ACSFI message on closer cooperation regarding the bioeconomy. He urged endorsement of the IPC's work. ITALY noted its involvement with the IPC and urged new countries to participate in the Commission's next session in 2024.

ARGENTINA noted plans to reincorporate Chile into the IPC and invited all to the Eighth Latin American Forestry Congress in Mendoza, Argentina, in March 2023.

The Chair offered his draft summary of conclusions on Thursday. The EU's proposal for a new subparagraph on integration of forest-related matters among the RFCs was merged into an existing one at BRAZIL's suggestion. The EU, with MOLDOVA, UKRAINE and TÜRKIYE, also proposed a new subparagraph on strengthening the cross-sectoral work of the RFCs.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- stresses the need for the RFCs to have a more policy-relevant role in the FAO Regional Conferences, and invited FAO to support further integration of important regional forest-related matters;
- invites FAO to continue to review and consult with Members on ways to further improve the RFCs;
- invites FAO to support further strengthening of the cross-sectoral work of the RFCs, especially on forestry and agrifood systems;
- invites *Silva Mediterranea* to further align the work plans of its Working Groups with global and regional agendas;
- invites the ACSFI to continue facilitating partnerships between FAO and the private sector to promote a forest-based bioeconomy and restoration of productive ecosystems;
- encourages implementation of the IPC Strategy 2022-2032;
- encourages FAO Members to consider membership in the IPC in view of its new mandate; and
- encourages the Working Group to support preparations for the UN International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026 by facilitating cross-regional expertise exchange on innovative, sustainable agrosilvopastoral systems.

Other Matters

FAO's Work in Forestry Under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31:

On Thursday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document ([COFO/2022/7.1](#)), providing an overview of FAO's achievements in forestry during the 2020-21 biennium, analysis of global trends and developments relevant to FAO's work in forestry, and related priority areas of FAO's work in the 2022-23 biennium and beyond.

Cameroon, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, welcomed the document and endorsed the priority areas outlined for 2022-2023. He said Africa encourages strategic thinking at country levels as well as country-level corporate initiatives such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative or the One Country-One Priority Product Initiative. He requested FAO to support the organization of a high-level conference on SFM within the framework of the UN General Assembly.

JAMAICA, PERU, BRAZIL, and the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC encouraged FAO to enhance its efforts on the conservation and restoration of forests and promotion of sustainable value chains. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA appreciated the Strategic Framework and said FAO's Science and Innovation Strategy is crucial to its implementation.

JAPAN said it has supported forestry activities in the Framework through voluntary contributions and has particular interest in the line items on halting deforestation and on sustainable use of wood. He urged greater cooperation between FAO and ITTO. The US supported the four priority work areas for 2022-2023 and beyond and urged accelerated action to halt forest loss and restore degraded lands. She emphasized the FAO leadership role in the CPF, and also noted concern over the impact of the war in Ukraine and asked that this be reflected in the Committee's report.

The EU proposed discussing under this agenda item the paragraph on the war in Ukraine it had proposed earlier in the week, which the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and BELARUS opposed. AUSTRALIA, CANADA, CHILE, CROATIA, FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, JAPAN, the NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, SLOVAKIA, SWEDEN, UK, and US supported the EU proposal.

When Chair Hargrove presented his draft summary of conclusions on Thursday, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION proposed an alternative paragraph underscoring FAO's technical role in addressing the impacts of ongoing conflicts on the global forest sector, including on the livelihoods of people in the forest area. She also proposed a new paragraph recounting COFO's terms of reference and underscoring that the Committee's mandate does not include political matters not related to forestry. These proposals were opposed by the EU and its supporters.

The impasse was the subject of extensive discussions on Thursday evening, during a two-hour special plenary on Friday morning, and informal consultations on Friday afternoon. On Friday evening Chair Hargrove proposed a compromise text recalling the decision and recommendations of the 169th session of the FAO Council and stressing the technical role of FAO in addressing the impacts of all ongoing armed conflicts on the regional and global forest sector, including on the livelihoods of forest dependent people. Although initially both sides resisted the compromise, in the end it was accepted with minor tweaks.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- endorses the priority areas of work in forestry in 2022-23 and beyond, and welcomes their strong alignment with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031, as well as their contributions to achieving the SDGs and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests' GFGs;
- encourages FAO to continue to pursue its reinvigorated business model, including through better interlinking its technical and operational work, fostering partnerships, and strengthening responsiveness to Members' needs and delivery at country level;
- requests FAO to continue supporting SFM actions at country level within key thematic strategies approved by governing bodies and FAO corporate initiatives, such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and the One Country-One Priority Product Initiative, as appropriate and aligned with FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-2031;
- invites FAO to continue to provide support to the high-level segments convened during regular UNFF sessions; and
- recommends that FAO provide regular updates on the implementation of FAO's activities in forestry within the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031, as appropriate, including in the Programme Implementation Reports.

Outcomes of the XV World Forestry Congress: On Thursday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document ([COFO/2022/7.2](#)), presenting key features and main outcomes of the WFC, held in a hybrid format in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 2-6 May 2022, and outlining possible follow-up work to help operationalize these outcomes.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA highlighted key outcomes of the Congress, including the [Seoul Forest Declaration](#), the [Ministerial Call on Sustainable Wood](#), and the [Youth Call to Action](#).

Gabon, for the AFRICAN GROUP, congratulated the Republic of Korea, FAO, and the CPF for a successful WFC, and suggested its record attendance during COVID indicated strong global community interest in forestry-related issues. He underscored the Group's support for the Call on Sustainable Wood. He said all WFC outcomes should be taken into account in FAO's strategies on climate change and science and innovation, while considering the specificities and priorities of each region. The Group urged the Republic of Korea and FAO to use their respective comparative

advantages to promote the WFC outcomes at the 27th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and other related fora.

MALAYSIA welcomed the WFC outcomes, especially those regarding sustainable wood and sustainable wood-based solutions. He urged continued FAO support for capacity building, technical assistance, and financing for creating bio-circular economies. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC highlighted the products of the WFC and stressed that threats to forests also pose a threat to all of the Earth's inhabitants.

The US congratulated FAO and the Republic of Korea on a successful WFC. While she said the US generally supports the follow-up actions suggested in the FAO introductory document, she suggested changing the action verbs, such as "invite" rather than "recommend" the FAO Council and Conference to consider WFC outcomes for inclusion in the FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-2031, since the outcomes were not negotiated. BRAZIL agreed, saying before the WFC outcomes can be incorporated into the Strategic Framework they need further multilateral discussion.

NEW ZEALAND said COFO should invite FAO and the CPF to support Members in implementing WFC recommendations and requested FAO to report back to COFO on any implementation of WFC recommendations. She also called on FAO to explore how to collectively respond to the Youth Call to Action, and to invite the RFCs to do likewise.

Peter Csoka, FAO and Associate Secretary-General of WFC XV, agreed that WFC is not a multilateral process and has a unique status, but suggested its outcomes justify its relevance. He expressed hope that FAO could capture all its recommendations and proposals, not only the ones of ambition, but also those of caution.

The Chair presented his draft summary of conclusions, which was adopted with minor amendments from AUSTRALIA, BRAZIL and the US.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- welcomes the WFC XV outcomes;
- invites FAO and Members to implement the Congress' recommendations, as appropriate, taking into account national context and existing international obligations; and
- appreciates the Youth Call to Action and invited Members to consider appropriate actions for supporting youth engagement in forestry at all levels.

Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on

Forestry 2020-2023: On Thursday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document ([COFO/2022/7.3](#)) on COFO's Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) for 2020-2023. He reminded the Committee that this was one of the three agenda items agreed beforehand to be subject to written procedure, so there would be no oral statements.

The Chair then presented his draft summary of conclusions, which was adopted.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- welcomes the adjustment of the MYPOW based on the request by COFO 25;
- welcomes the progress in the implementation of the MYPOW and the efforts of COFO and FAO towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda; and
- recommends aligning the planning cycle of the COFO MYPOW with that of the other Technical Committees starting in 2024 in order to facilitate cross-sectoral work among the Committees.

Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and Strengthening FAO's Contribution to the International Arrangements on Forests, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the Mid-term Review in 2024:

On Thursday, Chair Hargrove introduced the document ([COFO/2022/7.4 Rev.1](#)), presenting progress made by FAO, including through the CPF, in implementing the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF), and its contributions to the preparations for the midterm review in 2024 of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF).

Delegates generally welcomed the FAO's work supporting implementation of the UNSPF, its leadership of the CPF, and agreed that FAO should strengthen its contribution to the 2024 midterm review (MTR) of the IAF.

The EU, with MOLDOVA, TÜRKIYE and UKRAINE, noting risk of duplication, called for utilization of FAO data, knowledge products, and expertise in the MTR and for employing the RFCs to enhance regional contributions to the implementation of the UNSPF. The US acknowledged the CPF's collaboration on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC noted new momentum for the implementation of the GFGs through the UNSPF and FAO's contributions to UNFF debates. MEXICO said the UNFF mechanism for open, inclusive dialogue on issues is not being used enough by local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Supported by NEW ZEALAND, he expressed appreciation for the UNSPF communications strategy, but called for elevating forestry's visibility internationally.

JAPAN urged FAO leadership in encouraging CPF members to participate actively in the MTR.

Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, Director, UNFF Secretariat, described joint UNFF-FAO work within the framework of implementing the UNSPF, including a global workshop on national voluntary reporting and progress on developing Tier 3 indicators.

KENYA noted FAO's leading role in supporting Members' implementation of the GFGs, the UNSPF, and FRA assessments, urging continued FAO/CPF leadership.

The Chair presented his draft summary of conclusions on Thursday. Members offered a few amendments. During the discussion, Members agreed to an EU proposal to specify that FAO should facilitate participation of CPF members in the MTR. After some discussion of an EU proposal for a new paragraph on RFCs participating in regional dialogues related to UNFF, with proposals for modifications from the US, BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, and CAMEROON, delegates agreed to state that COFO "invites FAO to continue supporting the participation of RFCs in regional dialogues related to the UNFF and other relevant processes, as appropriate and within FAO's mandate."

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- recommends FAO strengthen its leadership role in the CPF, and facilitate active participation of CPF members in the MTR of the IAF;
- encourages FAO to contribute with expertise, data for statistics and knowledge to UNFF policy discussions; and
- invites FAO to continue supporting the participation of the RFCs in regional dialogues related to UNFF, as appropriate and within FAO's mandate.

Development of Regional Action Plans for the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy (2022-25): On Thursday, Chair Hargrove introduced the documents ([COFO/2022/8](#) and [COFO/2022/INF/10](#)) on FAO's Science and Innovation Strategy, adopted in June 2022 by the 170th FAO Council. The Strategy aims to help accelerate the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC supported the Strategy and called on the FAO to help foster South-South and triangular exchange of information. The EU, with MOLDOVA and TÜRKIYE, appreciated the approach outlined in the Strategy and called on FAO to assist in the development of regional action plans to include all forms of science and technology in forest management.

The US encouraged FAO to organize open and transparent exchanges for sharing best practices, noting that a focus on regional approaches may miss opportunities for sharing best practices. Senegal, for the AFRICAN GROUP, stated the need for accelerated implementation of the Strategy, and urged FAO to include women, youth and Indigenous communities in Strategy implementation.

ECUADOR, PERU, INDONESIA, and MALAYSIA highlighted the importance of continued FAO support to Member States in developing a global platform for sharing information. INDONESIA proposed that FAO establish regional innovation hubs.

Ismahane Elouafi, FAO Chief Scientist, explained that the Strategy addresses regional-level planning supported by strong coordination mechanisms that ensures learning from region to region. She added that action plans in the Strategy are devised according to the levels and priorities required to respond to identified needs.

The Chair presented his draft summary on Thursday. In the ensuing discussion, delegates accepted the EU's proposal for a new paragraph, after some modifications by BRAZIL and AUSTRALIA, stating that the Committee "called on authors of regional action plans to include relevant forms of science and innovation in forestry in their preparation."

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION proposed a new paragraph inviting the FAO RFCs to regularly report to COFO on their implementation of the Strategy. UKRAINE suggested adding "as appropriate." In response to a query from the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, Chair Hargrove said "as appropriate" would avoid any assumption that it would be an agenda item at a future COFO session. The US referred to efforts "relevant to" the implementation of the Strategy. Delegates ultimately agreed to Chair Hargrove's suggestion to combine this proposal with an already-agreed paragraph.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 26, the Committee:

- welcomes the high-level framework that will be used for the development of regional action plans for the effective implementation of the Strategy;
- encourages FAO to continue to organize open, inclusive, transparent and timely consultation processes, to take into account the guidance provided by Members in refining and further developing the regional action plans, and to ensure that action plans capture actions in the Strategy at all levels—global, regional and country;
- encourages FAO to ensure that the regional action plans align with and contribute to the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031; and

- invites FAO to continue to report progress on implementation of the Strategy to the relevant governing bodies, in particular in relation to forests and the involvement of RFCs.

Election of Officers

On Thursday, the Committee elected Günther Walkner (Austria) as Chair of COFO 27 by acclamation. Walkner thanked the FAO and the RFCs for their tireless efforts, particularly in light of the multiple challenges to forests today and urged everyone to work harder than ever to achieve the 2030 Agenda goals.

Date and Place of the Next Session

On Thursday, delegates agreed that COFO 27 will be held in Rome in the third quarter of 2024, with the exact date to be determined by the FAO Director-General in consultation with the COFO Steering Committee, for presentation to the next FAO Council in December 2022 and the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference in 2023.

Adoption of the Report and Closing Session

During the Friday evening plenary, Chair Hargrove announced that the draft report of COFO 26 does not include the compromise on conflicts reached on Friday, because the Drafting Committee had not yet had a chance to review it but would be inserted later under the agenda item on forestry under the FAO Strategic Framework.

Drafting Committee Chair Guillermo Valentin Rodolico (Argentina) introduced the draft report (COFO/2022/draft report). He explained that the draft report, except for the additional change announced by Chair Hargrove and minor editorial changes for smoother reading of the report that would be made later by professional proofreaders/editors, represents no substantive changes to the conclusions agreed by plenary. He proposed that the report be adopted *en bloc*. Delegates approved the report.

Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General, FAO, addressing delegates virtually, hailed COFO for its successful conclusion, saying the active involvement of delegates throughout the week was a testimony to their deep commitment and engagement. She highlighted some COFO 26 outcomes and urged Members to take the lead in showing the world how forests can contribute to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Several delegations praised the Chair for his outstanding leadership, hard work, and perseverance. Chair Hargrove, acknowledging that it takes many people to make a success, thanked the Secretariat, technical and support staff, interpreters, panelists, the Steering Committee and Members.

Chair Hargrove closed the meeting at 8:18 pm.

A Brief Analysis of COFO 26

As the 26th meeting of the Committee on Forestry (COFO 26) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) came to a close, the conflict in Ukraine was in its 226th day, with its increasing impacts on food and energy security across the globe, the COVID-19 global pandemic was still affecting people's lives in all countries, and the 21st century's triple crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution were still ongoing. The world's forests are not only being affected by all of these crises, at least indirectly, but discussions at COFO 26 made it clear that forests are an important part of the solution.

This brief analysis will consider the outcomes of COFO 26 in this context and what this may mean for the world's forests in the future.

Challenges

COFO 26 was always going to be challenging, largely because it had the task of making up for time lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting truncation of the virtual COFO 25 meeting in 2021. This made for a very full agenda at COFO 26, with no additional days allocated and 16 substantive topics to address, aside from the usual procedural agenda items. Add to that the fact that, as a participant of a recent Chatham House conference for business leaders, professionals, and investors reportedly said, "Politics are toxic right now" for various reasons, including the impacts being faced from the war, the pandemic, and the climate crisis.

A crisis can sometimes pull people together, where there is a clear need to overcome or resolve a mutual problem. On the other hand, differing interests as to how to resolve a problem can destroy trust and make compromise difficult if not impossible. At COFO 26 the war in Ukraine dominated discussions on several agenda items, especially given the differing positions between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, which is itself home to one-fifth of the world's forests. The war was perhaps more salient for COFO than for many other multilateral environmental bodies due to the effects of the ongoing war on land, agriculture, and global food and energy security, in which forests play a big role.

These potentially toxic politics brought into focus the debate over COFO's role as a technical committee of the FAO. To what extent must COFO take into account the broader context, into which politics may intrude? In reality, COFO has never been purely "technical," despite the Russian Federation's repeated calls to focus on the "technical" topics on the agenda whenever other delegates used interventions to condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine. It is the policymakers—heads of forestry departments and other subject experts—who are designated participants at COFO meetings. And they will use any opportunity to try to ensure their national interests. One country's national interests inevitably have the potential to conflict with those of others; this was of course evident in the differences expressed on the war in Ukraine, but it also came to a head in the hours of debate over how the COFO 26 report should reflect the way the war was addressed.

National interests were also reflected in the positions on other issues that more directly affect forests. Some of the world's biggest exporters of agricultural products objected vehemently to stating, in the report of the meeting, that agricultural conversion is responsible for 90% of all deforestation, even though the State of the World's Forests 2022 report explicitly states, "The latest data confirm that agricultural expansion is driving almost 90 percent of global deforestation." There were also objections to calling for "halting deforestation," despite the fact that this exact wording is one of the targets under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the end, neither of these phrases appear in the report of the meeting.

Progress

Despite sometimes difficult debates, and several days that went well into the evening, COFO successfully concluded its work. This positive outcome was not assured even an hour before the meeting ended, as a small group worked feverishly for at least six hours on Friday to find agreement on the most difficult conflicts of interests

manifested at the meeting. Compromise language referring to "the ongoing conflict," rather than to the "war in Ukraine" or to the effects of war more generally, was finally agreed by both of the main parties involved, which opened the door for final agreement on the entire report.

But the substance of the meeting also provided evidence of recent progress in addressing forests. Under numerous agenda items, statements frequently focused on progress being made nationally in conserving or restoring forests, with numerous countries reporting increases in tree cover or initiatives being undertaken for this purpose, such as Saudi Arabia's new programme to plant one billion trees across the country, or the ongoing multi-country Great Green Wall initiative in Africa. There was much focus on the fact that forests are only one of many land uses. So, despite some countries' reservations about putting explicit reference to the competition between agriculture and forest in the final report, there was a sense of general agreement that they must be integrated, given that "forest restoration" is only one aspect of a more comprehensive "land restoration," and that agroforestry—and even agroecology, which also encompasses forest biodiversity—are a necessary part of the future, and growing in importance.

Globally, trends are improving: the global deforestation rate, while not reversed, has slowed, and it almost goes without saying that attention to the situation of women, youth, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples is now high on the international agenda following decades or centuries of neglect. One ubiquitous sticking point, financing, also seemed somewhat less controversial, despite Brazil's (unsuccessful) attempts to insert the term "common but differentiated responsibilities" that has become ubiquitous in intergovernmental texts over the past 30 years, into the Chair's draft summary to remind developed countries of many developing countries' need for financial assistance to implement their increasingly concrete and ambitious commitments on forests under the Paris Agreement on climate change and the SDGs. At COFO 26 there appeared to be more or less general acceptance of the feasibility of results-based payments, under REDD+ and other schemes, given their acceptability to developed countries and companies whose investments in such schemes can help them meet their own environmental goals or commitments. Perhaps most significantly for forests, it was clear that calls at COFO 26 for integrating agriculture, forests, and other land uses are not falling on deaf ears, as the FAO itself reported on the ways in which its work is aimed precisely at this goal.

Keeping Hope Alive

COFO is a representative intergovernmental body and as such cannot be detached from the influence of national, regional, or global politics. It is of course not COFO's job to micro-manage FAO's forestry work, but the FAO Forestry Division acts as COFO's operational arm in bringing forest policy down to ground level, so COFO's guidance to FAO forestry work is key to achieving successful outcomes. Ultimately, COFO 26 managed to wend its way through the lengthy agenda and complex obstacles to agreement, indeed ending on a relatively high note with applause as the report was adopted *en bloc*. This enables FAO to have some certainty of a political mandate for continuing its work, such as leading international discussions on achieving a consensus definition of forest degradation, that may bode well for the future of forests.

Upcoming Meetings

80th session of the Economic Commission for Europe Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI): The annual meeting of COFFI will be held in person for the first time since 2019, under the theme “Urban forests in context.” The meeting will discuss the global and regional policy contexts, including outcomes from UNFF17 and WFC XV, forest economics and markets, the 2022-2025 Integrated Programme of Work, urban forestry matters, and the contribution of forests and forest products to a circular bio-economy. **dates:** 2-4 November 2022 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** unece.org/info/Forests/events/365296

Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Change Conference: The 27th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 27), the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 17), and the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 4) will begin work on the Global Stocktake, among other matters. **dates:** 6-18 November 2022 **location:** Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt **www:** unfccc.int/cop27

58th session of the International Tropical Timber Council and sessions of the Associated Committees: The Council is the International Tropical Timber Organization’s (ITTO) governing body. It meets once a year to discuss wide-ranging issues of interest to members, including those related to the illegal trade of tropical timber and the sustainable management of tropical forests. **dates:** 7-11 November 2022 **location:** Yokohama, Japan **www:** itto.int

63rd GEF Council: The Council, which meets twice annually, develops, adopts, and evaluates the operational policies and programs for GEF-financed activities, including those on SFM. The 63rd Council Meeting will be the first Council Meeting under the GEF’s eighth replenishment. **dates:** 28 November - 2 December 2022 **location:** virtual **www:** thegef.org/events/63rd-gef-council-meeting

UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15): This meeting includes the 15th meeting of the COP to the CBD, the 10th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the 4th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing. The meetings will be preceded by the fifth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework from 3-5 December 2022. The meetings are scheduled to take place to review the achievement and delivery of the CBD’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. It is also expected to take a final decision on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, as well as decisions on related topics, including capacity building and resource mobilization. **dates:** 7-19 December 2022 **location:** Montreal, Canada **www:** cbd.int/conferences/2021-2022

VIII Latin American Forestry Congress: The eighth Latin American Forestry Congress will be held together with the fifth Argentine Forestry Congress under the theme “The Vital Role of Forests in Complex and Changing Times.” The event will discuss the impacts on forests of the COVID-19 pandemic, wars, droughts, climate change, and a turbulent world, and the necessity to organize with a sustainability focus. **dates:** 27-30 March 2023 **location:** Mendoza, Argentina **www:** congresoforestal2023.org.ar

UNFF18: The Forum will review progress in implementation of the UNSPF and preparations for the Mid-Term Review, as well as UNFF18 inputs to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable

Development, work toward the global biodiversity framework and other international forest-related developments. **dates:** 8-12 May 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/esa/forests

UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: The 2023 session of the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC will take place on the theme “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels.” It will include in-depth review of SDGs 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and 17 (partnership for the Goals). **dates:** 10-19 July 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York, US **www:** hlpf.un.org/2023

SDG Summit: The SDG Summit is the quadrennial meeting of the HLPF under the auspices of the UNGA. Leaders are expected to comprehensively review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, provide political guidance for the way forward, and consider new science-based solutions for accelerating the full implementation of the SDGs in the remaining years towards 2030. **dates:** September 2023 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York, US **www:** hlpf.un.org

COFO 27: The 27th session of COFO will be held in the third quarter of 2024. **dates:** third quarter 2024 (TBC) **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** fao.org/about/meetings/cofo

For additional upcoming events, see: sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

ACFSI	Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries
CGRFA	Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
COAG	FAO Committee on Agriculture
COFI	FAO Committee on Fisheries
COFO	FAO Committee on Forestry
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FRA	Global Forest Resources Assessment
GFFFN	Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network
GFGs	Global Forest Goals
GFMP	Global Fire Management Platform
IAF	International Arrangement on Forests
IFM	Integrated fire management
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
NDCs	Nationally determined contributions
NWFPs	Non-wood forest products
RFC	Regional Forestry Commission
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable forest management
SIDS	Small island developing states
SOFO	State of the World’s Forests
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
UNSPF	United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests
WFC	World Forestry Congress