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TWENTY-SIXTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Merida, Mexico, 10-14 April 2000

REPORT OF THE TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

INTRODUCTION

1. The Statutes of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission (LACFC) define its functions as to advise FAO on the formulation of forest policy and to review and coordinate its implementation at regional level; to exchange information and, generally, through special subsidiary bodies, to advise on the most suitable practices and actions regarding technical problems; and to make appropriate recommendations in relation to the foregoing.
2. Membership of the Commission is open to all Member Nations and Associate Members of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, whose territories are situated wholly or partly in the Latin American region, as defined by the Organization, or that are responsible for the international relations of any non-self-governing territory in the region. To be considered for membership, those meeting the above requisites should make this known to the Director-General of the Organization. The Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission held its 20th Session in Havana, from 10-14 September 1998, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Cuba. The session was attended by delegates from 21 Member Nations, representatives of United Nations specialized agencies and observers from four international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.
3. In view of the importance that the member countries of the region gave to the forestry sector when they requested that FAO establish the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission, it was considered appropriate to make available to the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean the recommendations and ideas that resulted from the last session of the Commission.

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUESTS OF THE TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE LACFC

STATE OF FORESTRY IN THE REGION

4. The Commission recommended that forest fires be dealt with in a subregional group context and requested corresponding support from FAO.
5. The Commission recommended that FAO continue to support some of the activities of the subregional group for Central America and Mexico, i.e. criteria and indicators for the conservation and sustainable management of forests, forest fires, wildlife, protected areas, the Mesoamerican biological corridor and forest policy.

FAO reports: FAO forestry strategy and its implications for the future Programme of Work and Budget

6. The Commission recognized that the forestry strategies proposed for the region should be formulated with people's aspirations in mind. It also emphasized the need to acknowledge the impact of other sectors on deforestation and forest degradation. The Commission recommended that FAO conduct further analytical studies to help resolve these problems and raise people's awareness and participation.

FAO reports: Review of Regular and Field Programme Activities, including follow-up to the recommendations of the 19th Session of the Commission

7. The Commission noted the concern of many countries about the reduction of the field programme in the region, as compared to other regions, and recommended that FAO place greater emphasis on areas that had previously received high priority and that were still important, such as the compilation, processing and handling of data, dendroenergy and, especially, forestry management and conservation.
8. The Commission recommended that FAO take steps to expedite the processing and negotiation of project documents. In addition, it requested that FAO help countries increase their forestry project formulation and negotiation capabilities.

FAO reports: Technical Cooperation Networks

9. Taking into account the financial problems, the length of existence of certain networks and the time constraints on adequate performance by their Technical Secretariats, the Commission recommended that the FAO Regional Office, in consultation with the national forest authorities, examine the future of the TCNs with their Regional and National Coordinators, and report back on the matter at the next session of the LACFC.
10. The Commission accepted that there were no well-founded reasons to maintain the Committee on Forestry Research and considered the decision of the Conference to be appropriate, but at the same time it recommended that FAO and the Member Nations of the region strengthen interlinkages and the exchange of technical and scientific information resulting from research,

through the mechanism of horizontal technical cooperation among countries, in the framework of the subregional groups and with the support of FAO.

Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Forestry: Proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the process of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

11. The Commission expressed its concern that, given the complexity of the CSD/IPF/IFF process, it was very important to keep countries informed of new developments and recommended that FAO contribute to this process.

IN-SESSION SEMINAR: FOREST VALUATION

12. The Commission grew more aware of the importance of forest valuation and noted that there was a lack of knowledge of available tools for this and of information on physical data and prices to conduct such an evaluation. In view of this, the Commission recommended: a) training on the methodology and dissemination of practical tools for forest valuation; b) the preparation of case studies to test and validate the tools for forest valuation; and c) sharing this information through an informal network within the Commission.

MATTERS TO BE REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

13. The Commission requested that the following items be drawn to the attention of the next session of the Committee on Forestry:

- The need to reinforce the Field Programme, including FAO support to countries in project formulation and negotiation to attract more funds from donors to this end.
- The importance of conducting studies into the causes of deforestation to help resolve this major problem and raise people's awareness of this issue.
- Because of the lack of know-how on the practical tools of forest valuation and the shortage of trained personnel in this field, the Commission requested related support from FAO and the international community.
- In view of the importance attributed by the LACFC to its subregional groups, the Commission requested that FAO and other bodies provide support for implementation of the inter-sessional programmes of work established during the 20th Session.
- The need for the national forestry programmes to be supported at top national policy-making level.

NEXT MEETING OF THE LACFC

14. The next meeting of the LACFC will take place in Santa Fe de Bogota, Colombia, from 4 to 8 September 2000.