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## TWENTY-SEVENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Havana, Cuba, 22 to 26 April 2002

### REPORT OF THE TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

1. The Statutes of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission specify that its functions are to advise FAO on the formulation of forestry policies and to review and coordinate their implementation at regional level; to exchange information; to advise, through its specialized subsidiary bodies, on the most suitable methods and measures for technical problems; and to put forward appropriate recommendations for all of the above.
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 totally or partially situated in the Latin American Region, as defined by the Organization, or that are responsible for the international relations of one of the non-autonomous territories of the Region. To be considered for membership, those meeting these conditions should notify their interest to the Director-General of the Organization.
3. The Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission held its 21<sup>st</sup> Session from 4 to 8 September 2000 in Santa Fe de Bogotá, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Colombia. The session was attended by delegates from 16 Member States, representatives of United Nations specialized agencies, and observers from eight international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.
4. A summary of the recommendations and requests of the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the LACFC is given in paragraphs 5 to 24.

#### *State of forestry in the Region*

5. The Commission recognized that forestry institutions were still suffering from a range of difficulties, including a lack of coordination with other institutions, the low hierarchical status of the public forestry administration, a lack of institutional capacity, and decentralization. It also stated that the forestry institutions were now facing new sectoral challenges and demands, and

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therefore recommended that FAO conduct a detailed analysis of different administrative models in order to adapt the institutions to present and future requirements.

***FAO reports: The National Forest Programmes in the Region***

6. The Commission recommended that the four subregional groups should be used to the maximum extent possible as a support mechanism for the National Forest Programmes.

***FAO reports: Technical cooperation networks***

7. The Delegate of Cuba pointed out that dendroenergy was very important in his country, as it was in other countries of the Region, and, on the basis of prior consultations with energy officials in Cuba, recommended that the FAO Regional Office look into the possibility of continuing to sponsor the Latin American Technical Cooperation Network on Dendroenergy.

8. The Commission requested that FAO look into the merit of organizing the Third Latin American Congress on Watersheds within the framework of the International Year of Mountains.

***Technical items: Prevention and control of forest fires***

9. The Commission affirmed that forest fires were mostly caused by humans and almost always broke out in agricultural areas adjacent to forestland. The Commission therefore recommended that governments involve the Ministries of Agriculture on the subject of forest fires, when these Ministries were not responsible for forestry services.

***Technical items: International Year of Mountains - 2002***

10. The Commission stressed that the environmental benefits of forests were most evident in mountain areas, and therefore recommended that FAO and the countries make efforts towards enhancing these benefits.

***Technical items: forestry and the Kyoto Protocol***

11. The Commission was pleased to note the information on FAO's activities under the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, and recommended that it continue to provide support to countries in technical and scientific discussions on the implications of including forests in the Clean Development Mechanism, by through the strengthening of technical capacities, training and clarification of forest-related definitions.

***In-session Seminar: Forestry information projects and outlook study for Latin America and the Caribbean***

12. The Commission attached high importance to the strengthening of local institutions involved in the compilation, processing and analysis of forestry information through the project "Information and Analysis for Sustainable Forest Management in Latin America". It also recommended the inclusion of the private and public sectors, and the need for the LACFC Sub-Regional Groups to support the project.

13. The Commission recommended that the "Outlook Study for Latin America and the Caribbean" should include thematic topics such as the environmental services of forests, interlinkage between society and forests, interrelationship between ethnic culture and forests, non-wood forest products, trends in international trade, and the contribution of the forestry sector to national economies, to name only some of the themes of interest to the Region. The Commission also recommended that the activities of the information and outlook projects be properly harmonized, so that the information projects can provide data for analysis in the outlook project, including concepts and practicalities of production chain studies.

#### ***Satellite meeting on the National Forest Programmes***

14. The Commission recommended the inclusion of the different components of the production chain and the valuation of all forest resources. It also underlined the need to consider installed technological capacity, both hardware and software, implementation through human resources and participation of the indigenous and rural population.

#### ***Regional issues identified by the Commission for the attention of the Committee on Forestry***

15. The Commission requested that the following issues be raised at the next session of the Committee on Forestry:

16. The importance of improving the quality and accessibility of forestry information to underpin the effective planning, development and formulation of forestry policy. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of the FAO proposal to conduct the Project of Information and Analysis for Sustainable Forest Management and the Outlook Study for Latin America and the Caribbean for the forestry sector.

17. The growing importance of National Forest Programmes as a comprehensive framework for the formulation, planning and implementation of the forestry development process in the Region, especially for application of the proposals of the Inter-governmental Forum on Forests. The Commission also noted that FAO's work in support of the National Forest Programmes in the Region constituted an excellent example of the invaluable cooperation that the Organization could provide to forest development in countries.

18. The importance of the forestry sector in the mountain areas of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the opportunity provided by the International Year of Mountains 2002 to raise awareness of these ecosystems. Also, the need to integrate forest management with the management of the other natural resources at catchment level, and to analyse and learn from related country-level experiences.

19. Given the important role that forests can play in the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Commission requested that FAO help to strengthen national technical capacities by providing information and training on the Convention and its instruments.

20. The importance of the Subregional Groups established under the Commission as mechanisms to facilitate the integration and exchange of information and experiences among countries in support of their national forest policies and programmes.

21. Given that public forestry institutions are essential coordinating and executing bodies for sustainable forest development in each country, and that national and international initiatives could not be effectively developed without strengthened public forestry institutions, the Commission recommended that the Committee on Forestry identify appropriate strategies to foster the development of the forestry institutions of the countries of the Region.

22. In view of the considerable uncertainties in national management of native forests, the different positions adopted in this respect, the need to involve communities and the need to generate local benefits and achieve sustainable development, the members of the Commission requested that FAO promote recognition of integrated natural resource management by communities as a valid strategy for the conservation of forests.

23. The Commission considered that it was vital to reinforce the action of FAO's Committee on Forestry to promote forestry production chains in the projects it executed, as well as the other actions implemented through the Programme of Support to the National Forest Programmes.

24. The next session of the LACFC will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in October 2001.

### ***The sustainable development of mountain areas***

25. The following item is presented to this Regional Conference at the request of GRULAC.

26. Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development (UNCED) deals with sustainable mountain development in its Chapter 13. Considered to be fragile ecosystems, mountain areas require a special effort to improve understanding of the resources they contain, and sustained action for the development of local communities and the conservation of mountain resources. The main objectives of Chapter 13 are: i) greater awareness and better understanding of aspects related to the sustainable development of mountain areas at national, regional and global level; ii) protection of natural resources and development of institutional and technical mechanisms to reduce natural disasters; (iii) strengthening of a global information network and database for organizations, governments and individuals involved in aspects relating to mountain areas; iv) building of country capacity to improve the planning, implementation and monitoring of sustainable mountain development programmes and activities; and v) combating poverty.

27. In 1993, the Commission on Sustainable Development of the United Nations Economic and Social Council appointed FAO Task Manager of activities relating to implementation of Chapter 13. The Organization is therefore responsible for coordinating, directing and stimulating the efforts of UN agencies to implement the measures and recommendations indicated in this Chapter. FAO has carried out this responsibility through a series of internal and external mechanisms that are described below.

28. In 1998, the United Nations General Assembly took an important step in declaring 2002 the International Year of Mountains (IYM), thereby recognizing the importance of sustainable mountain development, and invited FAO to act as lead agency within the United Nations system, responsible for preparing the IYM.

### ***Proclamation of the International Year of Mountains***

29. The idea of proposing sustainable mountain development as a theme for an international year was initially put forward by the President of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan at the International Conference on Mountain Research - Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, held in Bishkek in 1996. It was then formally presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and after being strongly supported in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in 1998 the General Assembly approved by acclamation the resolution to proclaim 2002 the International Year of Mountains. FAO was invited to act as lead agency in coordinating the IYM, a task that was approved by the FAO Council in November 1998.

30. Under this overall goal of ensuring the sustainable development of mountain regions and the wellbeing of mountain communities, the priority objectives of the IYM are, *inter alia*:

- to increase awareness of and knowledge on mountain ecosystems, their dynamics and functioning, and their overriding importance in providing a number of strategic goods and services essential to the wellbeing of both rural and urban inhabitants, particularly water supply and food security;
- to promote the conservation and sustainable development of mountain areas for the wellbeing of present and future generations and their contribution to the conservation of other integrated ecosystems; and
- to promote and defend the cultural heritage of mountain communities.

31. These objectives are to be achieved through a range of mechanisms: the generation and exchange of information; awareness raising and sensitization; education, training and extension; documentation of best practices based on successful field case studies, and promotion of mountain-specific policy formulation and legislation. Efforts at both national and international level will be required for the success of the IYM, and for follow up at different levels.

### ***Expected results of the IYM***

32. The IYM provides us with an opportunity to initiate processes that will ultimately advance the development of mountain communities, acting as a "trampoline" or catalyst for continuous, tangible and lasting action, and leading to inter-institutional agreements and to political and institutional commitments. Its activities should reinforce all aspects of mountain development and encourage a participatory approach that will involve a variety of direct stakeholders. The expected outputs from a successful IYM will therefore exist in many forms and on different levels.

33. Expected global outputs:

- information on mountains, mountain resources and sustainable management and conservation practices will promote development through concrete actions;
- awareness of the importance of mountains, the fragility of their resources and the need for an integrated and sustainable approach to their development will be heightened through broad public dialogue (responsibilities, media products, publications and training material);
- initiation of long-term research and/or development projects addressing critical issues in mountain areas, such as the sustainable use of natural resources (water, soil, forest, minerals), impact on climate change, conservation of biodiversity, management of protected areas, ecotourism, cultural heritage and a sustainable mountain economy;

- improvement in livelihood systems and quality of life in mountain areas;
- formulation and consensus regarding principles, instruments and agreements for the conservation and sustainable development of mountain areas; and
- proposed plans of action and commitments at national and regional level.

34. Expected regional outputs:

- Organization of regional conferences and consultations on mountains, before and during 2002 and with the broad participation of all players, to raise awareness of the importance of mountain areas and the fragility of their ecosystems; and
- organization of discussions leading to better understanding of interactions between highland and lowland communities and related problems.

35. Expected national outputs:

- Development of appropriate guidelines and strategies for the sustainable development and conservation of mountain areas that will be successfully implemented in a number of countries;
- design of training material and curricula on mountain-related issues that will be widely used in and integrated into educational programmes of schools, universities, alpine clubs, sports clubs, tourism organizations, agricultural schools and others;
- establishment of mechanisms to monitor the implementation of sustainable mountain development at national level. As an alternative, this role could be carried out by the national committees that would have been established in preparation for the IYM; and
- compilation and analysis of data and information (including sex-disaggregated data) on mountain areas at national level.

36. Expected local outputs:

- Increased number of local initiatives and operational activities targeting sustainable mountain development, rational use of resources, income-generating activities and improvement in living conditions;
- initiation of support activities, in particular for indigenous communities and other vulnerable groups (low-income groups, especially women); and
- constitution of effective mechanisms that ensure local empowerment and participatory strategies in the use of mountain resources.

***Special considerations for the Latin America and Caribbean Region***

***Mountain resources in the Region***

37. The mountain areas of Latin America and the Caribbean account for a large part of the Region and include significant proportions of the population, including indigenous and ethnic groups whose stability depends on the rational administration of natural resources. The conservation of these areas impacts on the quality of the local, national and global environment and, in many cases, on the socio-economic conditions of the inhabitants of medium and lower watersheds. The manner in which these areas are used is therefore a priority for the countries of the Region. The mountain areas also include some of the most fragile ecosystems of the Region, requiring special treatment, and operational coordination and linkage with the relevant national authorities, civil society and local communities.

38. The mountain areas have considerable production potential, in terms of energy, forest output, reservoirs and water control, and genetic resources, and also in terms of sustainable agricultural production using appropriate technologies. Some mountain areas also have considerable touristic and recreational potential and therefore extensive natural potential that needs to be developed sustainably in accordance with land-use planning, appropriate technologies and a participatory social framework. By coincidence, the year 2002 has also been declared the International Year of Ecotourism.

39. The mountain areas of Latin America possess a wealth of biological diversity due to an abundance of ecosystems and their wide range of genera and species of mammal, bird, amphibian, fish and flora. There is a high degree of endemism in the ecosystems of temperate, tropical and arid climates. This wealth of biodiversity and high endemism give the mountain ecosystems stability and value, and contribute towards their scenic beauty. Their functions are essentially to maintain the ecological balance, water security and the production capacity of medium and lower watersheds.

### *State of the mountains in the Region*

40. The present state of degradation of forests and other natural resources in vast extensions of mountain land in the Region is mainly due to the lack of integrated administration, which is affecting the sustainability of the forest ecosystem, to pollution of waters, erosion of productive land and exacerbated instability of fragile areas vulnerable to extreme climatic events. There are few examples of administration based on integrated planning and implementation, although recent successful projects have inspired the participation of public and private entities and have generated new expectations of participation from governmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

41. The increasing exploitation of mountain areas, mainly for extractive purposes, has had serious repercussions on fresh water bodies, soils and forests, affecting water regimes and the quality, quantity and availability of water.

42. Forest biodiversity has been seriously degraded, with natural forests the subject of serious concern in all the fragile mountain ecosystems. The native forest of mountain areas has been increasingly degraded during recent years with a loss not only in forest cover, but also in its wealth of biodiversity. The priorities of urban and industrial development, with all their implications, the extraction of petroleum, minerals, gold and timber and agro-industrial activity in the last decades have caused most of the damage to the mountain areas.

43. The high altitude forests and watersheds are those most exposed to extreme events (flooding, drought, landslides). The accumulated pressure of human intervention has undermined the stability of geomorphologically active mountain slopes, which has in turn caused the lower areas to suffer the consequences of changes in the plateaux. A number of countries of the Region have recently been affected by flooding and landslides. These endangered areas can be demarcated and placed under environmental surveillance, with the application of preventive measures and treatment.

44. Expansion of the agricultural frontier in mountain areas is indicative of an absence of ecologically-sensitive land use planning, whereby land is used according to its capacity, population pressure on fragile soils is regulated and sustainable forms of use and administration are encouraged.

45. A high proportion of the mountain areas in the Region enjoy formal status as "protected areas", although some important ecosystems are not represented and population growth, expansion of exogenous plant and animal species, tourism and illicit logging within protected and adjacent areas increase the risk of deterioration. There is high risk of spontaneous and uncontrolled intervention in many protected forest areas, due to disproportionate use and pollution from economic activity within the area or in the surrounding area.

46. There is general recognition of the lack of sustainable and integrated administrative policies, strategies and plans in mountain areas, especially in the fragile ecosystems. Where these policies do exist, they need to be implemented and their results evaluated to effectively identify many of the causes of present and past degradation of natural resources, and to validate achievements.

### ***Strengthening activities in the mountain areas of the Region***

47. Priority needs to be given to protecting the natural resources of catchment areas that are in a critical state of conservation and to administering them in an integrated manner so that they have a strong impact on environmental stability, human activities and vulnerable lowland areas.

48. Sustainable integrated rural development programmes need to be established to check the worsening degradation of natural productive resources, water, soils, vegetation and fauna. Land-use agreements need to be reached with local communities to reverse the decline in crop and forest output and to reduce conflicts over land use. As agreed by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, activities relating to the environment and forests need to be organized within the reference framework of the National Forest Programmes of individual countries.

49. The present operating proposal for mountain areas is based on the integrated administration of natural resources in watersheds, enabling the physical area and its economic, natural and socio-cultural characteristics to be treated in a broad, systemic and participatory manner. The fact that the year 2002 is also the International Year of Ecotourism needs to be exploited to consider measures and regulations that will help reduce the negative impact of this activity on the mountain ecosystems of the Region.

50. Under its programme of administration of natural resources, the FAO Regional Office has prioritized the conservation and development of mountain resources and watershed management, and has fostered policies and technical and methodological support for the planning, administration and sustainable development of mountain areas. With FAO support, the Latin American Technical Cooperation Network on Watershed Management (REDLACH) has focused its actions on the administration of micro-catchments in mountain areas.

51. The objectives of REDLACH are:

- To support governments, civil society and local authorities and communities in the design of specific policies and strategies for the participatory planning and administration of sustainable mountain development. This will help countries to deliver on their Agenda 21 commitments to mountain ecosystems.
- To raise country capacity for the sustainable integrated and participatory administration of natural resources in fragile mountain ecosystems in support of Agenda 21, the World Food Summit and the action proposals of the Intergovernmental Panel and Forum on

Forests of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (IPF/IFF) and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF).

- To follow up the United Nations Resolution for the International Year of Mountains, in which governments, United Nations agencies and other players are invited and urged to participate and increase awareness of the importance of sustainable mountain development.

52. The administration of mountain areas has traditionally been a central concern of the forestry sector in the Region. An important element for the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission is the role that the forestry sector can play in providing leadership in the planning, coordination and facilitation of programmes and activities aimed at launching the IYM in individual countries.

53. As a way of sensitizing the authorities and civil society in general, the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) has developed a programme of events associated with the International Year of Mountains. The following round tables have so far taken place: Mountain Watershed Management; Decentralized Management of Mountain Ecosystems; Tourism in Mountain Areas, and; Administration of Social Goods in Mountain Areas. Three meetings will be held in the second half of 2001 on the following topics: first peoples and gender in the development of Andean mountain areas; security and emergencies in mountain areas; and productive activities in mountain areas. All the material that has been presented and the topics discussed will serve as a basis for activities to be undertaken in 2002.

### ***Third Latin American Congress on Watershed Management***

54. Bearing in mind the declaration on the IYM, the Latin American Technical Cooperation Network on Watershed Management decided to give priority to the topic of mountains and to prepare a plan of work that reflected the decision of the United Nations. At its annual meeting, held in the Dominican Republic in November 2000, the Network decided to organize the Third Latin American Congress on Watershed Management that would combine the efforts of the countries of the Region relating to watershed management in mountain areas. The Congress will provide a unique opportunity for the watershed management and development players of the Network's member countries to learn of - and from - experiences, successes and problems of watershed management in the Region's mountain areas.

55. The basic objective of the Congress will be to analyse, evaluate and exchange scientific and practical information on the conceptual and technical aspects of the many players involved in different fields of sustainable watershed development in order to secure a commitment of stakeholders on the sustainable development of mountain areas.

56. Given that most Latin American countries have a mountainous topography in much of their territory and that this conditions their present and future development, and given that the Congress needs to discuss watershed problems and solutions in every detail, the theme chosen for the Third Congress on Watershed Management in Latin America is "Watershed Management: Basis of Sustainable Development of Mountain Areas in Latin America".

### ***Congress target audience***

57. The Congress will serve as a meeting point for all those involved in watershed management. This includes technical experts in the management of natural resources, policy planners, decision-makers, researchers, academics, watershed programme administrators,

national, international and non-governmental institution experts, the private sector, civil society and other persons involved in watershed management and sustainable mountain development.

58. In recognition of the fact that watershed management is interdisciplinary, the participants at the Congress will be natural resource management professionals, agronomists, ecologists, economists, civil engineers, forest engineers, hydrologists, sociologists, sanitary engineers, mining engineers, veterinarians, geographers, geologists, researchers, educators, specialists in planning and extension and others associated in watershed management. The participation is therefore expected of all those using and offering their know-how and skills in the integrated and participatory development of mountain areas.

***International and national initiatives to celebrate the IYM in the Region***

59. As of August 2001, a number of countries of the Region, including Belize, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Trinidad and Tobago, had established focal points and national committees for the celebration of the International Year of Mountains.

60. The Bolivian National Committee for the IYM, for example, has been in operation since November 2000 and its plan of action for IYM activities has been submitted to the Government and donors. It is fulfilling the key objectives of the IYM with broad participation and grassroots activities and its plans are long term in prospective.

61. Peru's National Committee for the International Year of Mountains has held several activities in preparation of the event. In April 2001, it organized the "International Workshop on Mountain Ecosystems: a Look to the Future", and one of the outputs of this important workshop was the Declaration of Cuzco on Mountain Development.

62. The II World Meeting of Mountain Populations, organized by the Association of Mountain Populations of the World (AMPW), will be held from 20 to 24 September 2002 in Quito, Ecuador, where representatives of 115 countries will discuss issues relating to their conditions as inhabitants of mountain areas.