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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	27th session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO27) (Rome, 22-26 July 2024) <i>- Information from the Presidency and the Commission</i>

Delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Presidency and the Commission on the above-mentioned subject which will be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council meeting ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 23 September 2024.

**Summary of the 27th session of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN's
Committee on Forestry with a theme "Accelerating Forest Solutions through Innovation"**

- *Information from the Presidency and the Commission*

The 27th session of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN's (FAO) Committee on Forestry (COFO 27) was held between 22nd -27th of July 2024 in Rome, Italy, in a hybrid format concurrently with the ninth World Forest Week (WFW 2024). The theme of COFO 27 and WFW 2024 was "Accelerating Forest Solutions Through Innovation". The biennial sessions of COFO 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. At COFO 27 approximately 1,000 people took part, including 16 Ministers and Vice Ministers, participated in person, representing 120 Member States and 30 observer organizations and another 5,000 followed the proceedings online.

The week featured a series of events and exhibitions bringing FAO Members, partner organizations, including youth and members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, together to discuss a broad range of topics related to FAO mandate and aligned with priority topics of the COFO 27.

There were held three high-level dialogues dedicated to forests and innovation and one special event on Green Cities. Over the week, the FAO Forestry Division also launched two reports: Restoring the Mediterranean Region: status and challenges; and Bridging Nature and Climate through Protection of Primary Forests with High Ecological Integrity.

The COFO 27 was chaired by H.E. Günter Walkner Permanent Representative of Austria to the FAO. The session was opened by the speech of FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu who underscored the importance of forests for agrifood systems, protecting biodiversity, ensuring food security, combating climate change and improving resilience.

The EU&MS statements for the COFO 27 agenda items were prepared and agreed at the Council Working Party on Forestry, by active participation of EU Members States and the Commission and further coordination on issues that arose took place on the spot during the session. At COFO 27 the Hungarian Presidency spoke on behalf of the EU&MS. At the session the FAO presented its flagship report: State of the World's Forests 2024 Report (SOFO 24). It reported signs that forest cover is increasing in some areas. However, the report emphasized that forests above of degradation and deforestation processes are experiencing ever-increasing pressures from industries such as agriculture and mining, urbanization, consumption, and illegal logging. At the same time, forests play a significant and irreplaceable role in feeding the world's population, mitigating climate change, reducing the risk of natural disasters, and supplying freshwater, not to mention the benefits of wood products across sectors. The SOFO 24 Report underscored the importance of innovation if the Global Forest Goal (GFG) of halting and reversing deforestation by 2030 is to be met. Delegates broadened the discussion on forests to encompass the need to engage in more cross sectoral and cross-committee work to ensure forests' role in tackling climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and water management, and the role it could play in the bioeconomy.

As a result of the session the COFO 27's outcomes included approval of SOFO 2024 and endorsement of the FAO Forestry Roadmap 2024-2031 that will guide FAO's forestry work under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31. The Hungarian Presidency consistently elaborated the EU&MS position on deforestation free supply chains and expressed the EU&MS reservation regarding the FAO Forestry Roadmap as a minority view which was included in the report.

Delegates discussed items included in the agenda and approved recommendations furthering implementation of FAO's work on:

- enhancing the contribution of forestry to bioeconomy with focus on opportunities and challenges
- The FAO Forestry Roadmap – From Vision to Action 2024-2031; and FAO's work on forestry under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31
- urban forestry and its contribution to urban agrifood systems transformation
- contribution of forestry to FAO's work on climate change and integrated water management
- The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 and mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry
- integrated wildfire management
- dialogue with Statutory Bodies in Forestry
- Decisions and recommendations of FAO Bodies of interest to the Forestry Committee
- Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions
- Voluntary Code of Conduct for the sustainable use and management of plastics in agriculture
- Multi-year Programme of Work of the Committee on Forestry 2024-2027
- Strengthening FAO's contribution to the international arrangement on forests, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests
- The implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030

Germany and Peru introduced their bids to host the XVIth World Forestry Congress (WFC) in 2027, along with videos narrated by the German Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture Cem Özdemir and the President of Peru's Council of Ministers Gustavo Adrianzén Olaya, respectively. According to the (para. 31.) report of the FAO COFO27, the date for the next COFO session (COFO28) will be determined by the Director-General of FAO in consultation with the COFO Steering Committee and will be presented to the next FAO Council in December 2024 and the 44th Session of the FAO Conference in 2025.
