

Summary report of the Event on Forestry Planning and Policies Favoring Regional Cooperation

(Concurrent Session 1)

Meeting overview

Over the past three decades, the practice of forestry planning has undergone a paradigm shift. This shift involves replacing the long-standing commodity paradigm with a more integrated and multi-scaled ecosystem management strategy that emphasizes collaborative, adaptive and multi-stakeholder approaches. In this context, developing and supporting strong collaboration across borders has becoming more and more crucial in responding to the new paradigm of forestry planning.

To further facilitate comprehensive communication and strengthen regional cooperation in forestry planning and contribute to shaping regional forestry planning strategies in Asia and the Pacific, APFNet held an Event on Forestry Planning and Policies Favoring Regional Cooperation as one of the three parallel sessions of the Symposium on Forestry Cooperation in Asia-Pacific Region during 22-24 July in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. The following is a summary of key messages and ideas that emerged from the event. About 20 government officials from national forestry authorities who are responsible for forestry planning participated in the meeting.

The meeting invited participants from different sub-regions to present how forestry strategic plan and international cooperation affect each other and looked into how forestry strategic plans support and respond to the various international and regional forestry targets and goals. (see Annex 1 for detailed agenda). Specifically, the meeting aimed to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Provide a better understanding of the efforts made and processes adopted for strengthening international cooperation component in forestry strategic planning in the Asia-Pacific region;
2. Exchange information and experience on how to enhance international cooperation when implementing forestry plans
3. Identify areas for further collaboration in forestry planning in the region.

Key messages and insights emerged from the event are summarized as follows.

Experience in international cooperation for forestry planning

Participants from 4 economies gave presentations on formulating and implementing forestry plans in their respective economy and involve the main experience on

international cooperation. Below are the main insights based both on the presentations and the Q&A sessions afterwards.

China

Both forests and the forestry sector in the Asia-Pacific region are undergoing rapid changes in line with larger societal changes. Sustainable forest planning and management has become a basic principal in almost all economies in Asia-Pacific region and so as in China. In the *13th Five-year National Plan for Forestry Development*, adopted in 2016, China involved the forest cover and stock volume as binding indicators, which reflects China's determination to improve both quantity and quality of forests.

China has a well-established system of planning at various levels – national, provincial and local – with varying degrees of integration. The planning vision and direction are set at the national level and this is translated to action through legislation and allocation of resources. However, globalization has led to closer integration of economies and developments at different levels, obviously planning in forestry need to consider a larger picture on international view.

From 2013, China established the “Belt & Road Initiative (BRI)” forestry cooperation platform, and implemented the GMS cooperation mechanism to promote the integrated forest ecosystem management and regional demonstration projects. China also actively promoted the international forestry development goals and explore the goals/indexes of CITES, UNCCD and UNFCCC into national forestry planning. In 2016, National Forestry and Grassland Administration of China formulated the Forestry Action Plan of China's National Plan for implementing the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (SDGs).

China's international cooperation not only coordinates with the global ecological governance process, but also contributes the competitiveness of its forestry industry. In 2018, China's trade value in forest products with the countries under BRI increased by 4.7%, accounting for 32% of the total trade, and the foreign investment in forestry is also developing towards high quality.

Fiji

Global commitments and climate change mitigation have played a key guiding role in Fiji's national forestry planning in recent years. All commitments under the SDGs, Bonn Challenge and so on are take into account during Forestry planning and are embedded in the National Development Plan, the Ministry of Forestry's Strategic Development Plan, and the annual operational plans for various Divisions and staff of the Ministry of Forestry. The main focus of the forestry planning also started shift from harvesting to replanting and establishing new plantations and forest areas under long term conservation.

In 2019, Fiji launch the 4 Million Tree in 4 Years Initiative (4MT4Y) , which is primarily focused on addressing the decreasing forest cover, the rehabilitation of important landscapes, mitigating loss of biodiversity, soil and nutrient, and the silting of the main water systems. The initiative will plant various kind of trees from timber trees, fruit trees, and ornamental trees to non-wood species, which could significantly increase contributions of forestry sector to both ecological restoration and economic growth. Apart from the 4 million trees, it's also intend to plant to not less than 500,000 mangroves over the next four years to protect the coastal ecosystems. At the meanwhile, the initiative is Fiji's contribution to "Climate Action" and encourages inclusivity through "public-private-partnership" arrangements, multi-sectoral and integrated approaches to combating climate issues.

Sri Lanka

Forest degradation and deforestation are main environmental problems in Sri Lanka. Annual deforestation rate from 1999 to 2010 was estimated as 0.23% but forest degradation has not been estimated even though it is taken place continuously at an alarming rate. This problems contribute to climate change and UNFCC has estimated it contributes to 17% of the CO₂ emissions. Therefore, Sri Lanka made a national commitment to protect the existing forest area of the country, and planned to expand the existing forest cover (29.7% of total land area) to 32% by 2030. The main methods include: 1) Improvement of quality of natural forests and forest plantations; 2) Increase river basin management for major rivers; 3) Forestation of underutilized private lands and marginal Tea/Rubber lands; 4) Urban forestry; 5) Establishment of National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS); 6) Promotion on private and public sector companies for investment.

Sri Lanka also highlighted the positive impact of forest restoration and sustainable management on the national economy. Promotion on non-timber forest product (NTFP) make a significant contribution to local economies and livelihoods by provisioning food and medicinal resources, which lately are emerging as export commodities. Moreover, forestry also make a vital contribution to ecological service infrastructure and nature-based tourism, for which has already gained global recognition.

Thailand

Thailand has always attached great importance to international forestry cooperation, adhering to the basic principles of "partnership, mutual respect, mutual trust and mutual benefit". The core need of Thailand on international forestry cooperation is supporting or contributing to Thailand's effort in implementing programs and achieving the set goals of national forestry development, and the Royal Forest Department of Thailand has made a lot of efforts in this regard. With the support of multiple regional cooperation platforms, Thailand has participated in a variety of forestry improvement programs, including forestry sustainable management, community forestry, urban forestry and REDD+ Scheme, and shared its best

practices/lesson learned in forestry planning and management through these platforms.

As the member of ASEAN, Thailand also actively participates in forestry cooperation activities under ASEAN framework. According to the *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025*, the vision for the ASEAN cooperation in forestry is “Forest resources are sustainably managed at the landscape level to meet societal needs, both socio-economically and culturally, of the present and future generations, and to contribute positively to sustainable development”. Moreover, based on the *Strategic Plan of Action for ASEAN Co-operation in Forestry*, there are 5 Strategic Thrusts as follows: 1) Enhancing Sustainable Forest Management; 2) Enhancing Trade Facilitation, Economic Integration and Market Access; 3) Enhancing the Forestry Sector Resilience and Role in Climate Change; 4) Institutional Strengthening and Human Resources Development and; 5) Strengthening ASEAN's Joint Approaches on Regional and International Issues Affecting the Forestry Sector. Obviously, the above strategies reflect the common needs and goals of ASEAN countries in forestry cooperation and have crucial reference value for the future cooperation in the region.

Panel discussion

A panel of participants further clarified the formulating and planning process on forestry strategic plans and discuss potential areas and directions for further international collaboration. For many economies, the priority in forestry strategic plan was timber production for supporting economic development in last century, but a shift to balancing economic and environmental benefits took place in recent few decades. Some economies have also gone through the shift from focusing on forest area increasing to both forest area and forest quality enhancement in their forest strategies and policies.

When making national level forestry strategic plans, most of the economies have incorporated the SDGs and other global goals and commitments for instance UNFCCC, UNCCD, UNFF, CBD.

Despite the aspirations, the implementation of the strategic plans and policies has been less satisfying. It is the result of the following reasons: Firstly, there is a mismatch of the land use plan in forest areas and the customary use of forest which has been carried out by the local communities for the past few decades. Secondly, there is also a mismatch of the land use plans developed by different sectors. The government departments are competing for the land. In some economies, the need for economic development in some areas could be result in forest degradation and deforestation. Thirdly, there is a lack of both human and financial resources to implement the strategies and policies that have been developed. Last but not the least, it is difficult for people from other sectors to understand the value of the products and services that forests provide, which is posing challenges for

cross-sectoral cooperation.

In this regard, international cooperation can facilitate the development and implementation of the strategy and policy from three dimensions: First is providing capacity building opportunities, especially those opportunities for enhancing the understanding of the current prevailing international goals. Second is to provide funding to support the implementation and monitoring of the forest strategies. Another way is through technique and knowledge transfer, as well as exchange of experiences and lessons learned. Economies can learn from each other through the platform offered at the regional and international level. Meanwhile, the cutting-edge technologies, if provided, can greatly enhance the efficiency and accuracy of policy making.

Following recommendations were raised during the meeting for further guiding future cooperation in forestry strategic planning in the region:

- ✓ Promote information exchange between policymakers in the Asia-Pacific region on the status, plans, challenges and outlook of their respective forestry plans and planning processes;
- ✓ Match the human and financial resources with the forestry strategic plans by capacity building and broaden funding source;
- ✓ Provide technical and policy support to improve the knowledge pool and strengthen the process of strategic planning;
- ✓ Build awareness in forestry policymakers to respond to issues at the regional and international levels, and increase coordination between the demands of economy-level and international-level.

Annex 1 Detailed agenda

Concurrent session I	
Forestry Planning and Policies Favoring Regional Cooperation	
14:00-14:20	Opening
14:20-14:40	Presentation 1: Forestry planning and policies favoring regional cooperation in China (Mr. Xie Hesheng, Research Institute of Forestry Policy and Information, Chinese Academy of Forestry)
14:40-15:00	Presentation 2: Forestry planning and policies favoring regional cooperation in Fiji
15:00-15:20	Presentation 3: Forestry planning and policies favoring regional cooperation in Sri Lanka
15:20-15:40	Presentation 4: Forestry planning and policies favoring regional cooperation in Thailand
15:40-16:00	Q&A
16:00-16:30	Tea break
16:30-17:10	Panel Discussion on forestry planning from the perspective of further enhancing international cooperation
17:10-17:20	Q&A
17:20-17:30	Recap and closing
17:30-17:35	Group Photo