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### CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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Item 10 of the provisional agenda\*

### **FOREST ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION INITIATIVE PROGRESS REPORT 2015-2016**

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

#### **I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

1. At its eighteenth meeting, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) welcomed the actions being undertaken by the Republic of Korea, through the Korea Forest Service, to develop a Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (FERI). The FERI was launched in October 2014 on the margins of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention with the aim of supporting ecosystem restoration activities under the Convention in line with decisions XI/16 and XII/19 and Article 8 (f) of the Convention, and of contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, in particular Targets 5, 14 and 15. Document UNEP/CBD/COP/12/INF/19, describing FERI, was presented to the Parties on this occasion.

2. The CBD Secretariat and the Korea Forest Service of the Government of the Republic of Korea signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in March 2015, on the margins of the Bonn Challenge 2.0 meeting, in Bonn, Germany. The MOU set out the vision to 2020 for the six-year initiative and a workplan for 2015-2016. To promote collaborative engagement in the design, implementation and review of the workplan, a planning meeting was held in March 2015 with partner organizations.<sup>1</sup> The vision of FERI for 2020 is to increase developing countries' capacity for undertaking restoration assessments and plans, in a manner that contributes to countries' national restoration commitments, in particular those reflected in national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs).

3. As restoration needs to be carried out in ways that balance social, economic and environmental objectives, and in a manner that engages all relevant stakeholders, at its twentieth meeting, SBSTTA, in its recommendation XX/12, recommended that the Conference of the Parties adopt a short-term action plan on ecosystem restoration, as a flexible framework, adaptable to national circumstances and legislation, for immediate action towards achieving Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5, 12, 14 and 15, and

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\* UNEP/CBD/COP/13/1.

<sup>1</sup> Partners include members of the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration.

Targets 4 and 8 of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, and other internationally agreed goals and targets, and in particular targets identified in NBSAPs or other relevant strategies and plans.

4. SBSTTA recommendation XX/12 also welcomed progress made in the implementation of the FERI, and recommended that the Conference of the Parties adopt a decision to request the Executive Secretary, subject to the availability of resources, to support the efforts of Parties in making use of the short-term action plan on ecosystem restoration by, inter alia, enabling capacity-building and supporting the use of tools in collaboration with relevant partners and initiatives, including by implementing the FERI.

5. The consideration and likely adoption of the short-term action plan on ecosystem restoration by the Parties at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties is very timely to the continued implementation of FERI, following a first period of implementation focused on an assessment of countries' support needs and national interpretation of Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15. Going forward, FERI is well-positioned and prepared to provide support to countries as they operationalize the steps and guidance contained in the short-term action plan on ecosystem restoration. Some of the steps contained in the action plan are already being addressed through activities undertaken by FERI in 2015-2016, such as through a series of regional capacity-building workshops and two projects of direct support to restoration initiatives at the national and subnational scale. These activities are already proving useful to integration of ecosystem restoration concepts into broader forest and landscape restoration activities.

6. The work of FERI during this biennium has included collaboration between the CBD Secretariat and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to demonstrate the use and value of the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) and its applicability to achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.<sup>2</sup> It also has enhanced collaboration among members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) by facilitating interactions and information exchange with and among focal points at regional capacity-building workshops, and through the development of a joint message on forest landscape restoration to be presented at a forest ecosystem restoration day to be held at the Rio Conventions Pavilion on the margins of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Additional working ties with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Society for Ecological Restoration (SER), Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the World Bank, the World Resources Institute (WRI) and Bioversity International also expanded through the organization and coordination of the regional capacity-building workshops (section II B below) and the approval of direct country support (section II C).

7. The present note provides a description, in section II, of the activities undertaken by the CBD Secretariat in implementing the FERI over the period 2015-2016. These activities fall under three main axes of implementation: (a) stocktaking of current progress on Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15 and an assessment of capacity needs, (b) targeted capacity-building workshops at the regional scale, and (c) direct support to on-the-ground restoration projects. Outputs from these various activities are all available on a dedicated FERI website. Section III describes leveraged collaboration with key partners and outreach outputs. Section IV describes priority actions planned for the next biennium.

## **II. FERI ACTIVITIES 2015-2016**

### **A. Stocktaking of current progress and assessment of capacity needs**

8. For this first biennium of FERI implementation, activities focused on a necessary stocktaking of the situation with regards to CBD Parties' commitments to national action and current progress under Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15, as well national plans and capacity to implement them.

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<sup>2</sup> UNEP/CBD/COP/13/INF/11.

9. This stocktaking drew on several sources, including a review of national biodiversity plans for implementation, global indicators, and a questionnaire that was provided to Parties ahead of a series of workshops on ecosystem conservation and restoration. The review of fifth national reports and NBSAPs was conducted for 22 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 23 countries in Asia, and 17 countries in West Africa, focusing on information relevant to Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15. In addition, available indicators were consulted to assess progress against both targets, based on the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.<sup>3</sup> For the 62 countries reviewed, statistics on the frequency of occurrence of these elements in reporting or target setting were compiled and presented for each of these three regions under relevant components of the targets. Examples of best practices found in the reports and NBSAPs were also described for each of these elements, as well as support tools that may help Parties fill the gaps in baseline data and implementation planning.

10. The main conclusions from this analysis were that greater efforts by Parties in the setting, implementation and monitoring of national targets are needed in order to meet the objectives set globally under Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15. However, limited global progress towards these targets must not mask the contrasting situations that can be observed at the regional and national scale, with some countries demonstrating significant progress that could place them on track to meet some elements of the targets by 2020.

11. The review of national reports and NBSAPs also revealed considerable variation among countries in the amount, level of detail and type of information provided, with regards to the assessment of status and trends of natural ecosystems and the setting of national targets, with many countries appearing to lack the kind of quantitative and spatial baseline data that would be needed in order to meaningfully plan, implement and monitor national action to achieve quantitative elements set under the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The objective of this review was to inform the outlook on the implementation of both targets by 2020, and to determine where further support is most needed to help countries set measurable and achievable targets, based on accurate information on the state and trends of natural ecosystems and a comprehensive diagnosis of the direct and underlying drivers of their loss, degradation and fragmentation. Three main capacity and data gaps were identified on which capacity-building support could focus going forward:

(a) The prominence of forests, in terms of both available global indicators and data presented in national reports, suggests the value placed on forest ecosystems and the need to strengthen data gathering and capacity-building efforts towards other ecosystems as well;

(b) Indicators to measure the degradation and fragmentation of ecosystems are lacking, despite the demonstration that these processes have very significant impacts on biodiversity. This gap hampers the capacity of countries to plan and measure progress on national actions under Aichi Biodiversity Target 15;

(c) Parties could make further use of potential synergies between Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15 and national commitments under other related conventions and international agendas, such as nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to climate change mitigation and adaptation under the Paris Agreement on climate change, the land degradation neutrality target under UNCCD, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations forest instrument and the global objectives on forests under the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), and other initiatives, such as the Bonn Challenge, for forest restoration.

12. Outputs from this activity include a report titled “Updated assessment of progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15”, which will be presented at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties as UNEP/CBD/COP/13/INF/12.

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<sup>3</sup> See “Generic and specific indicators for assessing progress in the attainment of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including an assessment of their main characteristics”, available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/strategic-plan/strategic-plan-indicators-en.pdf>.

13. Moreover, drawing on the same data sources, nationally specific assessments of strengths, weaknesses and challenges in capacity at the national scale were prepared ahead of each regional capacity-building workshop. Nationally specific “country dossiers”<sup>4</sup> were produced from this work, serving as a gap analysis for countries to prioritize further work to advance their national commitments on Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15. Moreover, the comparative analysis of national plans also served to highlight the need for better alignment with other global processes, including the nationally determined contributions developed to implement the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). A direct response to the challenges and opportunities for strengthening action on restoration at the national scale highlighted by the nationally specific assessments prepared on the basis of FERI support was a submission of views submitted by the CBD Secretariat to the UNFCCC secretariat to support the discussions of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA) at the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (COP 22) in November 2016.<sup>5</sup>

14. To complete this data collection effort, an online questionnaire<sup>6</sup> was used to consolidate the analysis of national reports and NBSAPs and gather more information about the type of implementation actions put in place by national governments and related capacity needs. The results of this questionnaire also informed the planning of the workshop agendas and exercises, contributing to a more targeted focus on actual capacity needs expressed by countries and informing the choice of speakers on different topics from the countries invited.

#### **B. Targeted capacity-building workshops at the regional scale**

15. In the 2015-2016 period, FERI invited more than 60 countries from West Africa, Latin America and Asia to participate in capacity-building workshops on the restoration of forests and other ecosystems. In total, 83 country-level experts from 49 countries participated. In a unique collaboration with FAO, forestry experts were also invited to participate in order to work alongside the focal points from the biodiversity sector. The workshops were informed by in-depth analyses of status and commitments of national implementation of ecosystem conservation and restoration in reports and plans submitted to CBD and other processes (see previous section).

16. In general, the workshops aimed to facilitate a review of national targets and commitments for the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems and their services and to support the development of implementation plans that foster progress towards measurable and achievable national targets under Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15.

17. FERI workshop activities were designed in a flexible manner according to regional needs and priorities, but all included:

(a) A review of national commitments on ecosystem conservation and restoration and their stages of implementation;

(b) The promotion of South-South exchange of experiences and knowledge, including through the presentation and discussion of country practices;

(c) A presentation of best practices in ecosystem conservation and restoration from experts in the field, including on approaches taken to mainstream biodiversity into national development plans under other sectors;

(d) A review of relevant tools in support of national implementation plans;

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<sup>4</sup> [www.feri-biodiversity.org/country-data](http://www.feri-biodiversity.org/country-data).

<sup>5</sup> [http://unfccc.int/files/parties\\_observers/ngo/submissions/application/pdf/717.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/parties_observers/ngo/submissions/application/pdf/717.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Section 1: Diagnosis of causes and actions to address them (17 questions); Section 2: Linkages to climate change mitigation and adaptation (5 questions); Section 3: Assessment of state and trends of natural ecosystems (15 questions); Section 4: Target setting (9 questions).

(e) A discussion of opportunities for resource mobilization to support countries' implementation plans; and an interactive exercise using the "country dossiers" (see above section) prepared for all the participating countries ahead of each workshop. The dossiers were presented to workshop participants to use to identify priority gaps in national-scale data on the status and trends of ecosystems, and aspects of their national targets that could be improved to make them more specific, measurable and time-bound. Further to the workshops, countries have been encouraged to use the country dossiers as guides for further collection of relevant data to be included in their sixth national reports to the CBD;

(f) A second interactive exercise aimed at determining priority actions and next steps on forest and ecosystem restoration in order to improve progress on achieving Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15 by 2020. The results of these exercises are, for each participating country, a draft road map to plan and implement restoration actions at the national scale, highlighting gaps in technical and financial support and how they could be filled, based on the topics and partners presented at the workshop.

18. Full workshop details, including summary reports, can be accessed on the CBD website:

- (a) Workshop for subregions of Asia: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=ECRWS-2016-02>;
- (b) Workshop for Latin America: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=ECRWS-2016-01>;
- (c) Workshop for West Africa: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=ECRWS-2015-01>.

### **C. Direct support to forest ecosystem restoration projects**

19. In 2015, FERI established a process for receiving and approving project proposals to provide small-scale, catalytic co-funding towards forest ecosystem restoration. In April 2015, the CBD Secretariat requested members of the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) to submit projects on forest and landscape restoration supporting linkages to biodiversity that could benefit from small-scale FERI co-funding. ITTO, Bioversity International, CIFOR, and UNCCD submitted projects. Projects submitted by UNCCD (to be implemented by the National Forest Corporation of Chile) and by Bioversity International were launched in 2016. They entail the following:

(a) Designing a model of socio-environmental investment for restoration of degraded land in semi-arid zones of Chile. Implemented by the National Forest Corporation of Chile (CONAF), and receiving US\$ 50,000 over one year, the project focuses on dryland areas in Chile degraded due to intense wheat farming, and aims to restore the ecosystem balance through hydrological forest watershed restoration. Rainwater and soil conservation measures will be implemented, allowing the infiltration of water into the ground and preventing erosion. Native vegetation, and where necessary, exotic species, will be planted when climatic conditions are favourable to help recover and restore natural balances. The project depends on community involvement, with a focus on the participation of women in project work and monitoring;

(b) Establishment of pilot restoration plots in the biodiversity compensation area of the hydroelectric power plant of Ituango, Colombia. Implemented by Bioversity International in Colombia, and receiving US\$ 50,000 over one year, the project directly contributes to the implementation of Colombia's national restoration plan and contributes to the development of good practices for implementation of the Colombian legislation on compensatory measures for biodiversity loss. The project aims to test the ability of restoration approaches across a gradient of increasing intensity of intervention in order to cost-effectively re-establish native tropical dry forest vegetation. Restoration interventions will vary from natural regeneration (least expensive) to the establishment of diversity nodes that concentrate native diversity (most expensive), and intermediary interventions for which a decision support tool developed during a previous project phase will be used. While this tool is currently designed for the restoration of tropical dry forest in Colombia, its underlying methodology is adaptable to other ecosystems, and Bioversity International is committed to applying it to other countries or other ecosystems within Colombia.

20. Other FERI projects, undertaken in collaboration with the FAO Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM), plan on a launch phase by the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

21. An updated form for applying for direct support and a timeline for delivering support to projects over 2017 will be presented at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Support to projects has three primary aims:

(a) Building developing countries' capacity for undertaking forest ecosystem restoration activities, using relevant guidelines and tools and underscoring outputs expected to advance progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;

(b) Ecosystem restoration priorities, benchmarks and standards, in relation to existing forest ecosystem restoration actions, are improved and monitored;

(c) Forest ecosystem restoration actions, and their impacts on progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5, 14 and 15, are better profiled and targeted for future investment.

### III. FERI COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS, AND OUTREACH

22. FERI implementation is conducted in collaboration with members of GPFLR, and in particular with FAO, UNCCD, SER, IUCN, WRI and other members of the CPF, in particular the Global Environment Facility (GEF), ITTO, and CIFOR. Bioversity International and BirdLife International have also performed supportive roles.

23. Activities undertaken in this reporting period have enabled synergies and information exchange among key partners as well as generated a better understanding of biodiversity and ecosystem services within other organizations, processes and initiatives that are providing technical support to Parties in meeting their national targets and commitments. Joint activities with partners, including analysis, publication and workshops and other outreach events, have served as a communication platform for creating awareness about FERI activities. Collaboration among partners has also helped to foster improved coordination across national agencies on a variety of national commitments and targets.

24. Further opportunities will be explored in the 2017-2018 FERI workplan to collaborate with partners such as FAO in developing a knowledge platform on forests and landscape restoration as well as compatible information in country profiles on restoration strategies, interventions, investments and stakeholders. Moreover, further input will be provided to the FAO Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism advisory committee, as well as to the co-organization of capacity-building workshops that enable national forestry and biodiversity focal points and experts to foster cross-sectoral cooperation on forest restoration. This will also include providing inputs to follow-up consultations aimed at developing an action plan for forest and landscape restoration in the Asia-Pacific region.

25. In a similar fashion, FERI will explore collaborative activities with UNCCD on land degradation neutrality strategies for mutually supporting the incorporation of, and the investment climate for, biodiversity considerations in restoration efforts that align Aichi Biodiversity Targets and land degradation neutrality objectives.

26. The CBD Secretariat remains active in supporting the political momentum of the Bonn Challenge. FERI will continue to collaborate with IUCN on several activities, including country level analyses, and with WRI and IUCN in providing countries with access to relevant tools, such as the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology, as well as in continuing to improve these tools to better integrate biodiversity considerations.

27. Effective implementation of ecosystem restoration will contribute not only to the achievement of many of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, but also to several Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>7</sup> ecosystem-

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<sup>7</sup> See [General Assembly resolution 70/1](#), annex.

based adaptation and mitigation under the UNFCCC,<sup>8</sup> land degradation neutrality and combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought under the UNCCD,<sup>9</sup> the wise use of wetlands under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands,<sup>10</sup> the Global Objectives on Forests of the UNFF, commitments under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals,<sup>11</sup> and the objectives of many other initiatives. In this regard, FERI can build on the stocktaking on Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15, the assessment of national capacity needs, and other ongoing work, as mentioned in section II, to contribute to shared objectives in different forums.

28. Building on progress made through the ITTO/CBD Collaborative Initiative for Tropical Forest Biodiversity, the Secretariat will assess how renewed donor commitments could be further aligned to support FERI objectives towards the achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5, 14 and 15, including through FERI co-funding.

#### IV. FUTURE FERI ACTIONS

29. A FERI workplan 2017-2018 is under development with the aim of achieving the FERI vision and forging interlinkages among FERI activities, to showcase FERI contributions to the advancement of Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15 and other globally agreed goals and initiatives, in particular Target 15.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, by 2020.

30. The stocktaking of progress on Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 15 and an assessment of capacity needs in subregions of Africa, Asia-Pacific, and the Caribbean, as well as targeted capacity-building workshops at the regional scale, and direct support to on-the-ground restoration projects, will continue and expand in the 2017-2018 biennium.

31. FERI will aim at further refining the format of its capacity-building workshops, with a view to strengthening direct impacts on the implementation and design of countries' national plans and capacities. Building on the experience of the workshops held in the 2015-2016 biennium, FERI will use the analysis of national reports and NBSAPs, as well as questionnaires, to engage with Parties well ahead of regional workshops, in order to identify and target urgent needs for capacity development. These needs will be addressed during workshops through small group exercises or "clinics" that gather technical partners and government representatives and aim to provide visible outcomes in areas highlighted by the participants as requiring immediate support, as well as through clearer road maps defining post-workshop next steps to be implemented. Ultimately, this approach will ensure that the participants' engagement with the technical capacity support provided by FERI is taking place over a longer timescale, maximizing the potential for impact. Specific cases of demonstrated impact will be disseminated through regional FERI newsletters to inspire progress in the rest of the region. Engagement with Parties through these workshops will also be used as a platform to promote national-level projects that comply with revised FERI criteria, ensuring that actions are embedded in revised NBSAPs and incorporate elements of the short-term action plan on ecosystem restoration, to be considered and likely adopted by the Parties at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

32. FERI will also continue to disseminate the findings of the analyses of national reports and NBSAPs to contribute to significant improvements on Targets 5, 14 and 15 under Parties' sixth national reports to the CBD, using fifth national reports as a baseline to measure improvement.

33. Building on the "country dossiers" produced through the regional analyses, the website of the clearing-house mechanism (CHM) could also be used to provide "matchmaking" for peer-to-peer support, including across regions (e.g. a country that struggles to develop indicators for degradation would be recommended peer support from another country which is very strong on indicators of degradation). This

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 996, No. 14583.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1651, No. 28395.

“matchmaking” of technical expertise at governmental level could also lead to the development of FERI projects aiming to support South-South and technical cooperation, either through the facilitation of direct exchanges between national institutions or through support to regional organizations that can help disseminate relevant data and further build technical capacity.

34. Regular coordination, liaison and networking will be required to deepen existing and develop new working relationships with technical and financing partners, including WRI, IUCN, the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), SER, International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), ITTO, FAO, the UNCCD Global Mechanism, GEF, and private sector entities, to ensure that tools developed can best support the planning, implementation and reporting on Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5, 14 and 15.

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