



Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation

Summary Report of the 1st Meeting of APFNet Focal Points within the APEC Region (Final)

Beijing, 23-24 June 2010

The APFNet Secretariat

I Introduction

The *1st Meeting of APFNet Focal Points within the APEC Region*, initiated and organized by APFNet, was held on 23-24 June 2010 in Beijing, China to discuss how to establish an effective working mechanism. The meeting brought together 24 participants from 11 APEC economies: Australia, Brunei, Canada, China, Chinese Taipei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, the United States, Viet Nam as well as the APFNet Secretariat.

Mr. Qu Guilin, Director General of the Department of International Cooperation, State Forestry Administration of China, was the first of the three founding members of APFNet to give opening remarks, followed by a representative of the United States, then Australia. He pointed out that challenges such as illegal logging, climate change, weak law enforcement, and ineffective benefit sharing mechanisms are affecting the forest sector and sustainable forest management (SFM) in the Asia-Pacific region. These problems require concerted efforts and synergies of multiple stakeholders to address them in a coordinated way. In this regard, focal points have an important role to play as key collaborators to strengthen APFNet as it moves forward.

Mr. W. Brent Christensen, Counsellor at the US Embassy, observed that, because of the diverse forests and ecosystems in the Asia-Pacific region, APFNet needs to adopt a flexible approach and draw on the expertise in the forest sector to better promote SFM. Mr. James Lee, Counsellor Agriculture (Policy) at the Australian Embassy, commended China for promoting APFNet and confirmed Australia's continuing support for the organization and its efforts to achieve SFM. He stressed that, with the input of the participants, an effective working mechanism can be formulated to ensure good communication and collaboration among focal points and APFNet as they pursue common goals.

Following the opening ceremony, Mr. LU De from the APFNet Secretariat reported on past and current activities as well as planned future initiatives. He also proposed ideas for a working mechanism for focal points to consider and identify some of the key forestry problems as well as good practices in the Asia-Pacific region.

II Presentation and Discussions

Mr. David Cassells, APFNet Consultant, called on participants to raise issues of concern in regard to regional constraints and demands on forestry and then facilitated

discussion of those issues. The following comments and suggestions were made:

- **Challenges and opportunities for forest sector development in Asia-Pacific**

- 1. The forest sector and climate change**

The link between forests and climate change provides the sector with an opportunity to articulate its importance. Countries increasingly recognize that what happens in forestry affects climate change and *vice versa*. Many activities are going on in the region, including under the REDD program, for example. APFNet members can learn from each other and focal points can feed this knowledge back into their respective policy processes as part of the added value that APFNet can provide.

- 2. Insufficient funding and underestimation of forestry's contribution to GDP**

Funding for the forest sector is inadequate and the contribution of the forest sector to GDP is grossly underestimated due to flaws in the UN System of National Accounts. Moreover, in many developing countries, a significant number of forestry activities take place outside formal markets where statistics are not recorded. Forest development is a cross-sectoral issue requiring coordination and cooperation among many government ministries, including those responsible for national statistics, environment, agriculture, energy, mining and tourism. By working together as partners, these authorities and other stakeholders can help to more accurately determine the value of forestry to national development and thus attract a greater portion of funding from both public and private sources.

- **Work Plan for APFNet Development**

- 1. Relationship of APFNet with APEC**

When APFNet was proposed and approved at the APEC meeting of leaders in 2007, it was the first time that forestry figured prominently on the agenda. This forum offers an important point of entry to discuss forestry issues in the region, with the opportunity to bring forestry issues to the attention of senior officials and central decision-makers. APFNet should therefore use the informal relationship it has with APEC to build further support for its work.

- 2. Strategic plan/work plan**

APFNet should formulate both a five-year strategic plan and detailed annual work plans. The strategic plan should include ways to enhance cooperation and avoid duplication while the timely production of annual work plans would help focal points to better facilitate and coordinate network activities at the country level. China is now drafting its 12th 5-year development plan and APFNet, as part of its potential to add value, can help to ensure regional forestry cooperation is included.

- 3. APFNet priorities**

The priorities of APFNet should be further narrowed down to provide more focused guidance to project development.

- **APFNet Activities**

- 1. Capacity building**

Outputs of APFNet's capacity building programs should be combined with field work, and complement the work of other international and regional organizations.

- 2. Information sharing**

APFNet should serve as a platform to share regional best practices and lessons learned. It should also strengthen communication exchanges with its partners, including update forest information and set up an accurate database on forest resources.

- 3. Pilot projects**

AFNet guidelines for developing concept notes should be separate from guidelines for developing project proposals, both of which should be clear. It was further suggested to streamline the evaluation process for concept notes so that applicants are not required to spend as much time providing details at this stage. Instead, most time and effort should go toward developing the actual proposal once the idea is approved in principle. If APFNet could provide seed money to help develop project proposals, the quality of submissions would be enhanced.

- **Working Mechanism for APFNet Focal Points**

- 1. Role and functions of APFNet focal points**

- a) Information exchange and progress reports**

Because focal points are sometimes not available due to travel and other responsibilities, it is important that members name alternates to ensure continuity and effective communication. These names, along with their contact information, should be added to the list of focal points and they should be copied on all correspondence.

Focal points should report progress on their APFNet activities, as well as achievements and best practices with regard to sustainable forest management. The intention is not to increase their reporting burden but to have them build on/synthesize information already available, especially innovations. Best practices, for example, could be described in 1 or 2 paragraphs. A reporting format will be drafted by the APFNet Secretariat.

- b) APFNet publicity**

Focal points are an important means to raise the visibility of APFNet and generate broad participation of organizations and agencies at the local level. Focal points also had a role to play in promoting wider membership of APFNet.

- 2. Meeting mechanism**

- a)** It was suggested that meetings also could be held outside China from time to time so that the knowledge and expertise of other countries can be fully leveraged.
- b)** It was further proposed that the APFNet Secretariat prepare an annual calendar of its planned meetings and workshops, as well as other relevant

regional and international events, so that focal points could organize their schedules accordingly and better facilitate national participation in APFNet and its various activities. It was further suggested that this should be distributed to the focal points by the beginning of each calendar year.

- c) With regard to the frequency of focal point meetings, it was agreed that once per year was desirable. They should be held around the same period and, when feasible, convened in the margins of other international gatherings for better attendance.
- d) Focal points requested that the APFNet Secretariat circulate a draft provisional agenda 8 weeks/2 months prior to the meeting for comment. Sponsors such those from the ITC sector could also be sought to support the acquisition of the latest technology, such as video conferencing which could be used between annual gatherings. During the annual meeting, focal points would give a 3 to 5-minute presentation of key forestry activities in their country.

3. Funding mechanism

- a) Recognizing that focal points incur costs to enhance communications and facilitate APFNet activities, the feasibility of providing an annual financial contribution (US\$3,000 was suggested by the Secretariat) to support these tasks was discussed. For some members, line departments are unable to receive this type of funding and it was noted that for some countries the transaction costs could outweigh the financial benefit.
- b) Focal points were requested to give feedback to the APFNet Secretariat on the particular financial regulations within their country. The APFNet Secretariat would also look into how organizations such as ITTO and IUFRO disburse funds for similar expenditures and provide this information to focal points.