

Fourth Annual Meeting for the APFNet Focal Points
Golden Spring Hotel, Kunming China 6 June 2013

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Opening Session

Mr. Nguyen Tuan Hung, Viet Nam Forestry Administration and Chair of the Meeting, welcomed the Focal Points and Observers on behalf of the Viet Nam Forestry Administration. He expressed the gratitude to the Secretariat for its strong support in providing both documentary and logistical support for the 2013 Focal Points meeting. He then reviewed the key outcomes of the previous day's discussions by the Interim Steering Committee, and asked APFNet Executive Director Qu Guilin to make welcoming remarks. The ED characterized the Focal Points as the "eyes, ears, and mouth" of APFNet, and recalled the four key functions/roles of the Focal Points as described in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan.

The Chair then asked the Malaysian Co-Chair to assume the Chair for the remainder of the meeting, and Mr. Abd Rahman Bin Abd Rahim, Director General of Forestry Peninsular Malaysia, agreed to do so. The day's agenda was adopted without change.

Session 1: Update on the Progress of APFNet in 2012 and plans for 2013

The Chair asked the APFNet Executive Director to provide a brief update on the organization's work during 2013, and suggested priorities for 2013.

Noting that Focal Points had received a written report, the Executive Director said he would make a few additional comments rather than repeating the contents of the written report. On project implementation, the ED stressed the need to increase quality and improve the efficiency throughout the process. He highlighted the planning underway for the upcoming Second APEC Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry hosted by Peru as well as for the APFNet project conducted with Laos under ASEM auspices. In addition, the ED noted that MOU's had been signed between APFNet and APAFRI, and the workshop on mangrove restoration and preservation which APFNet co-sponsored. Mr. Qu concluded by terming 2012 a very remarkable year for APFNet, adding that the accomplishments of 2012 provided the possibility to adjust the emphasis to perhaps fewer but higher quality activities, striving to identify projects that are really needed and wanted. The ED encouraged the focal points to engage with the staff in both exchange of views and feedback.

The Secretariat then briefed the focal points on the status of accepting the APFNet Operational Framework, details of which are provided in the Summary Report of the June 5 Interim Steering Committee meeting.

The remainder of Session One consisted of Presentations on the substance and current state of four APFNet-funded demonstration projects, and at the request of the Chair Mr. Phillip Antweiler served as facilitator for the remainder of the day. The first presentation was “Demonstration of sustainable upland agro-forestry systems in Chinese Taipei”, presented by Dr. Fen-Hui Chen from the Taiwan Forestry Research Institute; The Chinese Taipei representatives stressed their eagerness to exchange ideas and information with other economies on this project and upland agro-forestry more generally. The second presentation, by Mr. Yang Yuming, from the Yunan Academy of Forestry, provided information on the project entitled “Sustainable Forest Rehabilitation and Management for the Conservation of Trans-Boundary Ecological Security in Montane Mainland Southeast Asia – Pilot Demonstration Project of Lao PDR, Myanmar and China/Yunan.” Mr. Zaw Win Myint provided additional information on the implementation of the project in Myanmar. For the third presentation, Mr. Nguyen Tuan Hung from the Vietnam Administration of Forestry, informed the audience about the now complete project entitled “Demonstration of capacity building of forest restoration and sustainable forest management in Vietnam.” Mr. Hung also presented an overview of the challenges facing implementation of sustainable forest management in Vietnam, as well as Vietnam’s thinking on next steps. The final project presentation was made by Dr Qinglin Li from the British Columbia Ministry of Forests and the University of British Columbia (UBC). His presentation focused on the project “Adaptation of Asia-Pacific Forests to Climate Change.” The PDF version presentations could be downloaded from the APFNet website.

During this portion of session one, the Secretariat reviewed the accomplishments of the 2012 capacity building program and responded to questions. Among the specific points noted were the Secretariat’s hope that more female participants could be selected for future workshops, the significance of the Kunming Training Center for future APFNet capacity-building activities, and that a workshop focused on rehabilitation is under preparation. In addition, discussions are at an advanced stage for involved a second university in the APFNet scholarship program. ITTO inquired about the procedures used to select partners for capacity building activities. FAO noted the additional scope remaining for cooperation, and suggested that a renewed effort at planning and consultation among organizations engaged in capacity building. The ED noted that during 2008-2009 considerable effort was put into consultations and planning for how APFNet could implement value-added activities. He stressed the problem-solving and initiative taking focus of APFNet capacity building activities.

Session 2: Discussion on the APEC 2020 Forest Cover Collective Monitoring

The Secretariat presented the thinking behind the Draft Concept Paper on a “Mid-term Evaluation of the Progress Towards the APEC 2020 Forest Cover Objective” which the Focal Points had already received. The facilitator offered some initial thoughts on aspects of the Project that it would be useful to receive Focal Points input on, and a lively discussion ensued.

There was clear sentiment expressed by several Focal Points that every effort needed to be made to avoid generating a duplicative call for data collection or analysis, and that economies were already over-tasked with reports. Focal points also queried how this report would be different from the FAO's Forest Resources Report 2015, which is already underway.'

FAO noted that it has had some discussion with the Secretariat already and that it is supportive of doing a report on mid-term progress toward the APEC goal. The question is how to go about doing so. The FAO Rep noted that International Organizations have made a major effort to streamline and reduce duplication in reporting requests. What may not be covered in the FRA reports or how and what economies are doing to reduce forest loss. Qualitative data is not featured in the FRA report. In addition, the FRA reports have a long data validation process of about 1.5 years. Bangladesh said the APEC report was a good idea, but noted that it is hard to collect data regularly, and that participants would a format template, and a clear understanding of when supportive funds would be available.

Executive Director Qu re-oriented the discussion by noting that in his view APEC leaders did not want loads of data, but rather an update on whether or not there is progress toward the goal, and most importantly why, and what needs to be done to succeed. One approach might be to ask the forestry leaders of each economy to highlight what are the most important factors that have influenced trends, either positive or negative, in the amount of forest cover.

The TNC rep suggested the importance of coordinating through the APEC mechanisms. Australia expressed the importance of keeping forests on the APEC agenda. China reiterated its agreement on the importance of reducing reporting burden, noting that most economies just submitted a report for the 10th UNFF in April (Turkey.) Nepal noted that it has a forest assessment underway, but will not likely have updated data on the timeline for the proposed report to APEC. RECOFTC queried whether there is a specific allocation target for each economy – it was clarified that there is not. FAO indicated its willingness to work with the Secretariat to revise the concept note, adding that it also has available lots of policy information which is relevant to the APEC goal. The Chair summarized the discussion, and requested that the Secretariat revise and re-circulate the Concept Note.

Session Three: Review of the Implementation of the 2011-2015 APFNet Strategic Plan

The Secretariat presented highlights of the accomplishments toward fulfilling the objectives of the Strategic Plan mid-way through its period in force. There was general sentiment from the Focal Points that admirable progress had been made, and that APFNet, in particular the Secretariat, could take pride in the amount that had been accomplished. A general discussion followed, including both information inquiries and comments/suggestions.

Malaysia noted that there is a lack of capacity building activity on forest rehabilitation. The Secretariat responded that a workshop is being planned on that topic. Regarding the Scholarship program, plans are underway to expand to at least one additional university (Nanjing Forestry

University). The Universities are not limited to those in China, but the Secretariat would like to have a solid proposal from universities interested, including a budget.

There was also a round of discussion seeking clarification on the Forest College Deans' meeting – specifically what type of institutions are eligible to participate, how is information about the meetings circulated, and questions seeking more detail about the nature of the relationship between the Deans' meeting and APFNet. The Secretariat noted that Beijing Forestry University currently heads the Steering Committee and contacts universities directly rather than through the Focal Points.

On study tours, the Secretariat noted that they are dependent upon economies initiating a proposal, and there are some challenges to organize the tours. There is no necessity that the tours involve only travel within China, but that has so far been the case. Several focal points expressed the opinion that two weeks is too short a duration.

On APFNet's involvement in Regional Policy Dialogues, the Executive Director noted that this is a crucial mechanism to bring forestry topics to the attention of policy makers. China noted that it would be happy to cooperate with any economy which wishes to host the Next Forestry Ministerial meeting. Demonstration projects will continue at about the same pace, while scrutiny of quality and implementation will be elevated. Successful capacity building, particularly selection of good participants, and follow-up remains a challenge, for all organizations doing capacity building, not only APFNet.

Under “other business” there were several interventions. EFI noted its discussion on cooperation with APFNet, and its interest in integrating FLEG-T material into curriculums. Bangladesh urged more information and clarity about the status of proposals that are accepted, but do not receive funding. Peru reported that it had completed internal financial arrangements to host the Second Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry, adding that economies could expect more information about the conference to be provided soon.

Thailand agreed to Chair the next Focal Points meeting, and the Philippines will serve as Co-Chair. The Secretariat will communicate with Focal Points about dates and venue when finalized.