

FAO: The Organization, its Conference and Council

Conference

The FAO Conference is the Organization's ultimate Governing Body for discussion and decision on global issues concerning food and agriculture and requirements for regulatory instruments, normally following their discussion in, and recommendations from, the Council; biennial sessions of the Technical Committees (Committee on Commodity Problems, Committee on Fisheries, Committee on Forestry, Committee on Agriculture) and the five biennial FAO Regional Conferences (for Africa; Asia and the Pacific; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; and the Near East). The Conference convenes once every two years in regular session.

The last session of Conference (6-13 June 2015) was held before the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) had been adopted and, as noted above, deliberated on matters, which for the most part had already been the subject of debate in the other FAO Governing Bodies. Discussion on the SDGs tended to focus on the crafting of the new set of goals and issues related to the implementation of the new development agenda (document C 2015/36 Rev.2 refers: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mn424e.pdf>). The Conference recognized FAO's primary responsibility for supporting Members in achieving goals relevant to its mandate and the importance of collaboration with the other Rome-based Agencies (WFP and IFAD), in the post-2015 process. The Conference also encouraged all FAO Members to ensure that adequate financial and non-financial means of implementation were made available for the effectiveness of the new development framework.

When considering the *Interim Report on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System*, the Conference observed that FAO's Strategic Framework was well aligned with the SDGs. Likewise, discussions on the Organization's *Programme Implementation Report* highlighted FAO's key role in delivering the Post-2015 Development Framework, with many members looking forward to reviewing how the Organization's Results Framework would respond to monitoring and measuring FAO's contribution towards the SDGs. It was noted that the Organization was going to embark on a review of the Strategic Framework, i.e. its programming cycle, in 2016 and to prepare a new Medium-Term Plan for 2018-21, and that this would afford Members the opportunity to see the full impact of the new SDGs, particularly the indicators that countries are committed to achieve.

Council

The FAO Council has an executive oversight and governance function and plays a dynamic role in the development of the Organization's programme and budget, drawing on the advice of the Programme and Finance Committees. Its oversight role comprises results-based monitoring, approving and overseeing any major organizational changes not requiring approval by the Conference, further to advice provided by the Committee on Constitutional and Legal matters. The Council convenes five times per biennium in regular session.

The Council, at its last session (30 November - 4 December 2015), welcomed the alignment of FAO's Strategic Framework with the SDGs, noting that there would be opportunity for bringing further coherence when preparing the Medium Term Plan 2018-21 in 2016. At the same session, when discussing the *Report of the 42nd Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)*, the Council welcomed the decision of the CFS to place the implementation of the SDGs, particularly those related

to ending hunger and malnutrition, at the centre of its work to 2030. Under discussion on the *Outcome of the XIV World Forestry Congress (Durban, South Africa, 7-11 September 2015)* the Council recommended that FAO actively support strengthening the contributions of its work on forests to the Organization's Strategic Objectives, including alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by means *inter alia* of technical support.

At earlier sessions the Council expressed support for the fledgling SDGs e.g. when considering *Follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) (Rome, 19-21 November 2014)*, calling on Members to identify potential areas for inclusion of nutrition in the SDGs, with a view to reflecting ICN2 outcomes in the Post-2015 Development Agenda (151st Session of Council, March 2015) and when discussing *the 22nd Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (23-27 June 2014)*, when Council supported the development of appropriate targets and indicators on forests in the SDGs and the development of indicators for the socio economic benefits of forests;