Manila Declaration on Forest and Landscape Restoration

We, participants of two international meetings on the science and policy of Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) held in the Philippines in February of 2019[2,3]:

Recognizing the extensive efforts that are being undertaken in support of FLR

Aware that implementation of FLR is expected to generate and sustain globally significant positive solutions for people, land, and climate while addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation;

Aware that the Bonn Challenge and the New York Declaration on Forests call for the implementation of FLR across 150 million hectares by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030, and that current commitments by state and non-state actors have reached 170 million hectares[4];

Aware that the FLR process has reached the stage at which commitments need to be turned into practice at a scale that is commensurate with commitments;

Aware that the FLR process is complex, with many challenges and opportunities, requiring a holistic approach to analyse, design, implement and monitor progress as well as good governance to turn a collective vision into action at an agreed spatial and temporal scale;

Aware that FLR is a voluntary or policy-driven approach to change the way land and resources are being used and managed that seeks to provide socio-economic benefits, contribute to social inclusiveness and engagement of youth, women and indigenous groups, and enhance human well-being while increasing ecological integrity;

Aware that FLR is a long-term process that needs to address short-term urgent needs and requires sustained coordinated efforts

Observing from numerous FLR cases that major gaps exist between the current practice of FLR and the core principles of FLR;

Recognizing that these gaps point to the need for more effective communication about the FLR approach and to operationalize the core principles[5];

Concerned that the practice of FLR could fail to meet expectations, e.g., by not sufficiently emphasizing the social and economic needs of local people, by poorly engaging stakeholders, by neglecting to address ecological resilience and natural regeneration potential, by compromising quality of outcomes or sustainability in an effort to rapidly reach scale, or by failing to reach a meaningful scale;

Concerned that both positive and negative lessons learned from interventions are essential to developing assessment metrics that integrate socio-economic and environment outcomes

Inspired by the growing integration and complementarity of scientific and local knowledge regarding the effectiveness and feasibility of a wide range of restoration interventions

We call upon competent and interested parties including practitioners, policymakers, civil society, public and private sectors to mobilize cross-sectoral action to implement FLR based on principles that will be made operational by actions to:

1. Develop a conceptual framework capable of guiding the practical interpretation of the FLR principles across a range of contexts along with an example of an associated working framework for a particular context;
2. Compose a short version of the working framework document, translate it into many languages, and disseminate it among many potential users;
3. Illustrate how different interventions have operationalized FLR principles (different cases can apply to each principle) through case studies and systematic reviews;
4. Provide different users and sectors with targeted documentation, such as briefs and videos, to illustrate how FLR aligns with a) broader national and international development and climate agendas; b) good community-based governance; c) broad environment and social policy agendas; d) funding and investment practices and programs from both public and private sectors;
5. Encourage and support the co-development and testing of working frameworks to assess their utility and effectiveness for different FLR actors;
6. Communicate the urgency and legitimacy of FLR to different user groups, stakeholders, sectors, funding agencies, and jurisdictions;
7. Engage additional members in the FLoRES task force[6] and broaden its interaction with interested parties;
8. Advance this agenda (steps 1-7) through international institutional platforms such as ICRAF, APFNet, the GPFLR, and through international conferences and workshops.

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