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**Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry**  
**Report from the Chair**

## Report from the Chair of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI)

1. The Chair of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI), Mr. Guy Robertson (United States of America), is pleased to submit his report to the 103rd meeting of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) on 1 February 2019.

### I. Introduction

2. The Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work (WIPoW) 2018-2021 (ECE/TIM/2017/2– FO:EFC/2017/2) was adopted by the joint session of COFFI and the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC) in October 2017 in Warsaw, Poland (Las2017). The Programme covers traditional topics related to forest products and services, such as forest resources and forest products markets. It also addresses issues related to climate change, sustainable forest management and its linkages to the green economy in areas such as innovation in the forest sector and ecosystem services.

3. The overall goal of the WIPoW is to “*support member States and regional economic integration organizations in their efforts to sustainably manage forests so that they provide forest good and services to benefit society*”.

4. This report outlines the main achievements of COFFI in implementing the WIPoW in the biennium 2017-2018 since its last report to EXCOM in December 2017, including future work priorities. More information is contained in the report of the seventy-sixth session of COFFI, which was held on 5-9 November 2018 in Vancouver, Canada (ECE/TIM/2018/2).

### II. Achievements over the past year

5. During the reporting period, the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section (hereafter Joint Section) continued to work on the forest sector and its contribution to a green economy and sustainable development. The Joint Section provided data on forests, forest management and the forest industry, in support of evidence-based decision-making, and provided assistance to member States for improving the forest sector in the region through coordinated activities of communication and capacity-building. Key highlights (reported according to the Work Areas (WA) of the WIPoW) include:

#### **WA1: Data, monitoring and assessment:**

The Joint Section coordinated, organized and supported data collection on forest resources, forest products markets and wood energy in the UNECE region. Outputs included:

- The *Forest Products Annual Market Review 2017-2018*, which was published in the summer of 2018.
- The study on *Wood Energy in the ECE region: Data, trends and outlook in Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and North America*, launched during the meeting of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary air pollution in May 2018.
- The first interactive database on *Forest Ownership in the UNECE Region*, which was completed and published on the UNECE Statistical Database (<https://w3.unece.org/PXWeb/en>).

- The Joint Section supported the FAO FRA Secretariat on the finalization of the national reporting format and its integration with the Forest Europe/ECE/FAO reporting on forests and sustainable forest management (SFM) in the pan-European region (jointly developed with the FAO FRA Secretariat and Forest Europe Liaison Unit Bratislava).
- A regional training on the FRA and pan-European reporting for national correspondents from Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia was organized by the three partner organizations leading forest reporting in the region.

**Impact:**

- As a result of the above activities, knowledge of forests and of the current progress and future potential of wood products and wood energy increased, allowing member States to better plan the management, protection and use of resources and strengthen their contribution to a green economy.

**WA2: Policy advice and dialogue:**

- The Joint Section organized **National Forest Policy Dialogues** in Ukraine in June 2018 and in Azerbaijan in July 2018. In Azerbaijan, this activity led to a revision of policy action plans for the period of 2015-2020 and the development of a detailed roadmap for reforming forestry management systems in Azerbaijan. In Ukraine, a participatory stakeholder dialogue to consult on the reform process and institutional structure led to increased participation of stakeholders and support for an inclusive policy process in Ukraine.
- The Joint Section supported the Bonn Challenge by organizing a **Ministerial Roundtable on Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge in the Caucasus and Central Asia** on 21-22 June 2018 in Astana, Kazakhstan. The meeting resulted in high-level representatives of Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan committing to restore over 2.5 million hectares of forest landscape by 2030. In addition, the Ministerial Roundtable adopted the **Astana Resolution**, committing the region to go beyond the declared areas and strengthening partnerships and regional cooperation to this end.
- The Joint Section also organized a **mid-term review of the Rovaniemi Action Plan** was organized in February 2018, where priority actions were identified and later agreed on by the Joint Working Party on Forests Statistics, Economics and Management in 2018 and set to be implemented in 2019.
- An output of the Rovaniemi Action Plan's underlying pillar on decent green jobs in the forest sector is the **study on Green Jobs in the Forest Sector**, which was published in June 2018. It provides a comprehensive overview of existing and potential jobs related to forests.
- On request of member States, the Joint Section developed the **study Forests and Water – Valuation and payments for ecosystem services**, containing the most comprehensive database of case studies currently available on water-related payment for forest ecosystem service schemes in the UNECE region.

**Impact:**

- The activities and outputs under WA2 led to concrete policy commitments such as 2.5 million ha to be reforested by 2030 in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which also

contribute to the realization of existing international commitments including the Bonn Challenge, CBD Aichi Target 15, the UNFCCC REDD+ goal, and the Rio+20 land degradation neutrality goal. In addition, the studies published led to increased knowledge on specific policy areas such as water-forest interlinks and developments in forest-related labor markets, which allows member States to create more favorable institutional frameworks and better plan for an inclusive green economy.

### **WA3: Communications and outreach:**

- The **International Day of Forests 2018** under the theme “Forests and Sustainable Cities” was celebrated on 21 March 2018 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland. The celebrations consisted of a panel discussion showcasing the unique ways in which forests “have gone vertical” in urban settings. The event was organized in collaboration with the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit and the Liaison Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Geneva.
- Together with UN TV and UNDP, the Joint Section produced the video *Made in Forests* was produced, starring UNDP Goodwill Ambassador and renown actress Michelle Yeoh. It puts the spotlight on the role that clothing manufacture and consumer fashion can have for a better planet. The video was launched by Ms. Yeoh at the Ministerial Segment of the HLPF on 16 July 2018. It received extensive media attention and now has over 4000 views (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ko8qCyoZ-Mg>).
- The movie was accompanied by an **exhibition on *Forests, Fashion and the SDGs***, showcasing textiles made of wood-based fibers and highlighting their connection to the SDGs.
- In order to raise awareness of the role that wood can play in cutting down emissions when replacing more carbon-intensive materials in the construction sector, the Joint Section collaborated with the Government of Poland and the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit to produce a **cartoon video of *The Three Pigs and Climate Change***. It was launched during COP24 in Katowice in December 2018.
- In order to foster support for all different types of wood products – from textiles to construction - COFFI members developed the ***Vancouver Invitation on Forest Products for a Better Future***, a statement of intent that was approved by the Committee at the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of COFFI in Vancouver, Canada, (the approved version is contained in Annex I of the meeting report ECE/TIM/2018/2 - <http://www.unece.org/forests/coffi2018>) It invites the public to recognize the important role that wood products can play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Impact:**

- The Vancouver Invitation as well as activities related to the Forests for Fashion Initiative and the International Day of Forests resulted in increased visibility and strengthened public support for the value of sustainably produced wood and wood-based products. This was evident by the many invitations the Joint Section received to present at forest and textile-related events and by the number of signatories of the Vancouver Invitation so far collected continues to increase.

### **WA4: Capacity-building:**

The Joint Section’s work on capacity-building aims to enhance the ability of specific countries and the UNECE region as a whole to implement sustainable forests management practices,

collect relevant data, monitor and analyze forest conditions as well as promote the engagement of national experts from the region. In this regard, outputs included:

- Continued implementation of the **UN Development Account (UNDA) project: Accountability systems for SFM in the Caucasus and Central Asia (2016-2019)** by organizing national Workshops on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Georgia between February and November 2018.
- A practical handbook titled *Guidelines for the Development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management* was developed to support national implementation processes in the Caucasian and Central Asian countries.
- A **workshop on National Wood Resource and Product Balances** targeting national correspondents responsible for forest and forest products reporting focused on improving the quality of data and analysis in forest reporting by using National Wood Resource and Product Balances (Geneva, Switzerland, 5-6 December 2017).

#### **Impact:**

- The activities carried out under the UNDA project led to improved capacity to develop criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, as 80% of trained officials confirmed an increased knowledge of the existing international best practice for sustainable forest measurement, monitoring and reporting. All beneficiary countries developed a draft national set of criteria and indicators, which are published within the project's reports in English and Russian.
- Participants of the workshop on *National Wood Resource and Product Balances* claimed to have developed a better understanding of the relationship between forest resources, wood harvest volumes, and final wood product outputs, as well as a better understanding of data gaps in national reporting and the need for comprehensive data resources. This understanding, in turn, will support improved data reporting throughout the UNECE system and subsequent submissions to FAOStat.

### **III. Major activities planned for 2019 and beyond**

6. The subjects to be covered by future activities will address issues mentioned in the scope of the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work. This work will contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and forest related SDGs, the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 and the United Nations Forum on Forests Quadrennial Programme of Work 2017-2020. The main outputs and impacts expected in 2019 are as follows:

#### **WA1: Data, monitoring and assessment**

The Joint Section will continue its regular work on collecting, validating and disseminating statistical data on forests and related industries. Activities undertaken under WA1 are expected to further improve knowledge about the relevance of wood products and wood energy in the region and provide member States with the best-available sources of information on the role that wood products and wood energy can play in various sectors to support environmental, energy, and socio-economic strategies supporting a greener economy. Outputs include the following:

- The *Forest Products Annual Market Review 2018-2019* and related data.
- The completion of the **study on the State of Forests of Caucasus and Central Asia**, the first study of its kind in the region, which is expected to improve the visibility and understanding of the forest sector in the region to national policy makers and the international community, encourage regional dialogue and cooperation on forest related issues, and strengthen efforts to improve data quality.
- Also, the Joint Section will publish a **study on Forest Ownership in the UNECE Region**, developed together with the European Cooperation in Science and Technology Action Forest Land Ownership Changes in Europe (COST Action FACESMAP), with support of the European forest owners' organizations.
- In addition, outputs include the finalization of the national data collection and data review for the 2020 reporting cycle of the Global Forest Resource Assessment and the **pan-European reporting on forests** as well as contributing to international processes on SFM through the use of regional Criteria and Indicators and the preparation of the **report on the State of Europe's Forests**.
- In relation to wood energy, a new database with 2017 data will be issued, and results of the **Joint Wood Energy Enquiry** analyzed and disseminated. To this end, a **study on wood energy in the UNECE region** will be prepared and the outcomes of the previous study shared at international meetings.

#### **WA2: Policy advice and dialogue:**

Activities undertaken under WA2 are expected to strengthen policy institutions across the UNECE region and enable the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan, SFM practices, and related international initiatives. Outputs include the following:

- The Joint Section will continue its work on a **study of the forest sector outlook** for the whole UNECE region, and provide capacity building to member States to adapt and use the results for their respective national needs.
- The Joint Section together with the Liaison Unit Bratislava of Forest Europe will finalize the *Guidelines on Green Jobs in the Forest Sector*.
- The **Rovaniemi Action Plan priority actions** agreed by the Joint Working Party on Forests Statistics, Economics and Management in 2018 will be implemented and the Section will continue the overall monitoring of the Plan implementation.
- A **Ministerial Conference on Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge in Eastern Europe and the Balkans** is planned to take place in Ukraine in 2019 and is expected to result in substantial reforestation commitments by countries in the region.
- A **follow-up to the Ministerial Roundtable on Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge in the Caucasus and Central Asia** is planned to strengthen commitments made in 2018 and support countries in their implementation processes.

#### **WA3: Communications and outreach:**

- On the occasion of the **International Day of Forests 2019** with its theme "Forests and Education", the Joint Section will organize a public event at the Palais de Nations. It will

educate participants about the important contribution that forests make to sustainable development.

- In order to reach wider audiences and contribute to discussions at the **Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE region**, the Joint Section will be involved in the planning of a roundtable on SDG4 – Quality Education. The peer-learning roundtable will feature discussions on fostering the understanding of sustainable forest management and the relation between humans and the environment through Forest Teaching and Communication Strategy.
- The **5<sup>th</sup> European Forest Week** is planned to take place during the joint session of COFFI and the EFC in 2019 with a focus on education.
- The Joint Section will also continue to promote the value of sustainably produced wood and wood-based products through the web presence of the ***Vancouver Invitation on Sustainable Forest Products for a Better Future*** ([www.unece.org/forests/vancouverinvitation](http://www.unece.org/forests/vancouverinvitation)), and the promotion of the video *Made in Forests* and the cartoon video *The Three Pigs and Climate Change* at international fora and events.

#### **WA4: Capacity-building:**

- The Joint Section will conclude its work under the **UNDA project on “Accountability Systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia” (2016-2019)**. To this end, the Joint Section will hold the 2nd national Workshop on “Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management for Armenia” in February 2019, in Yerevan, Armenia. The Final Regional Workshop will take place in the second half of 2019, in Kyrgyzstan; the final project publication including the results will be published in 2019 and the project will be externally evaluated.
- **Technical cooperation activities** undertaken under WA4 are expected to further improve monitoring and assessment of the forest sector in support of sustainable forest management by increasing the percentage of UNECE member States that provide satisfactory data on qualitative and quantitative indicators of sustainable forest management.

## **IV. Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the Committee**

7. No changes to the subsidiary structure were proposed by the last session of COFFI.
8. In 2013, in the Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform (A 65, para 20b), the Commission changed the name of the Timber Committee to “Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry” to better reflect the scope of its work. The mandate of the Committee remained unchanged. To align the names of the Sectoral Committee and the subprogramme, EXCOM is invited to transmit to the 68<sup>th</sup> Commission session a draft decision to change the name of subprogramme 7 from “Forestry and Timber” to “Forests and the Forest Industry”.

## V. Intersectoral cooperation

9. The ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section continued intersectoral cooperation with other UNECE and FAO units as well as external organizations and processes. For instance:
- The International Day of Forests 2018 celebrated under the theme “Forests and Sustainable Cities” on 21 March 2018 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, was organized jointly with the FAO Liaison Office Geneva and the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit.
  - Together with the UNECE statistics division, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and in collaboration with United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the UN Country Team of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Joint Section supported the National Workshop Shared Environmental Information Systems (SEIS) and Environmental Statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The workshop was designed to advance the understanding and effective application of SEIS environmental data sharing principles by relevant national agencies in Kyrgyzstan as well as to improve capacity for the production of environmental statistics for monitoring progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
  - The study *State of Forest Ownership in the UNECE Region* is a joint effort by the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, the European Cooperation in Science and Technology Action Forest Land Ownership Changes in Europe (COST Action FACESMAP), the European State Forest Association EUSTAFOR, European Forest Owners (CEPF) and European Federation of Forest-Owning Communities (FECOF), and will benefit greatly from a vast network for dissemination.

## VI. Technical Cooperation activities

10. Technical cooperation is carried out through work with members of the ECE/FAO Teams of Specialists, national correspondents, and projects such as the UNDA “Accountability systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia” project. Below are some examples of technical cooperation activities:
- The project “Accountability systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia”, which covers five target countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) aims at developing national sets of criteria and indicators, with the extensive use of experience and knowledge gained by the international and national criteria and indicators processes. This project is directly supported by the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management.
  - Technical cooperation is also carried out in relation to assisting countries in the implementation of the Bonn Challenge – a global effort to bring 350 million ha of degraded and deforested land into restoration by 2030. The Joint Section supported Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in defining feasible commitments to forest landscape restoration, particularly by conducting a study on degradation and restoration of forest land in the Caucasus and Central Asia. As mentioned, this resulted in over 2.5 million ha of forest landscape officially committed to be restored in the region under the Bonn Challenge by 2030, as announced during the Ministerial Roundtable on Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge in the Caucasus and Central Asia, 21-22 June 2018. The Joint Section will continue to support the Bonn Challenge by providing technical cooperation in Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

- As part of the National Forest Policy Dialogue in Ukraine, the Joint Section supported technical cooperation activities including a participatory stakeholder dialogue to consult on the reform process and institutional structure in Ukraine. Awareness among stakeholder rose and an inclusive process was supported.

## VII. Cooperation with other international organizations (beyond the Joint Section)

11. The Joint Section has been effectively cooperating with a number of stakeholders in the implementation of the Integrated Programme of Work. Some of the highlights include:

- The Intersecretariat Working Group on Forest Sector Statistics coordinates the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire amongst the 4 participating organizations: ECE/FAO, Eurostat, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and FAO. Each of the organizations is responsible for circulating the questionnaire to those countries for which it is responsible. Results of the questionnaire are provided to the partner organizations as needed. Each organization publishes these results according to its mandate and needs. We are grateful to our partners for their dedication and cooperation in producing the best forest products statistics possible.
- The 2020 pan-European reporting is done in coordination with the global effort, as a collective endeavour of UNECE, FAO and the Forest Europe Liaison Unit Bratislava. This includes technical guidance and training to correspondents from Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.
- The Joint Section, with the encouragement of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, and in collaboration with the International Energy Agency (IEA), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the European Commission (EC) produce the "Joint Wood Energy Enquiry", which aims at improving knowledge and understanding of wood energy consumption. Improving data reporting on wood energy has led to a better understanding of the future perspective of wood energy in the region.
- The Joint Section identified the lack of a coherent approach undertaken by the UN Secretariat and specialized agencies on the topic of Sustainable Fashion, in particular vis-à-vis the role that forest fibers can play. To this end, the Joint Section led the establishment of the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion through the organization of brainstorming events during the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in the UNECE region and the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The Joint Section will be an active member of the Steering Committee of the newly established Alliance in order to continue to promote the use of sustainable forest fibers. Members of the Steering Committee include representatives from: UNEP, the World Bank, International Trade Centre, FAO, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNDP, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), International Labour Organization (ILO,) and Global Compact.
- To implement the UNDA capacity-building project on “Accountability systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Joint Section collaborates with partners from the United Nations system to carry out on the ground actions at the national level, delivering as one, through UNDP and FAO country offices and with other organizations, such as the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ);
- The Joint Section continues to cooperate with the Forest Europe Liaison Unit Bratislava and contributes to many actions of the new Forest Europe Work Programme, which

includes support to the development of a report State of Europe's Forests, SFM tools developed by that process on criteria and indicators for SFM and work on green jobs and ecosystem services.

- The Joint Section supports international work and cooperation on monitoring of forest resources and sustainable forest management, including the European Union (i.e. Eurostat, the European Economic Area and the Joint Research Centre), the Montreal process and other organizations (i.e., the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, the International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests and the European Forest Institute) in this area.
- One of the outcomes of previous strategic reviews called for increased interaction with the private sector. For this reason, representatives of numerous private sector stakeholders participated in a panel discussion during COFFI2018, and discussed the challenges and opportunities faced by the sector, particularly in relation to wood construction, and how policymakers might help the industry to thrive and enhance its economic, environmental and social contribution. One of the key recommendations focused on the importance of cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration in building construction, which is crucial for adopting new technologies in wood construction and therefore addressing future housing needs in a sustainable way. All recommendations are included in the meeting report (ECE/TIM/2018/2) and will be considered in the Joint Section's future work.
- Finally, it should be noted that COFFI and Joint Section functions provide important opportunities for collaboration between member States, international organizations, and formal or informal working groups. Recent activity by the Circumboreal Working Group is a case in point.

## **VIII. Other issues of policy/political nature that the Sectoral Committee may wish to raise with the EXCOM**

12. At the last session of COFFI, the Committee adopted its Rules of Procedure as included in Annex III of the meeting report (ECE/TIM/2018/2).

13. The Committee also approved the *Vancouver Invitation on Sustainable Forest Products for a Better Future*, which is a statement of intent promoting the value of sustainably produced wood and wood-based products as environmentally friendly material which anyone can join and support. The approved text is available in Annex I of the meeting report (ECE/TIM/2018/2).

14. On 5–6 December 2018 the FOREST EUROPE Expert Level Meeting (ELM) took place in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, to discuss further procedural steps on a possible legally binding agreement on forests in Europe. The ELM agreed on a draft decision to be forwarded to ministers for their approval. The draft decision invites UNECE, with the support of FAO, to convene and service jointly further negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe by setting up a negotiating process in an appropriate format based on the parameters contained in the decision. Forest Europe Ministers were requested to approve the decision via a silent procedure, to expire on 19 March 2019. The EXCOM will receive a briefing on the ELM and expected next steps from the co-chairs of the Forest Europe process and the Chief of the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section at a session after the 19 of March 2019.