

**Joint Meeting
of the Executive Committee of the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC)
and the Bureau of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI)**

22 April 2020, 15:00 to 17:00, virtual

Minutes

The Joint Bureaux met virtually on 22 April from 15:00 – 17:20 CET via Skype.

This report presents the decisions taken by the Bureaux¹, which was attended by the following members:

EFC Executive Committee:

- Ms. Lyubov Polyakova (Ukraine), Acting Chair
- Ms. Christine Farcy (Belgium), Formal-Chair

COFFI Bureau:

- Mr. Guy Robertson (USA), Chair
- Ms. Marta Gaworska (Poland), Vice-Chair
- Ms. Maria Sokolenko (Russia), Vice-Chair
- Mr. Vardan Melikyan (Armenia), Vice-Chair

Mr. Kenan Kilic (Turkey) and Mr. Rob Busink (the Netherlands), both EFC Vice-Chairs, were not able to participate and sent regrets.

From the Secretariat were present:

- Mr. Gianluca Sambucini, Chief, ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, COFFI Secretary
- Mr. Ekrem Yazici, Deputy Chief, ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, EFC Secretary
- Mr. Roman Michalak, ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section
- Mr. Florian Steierer, ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, Secretary of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management (JWP)
- Ms. Leonie Meier, ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section

On invitation, Mr Matthias Dieter (Germany), Chair of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management, provided his comments prior to the meeting as observer.

The Bureaux meeting was chaired by Ms. Lyubov Polyakova and Mr. Guy Robertson.

¹ Bureaux refers to the members of the Bureau of the Committee on Forests and Forest Industry and the Executive Committee of the European Forestry Commission meeting jointly.

Agenda item	Information provided and discussion	Decisions taken	Action required
1. Adoption of the agenda	The Acting Chair of EFC, Ms. Lyubov Polyakova, opened the Bureaux meeting and welcomed the Bureaux. She introduced the provisional agenda and asked the Bureaux members for its adoption.	The agenda was adopted without changes.	None
2. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on forest sector	<p>Secretariat presented changes to schedule of forest-related events, including the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management, various Team of Specialists meetings, the Ministerial Meeting on Forest Landscape Restoration in Eastern and South-East Europe, UNFF15 and the upcoming COFO meeting.</p> <p>Ms. Lyubov Polyakova also informed about upcoming FOREST EUROPE meeting and its possible rescheduling</p> <p>The Bureaux invited the Secretariat to conduct webinars on capacity building or similar topics for educational purposes. This could also reach wider audiences beyond the usual delegates.</p> <p>Question were raised about modalities for meetings and whether the same rules apply to ECE and FAO. Secretariat clarified that FAO does not have general decision like ECE (the decision text can be found here), but rather uses a case-by-case approach. At the moment for COFO and European Regional Conference a physical meeting is planned.</p>	The Bureaux recommended that the Secretariat should consider topics and content of webinars and come up with innovative webinar formats.	

<p>3. Postponement and rescheduling of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party and its ToS meetings and impact on COFFI/EFC activities</p>	<p>Secretariat informed the Bureaux about arrangements for postponed meetings. The Bureaux wished to extend the delay for the silence procedure to five working days instead of 72 hours and this will be reflected in the final draft of arrangements to be submitted to EXCOM for approval. However, it was recommended to allow flexibility in the future regarding the duration of the silence procedure. Regarding the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party (hereinafter - JWP), the Secretariat clarified that the formal framework, including agenda and background documents are still valid for a virtual meeting. The virtual meeting would be considered informal but report would be official following silence procedure.</p> <p>The Secretariat stands ready to use both days for informal remote consultations of the JWP (18. June + 19 June):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option 1: One informal session JWP (as outlined in overview table distributed to the JB) + one session webinar ▪ Option 2: Two informal sessions JWP (one day items 1-5, second day item 6) <p>The Bureaux agreed that it will follow the guidance of the JWP Chair, who prefers option 2. However, more clarification was requested regarding the way that other UNECE entities are conducting business and how to organize registrations, and the Secretariat was requested to update the Bureaux once more information becomes available, if possible by next JB meeting. The Bureaux recommended to have formal registration to the JWP.</p> <p>Following a discussion about the arrangements related to the silent procedure, the Secretariat clarified that if silence procedure is broken, text will be amended and new round of approval sought.</p> <p>Regarding the question of who would be invited to review the draft JWP report before it becomes an official document, the Bureaux noted that draft meeting report will have to be shared with missions in order to get formal approval, but invitations for comments and adjustments of the meeting report should be a straightforward process. The official report should be translated into the UNECE/FAO languages.</p> <p>The Bureaux also discussed the format of the Team of Specialist feedback session within the Strategic Review process. The Secretariat presented the following two options:</p>	<p>The Bureaux recommended to follow option 2 for the JWP format of informal consultations (as meant by Special Procedures).</p> <p>The Bureaux decided silence procedure which currently stands at least 72h should be extended to five working days. The following wording was suggested for para 2 of the “Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period” document: “under a silence procedure of at least 72 hours or timing as defined by the Joint Bureaux” to provide more flexibility.</p> <p>The JB recommended that the Secretariat should update JB on the procedures of registration for online meetings and circulation of draft reports from online-meetings in case the relevant experience in UNECE appears before the next JB call.</p>	<p>The Secretariat will organize another Bureaux call before the JWP to address all pending issues.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option 1: Virtual feedback session with 5-minute presentations by each ToS leader, allowing JWP to rate performance of ToS virtually; ▪ Option 2: Online questionnaire to all JWP members to evaluate performance of ToS. 	<p>The Bureaux recommended following option 1 for the Team of Specialists feedback session, noting that we can still benefit from the survey that has already been sent out as it includes specific questions about ToS performance.</p> <p>The Bureaux requests the Secretariat to organize another Bureaux call before the JWP.</p>	
<p>4. Budget situation of the Joint Section</p>	<p>The Secretariat updated the Bureaux about the double cash flow crisis facing the United Nations with COVID-19 and preexisting difficulties.</p> <p>The Secretariat informed the Bureaux about progress on the implementation of WIPoW 2018-2021 and shared with the Bureaux the updated version of the ECE/FAO Plan and Budget 2020 document. The secretariat also informed the Bureaux about funding needs.</p> <p>The Bureaux members thanked secretariat for the well-prepared table, raised several questions about the specific activities and secretariat provided answers /clarifications to the questions.</p>		

<p>5. Market report funding and impact of proposed approach</p>	<p>The Secretariat informed the Bureaux about the limited funding available for this year’s flagship publication “Forest Products Annual Market Review” (FPAMR). It stressed that member States’ complete and timely data submissions are more important than ever, as a large focus of the scaled-down publication will be on this data.</p> <p>The Bureaux welcomed the pragmatic approach of issuing a more concise report and will keep in mind pledges for the next funding cycle in 2021.</p> <p>The Secretariat suggested that a webinar format could be used to for analysis missing in the scaled-down report while communicating about the product to wider audiences.</p>		<p>The Secretariat will explore opportunity for hosting a webinar on the FPAMR and/ or the Outlook Study to increase visibility of the Joint Section’s work.</p>
<p>6. Strategic Review status</p>	<p>The Secretariat provided a brief update on the timeline of the Strategic Review process, presenting two options for the Bureaux’s decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option 1: solicit country-level responses on word document within first round consultation ▪ Option 2: after first draft of IPoW is produced, give member States the option to provide substantive comments. <p>The Bureaux noted that due to ongoing restrictions as a result of the pandemic, the Secretariat may consider cancelling the workshop proposed in the timeline and opt for online consultation with member States instead.</p> <p>The Bureaux also noted that priority for analysing responses of the Strategic Review questionnaire should be given to responses of governmental structures</p>	<p>The Bureaux decided that it was more important to have member States’ comments on the draft IPoW rather than having their feedback reflected in the questionnaire, as countries have been in the position to provide comments during COFFI session, while no decision could be taken on joint matters during COFFI session</p>	<p>The Secretariat will table the Strategic Review process at the next Bureaux call.</p>
<p>7. Update on LBA negotiations</p>	<p>The Secretariat informed the Bureaux about the negotiations on the Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe and the draft EXCOM decision developed for rejecting the invitation (approved by silence procedure on 3 April 2020).</p> <p>The Bureaux requested to table this item for the next Bureaux call in order to be informed about the EXCOM decision.</p>		<p>The Secretariat will table this item at the next Bureaux call.</p>

<p>8. Preparation for UNFF15</p>	<p>The Secretariat informed the Bureaux about the invitation by UNFF15 to submit a written joint statement.</p> <p>The Bureaux welcomed this opportunity for providing visibility and highlighting the benefits of the joint efforts of EFC and COFFI in UNSPF implementation and showcasing how this joint work is important for the recovery from the global COVID-19 pandemic. A joint statement is also a good opportunity for reaching wider audiences. The Bureaux agreed that the statement should be signed by the COFFI and EFC chair.</p>	<p>The Bureaux supported submitting joint statement to UNFF 15 on behalf of COFFI and EFC chairs</p>	<p>Secretariat will establish a zero draft (1-2 pages) of the joint statement by the 11th of May and share with Bureaux members.</p>
<p>9. Draft agenda for the 78th session of COFFI (Geneva, 2-6 November 2020)</p>	<p>The Secretariat presented the draft agenda of the 78th session of COFFI and invited the COFFI Bureau to express their views about a possible thematic focus of the session.</p> <p>COFFI Bureau agreed that a thematic focus on the linkages between COVID-19 and biodiversity loss could be a possibility for the panel discussion on Day 1.</p> <p>COFFI Bureau agreed to table this item for the next call in order to agree on the annotations of the draft agenda and the thematic focus for the parliamentary documents.</p>		<p>The Secretariat will expand the draft agenda with annotations for review by COFFI Bureau during the next call.</p>
<p>10. Any other business</p>	<p>None.</p>		