

**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)**

**20 May, 15.00 to 16.30 (CET), virtual**

**Minutes**

The Joint Bureaux met virtually on 20 May 2020 from 15:00 – 16:30 CET via Microsoft Teams.

This report presents the decisions taken by the Bureaux<sup>1</sup>, 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. Kenan Kilic (Turkey) and Mr. Rob Busink (the Netherlands), both EFC Vice-Chairs, and Mr. Vardan Melikyan (Armenia), COFFI Vice-Chair 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. 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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
<b>1. Adoption of the agenda</b>	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
<b>2. Postponement of the ECE/FAO Joint Working Party to 2021</b>	<p>The Secretariat gave an update on the postponement of the ECE/FAO Joint Working Party (JWP), clarifying that EXCOM allowed only formal virtual meetings where “business critical decisions” need to be taken. The ECE/FAO Joint Working Party does not classify in that regard; hence the Secretariat is seeking the Bureaux’s approval to postpone the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the JWP to March 2021.</p> <p>The Bureaux asked for clarification on the legality of having a COFFI Session without prior session of the JWP. The Secretariat noted that it is possible since COFFI is not obliged to hold a JWP session each year. There have been cases in the past when it was postponed to another year.</p>	Joint Bureaux, considering the special situation of COVID-19, decided to postpone the 42 <sup>nd</sup> session of the UNECE/FAO Joint Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management until March 2021	Secretariat will send out notifications to member States about the postponement by 29 May.

<p><b>3. Strategic Review status</b></p>	<p>The Secretariat provided an update on the informal consultations which would be part of a slightly adjusted Strategic Review process timeline, planned for 18 June 2020. In consultation with the Co-chairs, the Secretariat prepared a note to member States which Bureaux members have received for review. The session will consider successes and shortcomings of current Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work (2018-2021, WIPoW) with aim of identifying elements for inclusion or adjustment in new IPoW. The Secretariat stressed the informal nature of the meeting, adding that there will be “report by the co-moderators” but nothing formal. Participants will include national authorities (i.e. Heads of Delegations or representatives to COFFI and EFC, member States through the Permanent Missions in Geneva and Joint COFFI and EFC Bureaux members (max. 50 participants).</p> <p>The Chair asked Bureaux members about their opinion on the issuance of invitation letters and asked the Secretariat to clarify the registration process. Bureaux members welcomed the detailed draft information note but doubt that participants can decide on questions proposed in the note without background document. Suggests such doc should be circulated to participants before the meeting to allow participants to get acquainted with survey results.</p> <p>However, the Secretariat responded that member States should be familiar with the structure of the current WIPoW, so that should be the main document they will be looking at in preparation for the meeting. The EFC Secretary also underlines the importance of having this informal meeting which would serve to provide a structures basis on which to build the new Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW).</p> <p>On the question of registrations, the Secretariat clarified that the list of Heads of Delegations of COFFI and EFC is regularly updated, and will serve as basis for sending out invitations. In addition, a Note to Permanent Missions n Geneva will be sent in order to verify existing Heads of Delegation contacts, and invite representatives of the Missions to attend if required. Ideally have one Head of Delegate representing the country in the discussion. The Secretariat underlines the importance of having the Joint Bureaux represented in the meeting, whose role will be to capture the main conclusions and interpret the country representatives’ feedback, and review the draft of the IPoW, which will be developed after the meeting. Also, Joint Bureaux should advise on what aspect of the current WIPoW structure should be retained or changed.</p>	<p>JB members invited to think about facilitation, can be done via email exchange.</p> <p>More room between November 2020 and March 2021. Detailed steps still to be developed.</p> <p>Survey results should be complemented with presentation about Work Areas and involvement in int. processes</p> <p>The presentation of Work Areas is more important than Survey results, which should only be used to highlight activities. In addition, the background document should reference the online reports about the achievements of the Teams of Specialists.</p> <p>To adjust road map and provide clear vision of actions and deadlines for period between COFFI and JWP</p>	<p>Secretariat will circulate survey results to JB by 10 June.</p> <p>The Secretariat to further develop the agenda of the informal consultation over the course of next weeks in consultation with the JB.</p> <p>Secretariat to include in their presentation during the informal consultation the Work Areas, key activities and involvement of COFFI/EFC in different international processes to give sufficient background to participants.</p> <p>Secretariat will send a Note to member States through Permanent Missions to have participants that</p>
--	--	---	--

	<p>The Chair asked the Bureaux for their ideas on how the discussion could be organized. Bureaux members stressed that they would like a discussion on general input on the IPoW and what kind of changes people are looking for. Survey results are just a part of the puzzle but broader package should include the WIPoW.</p> <p>The Secretariat proposed to further develop the agenda of the informal consultation over the course of next few weeks. Bureaux proposes to have a facilitator for the 80 minutes feedback sessions, and to consider the importance of having specific questions that countries can respond to in their time-limited statements.</p> <p>The Bureaux remarks that the timeframe between sending out a first summary of the survey outcome by 12 June would only leave a couple of days for delegates to prepare before the meeting. In addition, Bureaux notes that the proposed special workshop in October should be optional or can take place during the COFFI Session in November, in order to allow for more flexibility given the current pandemic situation. Secretariat agrees and but notes that deadline for survey input is 1 June, so it won't be possible to provide input any earlier.</p>		<p>represent countries' views</p> <p>Secretariat will send an invitation to Heads of delegations and JB members to mark the 18 June consultation in their agenda</p>
<p><b>4. Update on LBA negotiations following EXCOM</b></p>	<p>The Secretariat informed the Bureaux that the draft decision, which requests UNECE/FAO to reply back to Slovak Republic and Forest Europe that they are not in position to host LBA process, was presented by chair of EXCOM during a virtual meeting held on 20 May. It received no objections from EXCOM members. A silence procedure will start on Monday for 72 hours, so by mid next week the decision will be officially approved.</p> <p>The Secretariat commented that the work behind the LBA could be used in the future to guide the possible drafting of a nonbinding, voluntary charter allowing member States the opportunity to agree on strategies and policies to support the forest sector.</p>		<p>The secretariat, together with the office of the ES of ECE and the office of the DG of FAO to develop a letter to the Slovak Ministry. This should start once the EXCOM report is approve by the silence procedure (Thursday 28 May 2020)</p>

<p><b>5. UNFF15 Joint Statement</b></p>	<p>The Chair thanks all Bureaux members for their comments on the draft Joint Statements which will be presented on the website of the 15<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Forum on Forests and notes that it will ideally provide COFFI and EFC with an opportunity to be mentioned during the session.</p> <p>The Secretariat clarified that the Joint Statement provides a comprehensive communication that will be available on the website of UNFF15, but there may be another opportunity to highlight key parts of the message to be used in the UNFF15 report, so there is a possibility to convene two messages.</p> <p>Bureaux notes that there is already a highlighted part in the statement which could be used for this purpose.</p>		<p>Secretariat to submit the Joint Statement to the UNFF Bureau with comments and as reviewed by the Co-Chairs.</p>
<p><b>6. Draft agenda for the 78<sup>th</sup> session of COFFI (COFFI matters)</b></p>	<p>The Chair referred to the draft agenda of the 78<sup>th</sup> session of COFFI and invited the COFFI Bureau to express their views about a possible thematic focus of the session. The Secretariat proposed some themes such as forest disturbance processes, a focus on the green economy, and economic recovery for the forest sector post-COVID-19.</p> <p>Bureau members request that a draft should be recirculated to JB chairs and then further refined. The Secretariat clarified that final date of submission is 10 July. Further refinements are possible closer to the date, and can also be taken from informal consultation.</p> <p>Further, the Bureau asked about the uncertainty of holding a physical meeting and that alternatives might be necessary. The Secretariat proposes to keep open the option for a mixed structure, for example one which allows representatives of permanent missions in Geneva to attend in person and those that cannot travel to connect remotely.</p>		<p>Chairs and secretariat to come up with one or two candidate themes for JB comments.</p> <p>Further questions/comments by JB to be shared via email until mid-next week.</p>

<p><b>7. Theme for the high-level segment of the 69th Commission session (COFFI matters)</b></p>	<p>Secretariat clarifies that COFFI Chair was asked to provide input to the theme of the 69<sup>th</sup> Commission session which will take place in April 2021. The input should reflect our work vis-à-vis the main theme. Summary and highlights of the different activities related to the circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources. Each subprogramme will have limited space so level of focus needs to be clarified. The Chef de Cabinet has been contacted to clarify scope and extent of input.</p> <p>The Bureau notes that last year the Secretariat was requested to explore the role of forests in the circular economy, and that this kind of work could be presented. In addition, some results from the State of Forests in Europe and the Forest Resources Assessment reports could be highlighted. In addition, the input should reflect that it is the joint work of COFFI and EFC.</p>		<p>Secretariat and Chair to provide a first draft of inputs by 4 June and circulate with Bureau members. Deadline for submission is 12 June.</p>
<p><b>8. Date and place of next meeting</b></p>	<p>The Chair moves to a discussion about the date and place of the next Joint Bureaux meeting. Bureaux members note that there might be a need to hold ad-hoc Bureaux meetings (e.g. in July) given the Strategic Review process and the preparations for COFFI2020. They also note that virtual meetings have been quite successful and great opportunity to connect and update each other.</p> <p>Secretariat clarifies that September meeting could be used to discuss SR process (and possible preparations for a special workshop in October) and the IPoW process. All the rest can be done through email.</p>		<p>Secretariat to find suitable date in September</p>
<p><b>9. Any other business</b></p>	<p>None.</p>		