



European Forestry Commission
Food and Agriculture Organization



FAO/ECE
Forest Communicators
Network



Timber Committee
Economic Commission for Europe

**14th Meeting of the
Forest Communicators Network
September 6 – 8, 2006, Valsain/Spain**

REPORT

The 14th meeting of the FAO-ECE Forest Communicators Network was hosted by the Ministry of the Environment of Spain, organized together with the National Environmental Education Centre Valsain. 35 people from 13 countries and 5 international institutions participated. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtner from Austria, Leader of the FCN.

MAIN OUTCOMES

Mr. Florian Kraxner reported about the work of the FCN Subgroup led by Ewald Rametsteiner dealing with consumer attitudes towards forests and forest products. The first part of this Subgroups work focussed on public perception concerning forests and was published together with the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe under the title 'The Europeans and their Forests' in 2003. Mr. Kraxner presented the preliminary outcomes of the second part of the study focussing on public perceptions concerning forest products. The Subgroup has collected and aggregated results of various opinion surveys carried out by different institutions in Europe, North America and Japan. The report is expected to be ready for publication by October/November 2006. Publication and dissemination will be done together with the Liaison Unit Warsaw of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

Mr. Gerben Janse from the European Forest Institute updated the FCN about his work regarding best practices in forest communications. Since the last meeting he has concentrated on the theoretical background and will now start to collect practical examples.

Mr. Alan Kocher from Switzerland presented the concept for an International Conference Linking Forest Communications and Policy, which a Working Group of the FCN had elaborated. According to the FCN mandate this conference is to be conducted for decision makers, policy experts and communications specialists by 2008 with the main objective to improve the forest and forest industries sectors effectiveness in communicating internally as well as cross-sectorally. The concept was welcomed by the participants and some recommendations for improvement were made. The revised concept will be sent out for a last round of written comments and will be ready in a few weeks time to be presented to potential hosts and sponsors.

The meeting formulated recommendations for the promotion of the up-coming 5th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe scheduled for fall 2007 in Warsaw/Poland, which are summarized in ANNEX I.

Mr. Jean Pierre Haber from the European Commission offered to elaborate a draft outline of a communication strategy for the forest industry, based on the findings of the public opinion survey the European Commission – DG Enterprise had conducted some time ago. This strategy will form an integral part of the guide on best practices in forest sector communication, under preparation by the FCN.

Slovenia showed interest to host the next FCN meeting in May/June 2007, which could provide the opportunity to create synergies with the Slovenian EU Presidency, date and location to be confirmed.

ISSUES DEALT WITH

Wednesday, 6 September

Opening of the Meeting and introduction of the meeting objectives

by the Ministry of Environment of Spain-CENEAM
and Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl, leader of the FCN

Tools, Tips and Techniques for Communicators

A one day **Train the Trainers Workshop** conducted by Mr. Bob Burt from Natural Resources Canada, Mr. Colin Morton and Mr. Charlton Clark from the UK Forestry Commission in co-operation with other FCN members. These workshops conducted by the FCN since 2002 aim towards helping participants to improve their knowledge and skills concerning forest related communications and to enable them to teach others in this field. The Workshop in Valsain put a special focus on Issue and Crisis Management.

Thursday, 7 September

Communication Opportunities, Challenges and Strategies

The meeting analysed and discussed communication opportunities, challenges and strategies on the following issues based on respective presentations:

➤ **Wood Supply, Bioenergy and Climate Change**

Mr. Florian Kraxner from Austria presented findings of studies carried out by the International Institute for Applied System Analyses. Among other issues he highlighted existing awareness gaps concerning the potential of bio-energy from wood, the increasing competition between

the bio-energy and the pulp and paper sector regarding the demand for wood as raw material, as well as recent developments in the climate protection policy regarding incentives to reduce deforestation.

➤ **The Forest Science/Policy interface**

Gerben Janse from the European Forest Institute presented results of his study on communication between forest scientists and forest policy makers in Europe.

➤ **Forest Certification**

Ms. Ana Belen Noriega from Spain presented communication activities of the PEFC process, particularly focusing on recent developments in Spain.

➤ **Forest Fires**

Mr. Ricardo Velez from Spain explained the socio-economic factors behind forest fires and their dynamics in the Mediterranean basin and presented the Spanish communication approach for changing the behaviour of key actors and for gaining acceptance and support for the necessary activities. Mr. Bob Burt explained the extensive forest fire prevention and combating program of Canada highlighting inter alia the science and technology developments and the Canadian Forest Fire Information System. Despite the differences between these countries some communalities could be identified: forest fires are an integral part of the ecosystem dynamics in many forest types and regions. There the possibility to prevent forest fires is limited. The challenge is to learn how to live with the problem of forest fires and how to deal with them in a controlled manner. Communication plays a key role in these efforts.
<http://www.wildfire07.es/>

➤ **Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe**

The meeting formulated specific recommendations for the up-coming 5th Ministerial Conference scheduled for fall 2007 in Warsaw/Poland, with a special focus on the relation between forests and water, based on a presentation by Marta Gaworska, Poland. A brief summary of the outcomes is annexed to the report.

➤ **International Conference on Forest Policy Communication**

The meeting finalised the concept for an international conference on forest policy communication, which a Working Group established by the FCN had elaborated prior to the meeting, and defined the next steps to be taken in preparing for this conference. According to the FCN mandate this conference is to be conducted for decision makers, policy experts and communications specialists by 2008. The main objective of this conference is to improve the forest and forest industries sectors effectiveness in communicating internally as well as cross-sectorally.

➤ **Success Stories**

The participants had the opportunity to share success stories and lessons learned regarding forest communication activities. Specific presentations were made on:

- Communication Package 'The Truth about the Forest Based Sector' (Birte Schmetjen, CEPF)
- Forest Based Sector Technology Platform (Birte Schmetjen, CEPF) <http://www.cepf-eu.org/> ; <http://www.forestplatform.org/>
- PR course for foresters (Alan Kocher, Switzerland)
- Forest communication and EU-Presidency (Kai Lintunen, Finland)
- Campaign against illegal dumping of waste in forests (Tomass Kotovics, Latvia)
- New ways of forest business reporting (Ingwald Gschwandtl, Austria)
- Forest Week (Eve Rebane and Anari Lilleoja, Estonia)

Friday, 8 September

Study Tour

Practical examples of forest management and forest related communication activities around Valsaín (Valsaín-Boca del Asno-Navacerrada, Alto de Cotos, Monastery of El Paular, Miraflores, El Pardo National Heritage Estate) were introduced to the participants and discussed.

PRESENTATIONS

are posted at:

<http://www.mcpfe.org/me/m06/fcn/>

further information about the FCN are available at:

<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/pr/pr.htm>

ANNEX I

Summary of the discussion on possible contributions of the FCN to promote the 5th MCPFE

by Marta Gaworska

MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw

With regard to the communication strategy it was suggested to use the experiences from the preparation of the Vienna Summit. The potential conference topics, such as forest and water, wood and energy should be translated into key messages, with “tangible” substance that will be understandable and somehow associated with relevant target groups. It is important to demonstrate how MCPFE activities have influenced forest policy and shaped forest conditions in Europe to the better. The impact of political decision for European forests should be illustrated in practical terms. This can be demonstrated by information about what has been achieved since 1st Ministerial Conference, how forest policy shapes the forests, how it changes its condition, cover and vitality, how secure public accessibility (also for recreation). Facts should be linked with forest characteristics that can be perceptual for public or other relevant target groups. Existing issues, being attractive for public opinion, such as climate change should be integrated and demonstrated in an adequate way.

The tips for developing the key messages were:

- avoid difficult political or scientific terms,
- avoid negative language,
- illustrate with examples,
- make it short and simple.

Accurate assessment of target groups was pointed out as significant part of the future course of action towards promotion of the 5th MCPFE. It was suggested to focus on the representatives from following groups:

- ministers responsible for forests,
- ministers of other relevant sectors, e.g. energy,
- other decision making actors (e.g. international organizations)
- forest owners associations,
- ecological NGOs,
- foresters as profession group,
- water supplies,
- general public.

The need to use the right communication tools and messages was stressed in order to reach each of the target groups. Furthermore, the following PR tools were pointed out as relevant:

- fact sheets,
- website,
- targeted leaflets,
- posters,
- press releases,

- press conferences,

In addition it was strongly recommended to organize a “special event” during the Conference. This kind of activity would provide a substance for media and increase the attractiveness as well as visual identity of the whole meeting.

Suggestions for forest and water communication messages included the following ideas:

- forest depends on water and water depends of forest,
- water as forest product,
- forest and water as common values,
- link to the economy in terms of tourism (high interest of public),

In conclusion it was stated that the FCN has a great potential to support the promotion of the 5th MCPFE at both, international and national level. Exchange of information on the conference topics would help to complete the relevant aspects for different target groups and broad forum of public opinions. The FCN can help in the development of key messages, target group leaflets and information materials. This and other specific activities could best be carried out through the internet platform, which allows an efficient way of communication and dissemination of the products. The establishment of a specific internet network could be considered e.g. by the MCPFE LUW. The FCN could provide sufficient structure for transferring the messages from international to national level. Possible cooperation of the FCN and MCPFE LUW should be based on two way communication and recognition for mutual requirements. Further contribution of the FCN to the elaboration of PR activities for the 5th MCPFE is proposed to be taken up at the next - 15th Meeting of the FCN, to be held in spring 2007.

ANNEX II

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