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Timber Committee

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
European Forestry Commission

JOINT FAO/ECE WORKING PARTY ON FOREST ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS

Twenty-fifth session

to be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva
24 – 26 February 2003, starting at 10.00 hrs on Monday, 24 February

Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda

Role and functioning of the Working Party

Note by the secretariat

1. At its session in 2000, during the first strategic review of the ECE/FAO integrated programme, the Working Party considered its role and methods of work. The relevant section of its report is reproduced in annex 1. A new strategic review will be started in 2003, to be concluded by the joint session of the parent bodies in autumn 2004. It appeared desirable that the Working Party consider, on the basis of experience in 2001, 2002 and 2003, whether it has achieved the goals it set itself in 2000. The results of the Working Party's discussion will be input to the second Strategic Review process, during which the Working Party will be consulted (according to modalities and a timetable which have not yet been decided).

2. Questions which delegates may wish to consider would include:
 - Has the Working Party succeeded in providing guidance to teams of specialists and communicating to the parent bodies the results of the teams' work?
 - Has the Working Party bureau been able to function in the way desired?
 - Has the move to annual sessions improved the effectiveness of the Working Party?
 - Have the sessions been organised in such a way as to achieve the Working Party's objectives, notably with regard to scope and format of documents, organisation of discussions and report?
 - Has representation at the Working Party been satisfactory, both as regards country coverage, and as regards position of delegates (ability to "combine competence in the area of forest economics and statistics and authority to represent the views of their governments".)
 - What improvements are desirable in the Working Party's methods of work?

3. *The Working Party is invited to review its role and functioning, in the light of its intentions in 2000 and its experience in subsequent years, according to the questions set out above, and make any recommendations for improvement it may consider necessary.*

Annex 1

Extract from the report of the 2000 session of the Working Party (TIM/EFC/WP.2/2001/8)

47. Consistent with its mandate, the Working Party suggested the following clarification of the role of the Working Party and changes in its methods of work. The purpose is to ensure that the contribution of the Working Party is in keeping with the expectations of the parent bodies and, in particular, the contribution of the Working Party to the ongoing review of the integrated programme of work.
48. Role of the Working Party. For the three programme areas assigned to it, the Working Party will have responsibility for detailed review of the elements of the integrated program of work of the joint secretariat. The work of the Working Party will continue to rely on the existence of Teams of Specialists. Therefore the Working Party must be more directly responsible for development of the mandate and terms of reference for Teams of Specialists, and Teams must be asked to report through the Working Party to the parent bodies in order to ensure effective oversight. The Working Party will be responsible for (1) providing guidance to the Teams of Specialists on the decisions of the parent bodies, and (2) communicating to the parent bodies the results of the work of the Teams of Specialists.
49. The bureau of the Working Party (chair and vice-chairs) will function in a manner comparable to the bureaux of the parent bodies: the Working Party can authorise its bureau to take decisions in the period between sessions, subject to review at the following session of the Working Party.
50. The bureau of the Working Party is expected to contribute actively to the work of the bureaux of the parent bodies, and should be represented by its chair at the annual bureaux meetings.
51. With regard to periodicity of Working Party sessions, the Working Party will begin meeting on an annual basis starting in 2002. Meetings will take place in March or April, to precede the meeting of the bureaux of the parent bodies. Meetings of the Working Party will remain 2 to 3 days in duration.
52. In summary, the Working Party's advice to the parent bodies is for (1) renewed commitment for participation in the Working Party, (2) recognition of the responsibility for oversight of Teams of Specialists that accompanies the role of the Working Party, and (3) annual meetings of the Working Party that are designed to integrate more effectively with other activities of the parent bodies.

53. In themselves, these clarifications in roles and changes in methods of work will not be sufficient to ensure that the Working Party remains an effective, intergovernmental, body. There must be a renewed commitment on the part of member governments to contribute to this aspect of the integrated program of work through participation in the sessions of the Working Party. Continued low levels of participation result in ineffective functioning of the Working Party and ultimately transfer its responsibilities in implementing the integrated programme of work (notably, detailed review of elements of the integrated programme of work) to the parent bodies.
54. In addition to wide representation of member governments, participation in the Working Party must continue to include individuals who combine competence in the area of forest economics and statistics and authority to represent the views of their governments.