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Timber Committee

European Forestry Commission

Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party
on Forest Economics and Statistics

Thirtieth session
Geneva, 2-3 April 2008
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

“STATE OF EUROPE’S FORESTS”: LESSONS LEARNED

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

This document briefly presents some of the main issues which arose during the preparation of the report on the State of Europe’s Forests 2007, as background for the Working Party’s discussions. The Working Party is invited to review the process of preparing this report and identify lessons to be learnt for the future.

1. This document is produced in accordance with the programme of work as approved by the Timber Committee in ECE/TIM/2007/9 and “the needs at the international level for statistics and other information relating to the forestry” as stated in the terms of reference of the Working Party as approved by the Timber Committee in ECE/TIM/2006/8.

I. Introduction

2. The report on *The State of Europe's Forests 2007*, (SOEF 2007) prepared under the auspices of UNECE, FAO and the MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw was presented to the Warsaw ministerial conference in November 2007. It was the result of four years preparation, guided by the Working Party, had high policy relevant ambitions and consumed significant resources in the secretariats, the expert community and at national level. Similar reports, but less ambitious, were prepared for the ministerial conferences in Lisbon, and Vienna, and will be prepared, in all probability, for the Oslo Conference in 4-6 years. These reports are complex, bringing together scientific, administrative and statistical information, in a policy framework (the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management) for a very visible high level event. As the Working Party, which is on the interface between science and policy, was responsible for guiding the preparation of SOEF 2007 and will perform the same role for the Oslo report, it seems necessary to review the whole process, identifying lessons to be learned, so that the next report, and other similar work, will fully benefit from the experience gained with SOEF 2007

3. The report was widely distributed, and may be downloaded from the MCPFE website. It contains full information on the process of preparation (see especially the introduction and annexes 1,6,7, and 8) which is not repeated here. This paper identifies a few major issues which Working Party delegations may wish to address, but is not exhaustive.

4. Working Party delegations are invited to consult in their country before the session to ensure that all aspects are taken into consideration. Those whose opinion might be sought would include national correspondents, experts in specific fields included in the report (e.g. employment, biodiversity, forest health etc.), national delegates to MCPFE, ECE and FAO, policy makers, private sector, civil society as well as other intended user groups, forest sector researchers and representatives of other sectors who might use the information (e.g. climate change experts).

Organisation of the discussion

5. The item will be introduced briefly by one or two of the experts responsible for the study (lead editors, members of the secretariats). Then all delegations will be invited to give their views on the questions under review. Remarks made will be taken into account in future work and will be transmitted to the next session of the team of specialists in May 2008 in Vienna. If necessary, suggestions could also be brought to the attention of the Strategic review.

Questions for delegations

6. Delegations are welcome to comment on any aspect of the SOEF2007, but they may wish to consider the following major aspects.

(a) Information collection and validation

- (i) Design of the enquiries, terms and definitions
- (ii) Timing of the enquiry and contact with national correspondents, data validation process
- (iii) Enquiry on qualitative indicators (mostly new)
- (iv) Coordination between national correspondents and international data providers
- (v) Adequacy of data coverage: missing countries and/or parameters, treatment of fragmentation and forest types (both mentioned in list of indicators but with weak coverage in SOEF 2007).

(b) Preparation of the report

- (i) Organisation and timing of report preparation (lead editors, coordinating lead authors by criterion, timing – lead authors started work when the data set was complete - , use of regions, country data in annexes)
- (ii) Structure and length of report (systematic equal treatment of all indicators, with overview of progress towards sustainable forest management etc.)
- (iii) Link between analysis and data (should other data sources have been used such as research reports?)
- (iv) Partnerships between main actors: MCPFE Liaison Unit, ECE/FAO, FRA, International data providers, editors and authors
- (v) Layout, graphs, etc.
- (vi) Adequacy of resources (finances, time and personnel)
- (vii) Dissemination of the report
- (viii) Distribution, including timing, press release etc.
- (ix) How is the report being used (MCPFE, other international organisations, national uses)?

7. With regard to the use of the report, the secretariat is expected to monitor the use being made of major reports such as SOEF 2007, notably by collecting lists of citations. ***Delegations are invited to provide the secretariat with information on how SOEF 2007 is used in their country:*** citations in academic journals, official reports or public debate, translations etc. If they wish, they may send or bring copies of articles to the secretariat.

8. ***Delegations are invited to review the whole process of preparing State of Europe's Forests 2007, focusing if they so wish on the aspects mentioned above, and draw conclusions as regards lessons learned for the use of future studies.***
