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Towards the 2013 Strategic Review of integrated Programme of Work on Forestry and Timber

Note prepared by the bureaux of the Timber Committee and European Forestry Commission, in cooperation with the secretariat

Summary

This document provides proposals and an overview of the approach, methodology and timeline that could be employed in the Strategic Review of the joint ECE/FAO integrated sub-programme on Timber and Forestry, which has to be undertaken every four years. The outcome of the strategic review process will determine priorities up to 2017.

The Committee and the Commission are invited to discuss and review the plans, provide additional ideas or suggestions, and authorize the secretariat to implement them, so that results can be presented for endorsement at a Joint Timber Committee-European Forestry Commission session in October 2013.

I. The strategic review process and the 2011-12 Strategic Review and Plan

1. The strategic review is an assessment of the “Timber and Forestry subprogramme” and its programme of work, covering all aspects: broad direction and objectives, mandates of the UNECE Timber Committee (TC) and the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC) and their subsidiary bodies, structure and content of the programme, resources, methods, partnerships, outputs, etc. As the Strategic Review is not a formal decision-making process, any changes will be subject to the rules of UNECE and FAO.
2. A first strategic review of the UNECE/FAO integrated programme of work on Timber and Forestry was undertaken in 2000 and a second in 2004, covering the period to 2008. A third thorough strategic review took place in 2008, and a strategic work plan covering the period 2008-2013 was subsequently approved. While extending the programme to 2013 meant the extension of its cycle to five years instead of four, this was done for it to coincide with the United Nations (UN) and FAO biennial programming structure. To maintain the cycles aligned, it is suggested that a fourth review be undertaken in the period 2012-2013 and that the resulting revised programme of work be adopted by the Committee and the Commission by the end of 2013. The four-year period covered by the revised programme of work should then be 2014-2017¹.
3. The draft programme of work would be drawn up in 2012 in order to give member States enough time to discuss it in 2013. Should the Committee and the Commission agree to undertake the review according to the suggested timing above, the revised Programme of Work 2014-17 should be endorsed in a joint ordinary or extraordinary (depending on the EFC schedule) Committee and Commission session in 2013.
4. The Committee and the Commission are invited to endorse the proposed timing for the fourth Strategic Review, to be completed by 2013.

II. Methodology

5. The main objective of the review process is:
 - (a) the evaluation of the achievements of the UNECE/FAO programme of work 2008-13, taking into consideration also past experience;
 - (b) the development and agreement of a programme of work for 2014-2017. The programme of work would then be the basis for the biannual programmes 2014-15 and 2016-17 of the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber section and the work of the Committee and the Commission for the same years.
6. In the previous cycle the programme of work 2008-13 was also called the “Strategic Plan”. This, however, created confusion, as the terms “programme of work” and “strategic plan” were often used interchangeably. For this new cycle it is proposed that the term 2014-17 ECE/FAO Programme of Work on Timber and Forestry be used (hereafter 14-17 PoW), with the understanding that implementation of the 2014-2017 PoW and additional relevant activities could be discussed at the meetings of the Committee and Commission, as is the current practice.

¹ The strategic plan would then cover the United Nations Programme Planning biennia 2014/15, 2016/17.

7. Based on a thorough assessment of advantages and shortfalls of the previous review, it is proposed that the following principles be taken into account:

- The review should be as broad as possible covering all aspects: general direction and objectives, mandates of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission and their subsidiary bodies, structure and content of the programme, resources, methods, partnerships, outputs, etc.
- The review should be as inclusive as possible, through an all-encompassing process to address Governments, the private sector and civil society at large, research and academic institutions, as well as other partners participating in the work of UNECE and FAO in the region.
- A survey with open questions should be used, allowing respondents not only to provide feedback on performance and output, but also to elaborate on specific topics and provide comments and suggestions for future actions and input to the new programme.
- The review process should be open and transparent, ensuring that any input and feedback is made public and posted on the Section's website.
- The review should be forward looking. As much as the review needs to assess and learn from the past, it should be oriented towards identifying and addressing new challenges and reviewing and structuring the programme in a comprehensive manner.
- The review should make use of different means to gather the opinion and input of different stakeholders.

8. In particular, the following would be used:

A. Survey

9. The review should make use of a survey, to be made available in English and Russian, to be shared with all the relevant stakeholders. The survey should have open-ended questions, allowing respondents not only to rate processes and products but also to provide ideas and comments on future actions.

10. On the basis of previous experience, it is suggested that only one comprehensive questionnaire be produced and shared with all the relevant stakeholders. The survey might be seen as a cumbersome exercise, but it would give all those interested an opportunity to participate actively in the review process.²

11. The Secretariat could then compile the results of the questionnaire and use this as a basis for discussion in review meetings. The proposed open questions for the survey are available in the annex.

² During the past review, two surveys were issued. One questionnaire was directed to users and focused on the programme of work outputs, while the other was specifically designed for heads of delegation to provide a comprehensive assessment of the process and proposals for the new strategic plan. These surveys consisted of closed questions, giving the respondent the possibility to only rate items from a scale of one to five. This did not allow for specific comments or suggestions to be provided. Moreover, having two different questionnaires created confusion and overlaps.

B. Evaluation of the work of Teams of Specialists

12. In the past, Team of Specialists (ToS) leaders were asked to undertake a self-evaluation of the Teams' work. This time it is proposed that this evaluation be undertaken collectively by the respective ToS, through internal consultations, and the results presented to and discussed at the ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics at its next session, in 2012.

13. The results of these exchanges should also feed into the review process.

C. Secretariat assessment of work and outputs

14. The ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section benefits from the direct experience of managing and implementing the programme of work, and is often aware of challenges encountered in its execution. It is, therefore, proposed that the results of a secretariat internal review of the 2008-2013 programme of work as well as ideas for its future development of the 2014-2017 programme of work be compiled and made available for the review. This is not intended to be a self-evaluation, but more an assessment of challenges faced by the secretariat in implementing of the programme of work, an evaluation of the structure of the programme of work and suggestions for possible improvements.

D. Informal meetings with stakeholders, including bilaterals

15. Important information and exchanges on the expectations, needs and suggestions from member States as well as other relevant stakeholders are often gathered in informal meetings. It is suggested that, whenever feasible, the secretariat should also conduct interviews with member States and other partners to discuss the above. The interviews could be based on the annexed questionnaire, but also touch upon specific issues relevant to the country or partner.

16. This might, for instance, include exchanges with countries that are currently not very engaged in the work of the Committee and the Commission. It could also include specific interviews and exchanges with major partners including FAO, EFI and Forest Europe to discuss mutual expectations, as well as opportunities for further synergies and organization of work.

E. Meetings with the Timber Committee and European Forestry Commission members to discuss the strategic review and new programme of work

17. It is important that opportunities are found to discuss collectively the strategic review and the draft programme of work. One or two of these opportunities could be offered by the meeting(s) of the joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics (to take place in spring 2012 and 2013), which could dedicate one day to the review. Another opportunity could be a one-day special session or workshop held back-to-back with the Committee meeting, which would be open to Commission members. The final programme of work should be adopted by a joint session of the Committee and the Commission in late 2013.

18. The Committee and the Commission are invited to discuss the proposed activities, provide additional ideas and agree on a final methodology for the strategic review. Further

guidance will also be provided by Committee and the Commission members during dedicated meetings in the course of 2012.

III. Timeline

19. The following schedule is proposed for the review process:

Phase I: Evaluation

(a) October 2011, joint session of the Timber Committee and European Forestry Commission:

The document on the review methodology and timeline is approved and the process starts.

(b) From January 2012 to April 2012

The questionnaire is shared with relevant stakeholders and returned to the secretariat by end of April.

(c) March 2012, Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics

The teams of specialists will present and discuss with the Working Party the results of their internal evaluation. (An additional one day meeting could be organized in the margins of WPFES to discuss the review).

(d) May 2012

The secretariat prepares its assessment of work and outputs.

(e) July 2012

The following documents are made available:

- (i) Compilation of results of the survey (narrative);
- (ii) Secretariat's assessment (which would also include results of bilaterals, to the extent possible);
- (iii) First draft of the 2014-2017 programme of work to include scope, objectives, main elements and structure.

Phase II: Preparation of the programme of work 2014 - 2017

(f) October 2012

A one-day meeting to be open also to Commission delegates is organized in the margins of the Committee meeting to discuss the inputs above, and further develop the programme of work. The meeting will consider the results of the evaluation and initial views on scope, objectives, elements and structure of the programme of work 2014 – 2017. It will also further develop guidance for the preparation of the programme of work.

(g) March 2013, WPFES

The Working Party discusses a revised Programme of Work, on the basis of comments and inputs from the October 2012 meeting.

(h) July 2013

On the basis of discussions at the WPFES, the Secretariat prepares the final draft of the 2014-2017 programme of work.

(i) October 2013

A joint session of the Committee and the Commission finalizes and adopts the new 2014-2017 programme of work.

(j) January 2014

Implementation of the new programme of work begins.

20. The Committee and the Commission are invited to discuss the timeline above, provide additional suggestions and agree on a final timeline to be followed for the review.

Annex

Questionnaire

Questionnaire to be shared with all Timber Committee (TC) and European Forestry Commission (EFC) stakeholders³.

Background information on respondent

A. Programming

Programme of work 2008-2013

1. How familiar are you with the joint TC and EFC programme of work and with the work of the TC and EFC? In which way have you been involved with the work?
2. What do you assess as being the main results of the programme of work 2008-2013?
3. General assessment of some outputs (to be listed) based on a rating of 1 to 5.
4. What has been the most important output for you or your organization?
5. To what extent did the programme achieve its stated objectives?
6. What do you think were the shortfalls of the 2008-2013 programme of work?

Programme of work 2014

7. What should be the objectives of the new programme of work 2014-2016?
8. How could the programme of work better service the need of members States in the region?
9. What additional areas should the programme of work address, if any?
10. Could you rate themes and work areas according to your country's priority?
11. Is the scope and structure of the programme, and its organization in five work areas still appropriate? How could it be modified?

B. Bodies

Timber Committee

12. Is the scope, structure and functioning of the Timber Committee adequate to respond to its objectives? If not, what do you think are the main shortfalls of this body and how would you like to see it improved?

3 The questionnaire will clarify that not all questions could be answered by all stakeholders, as this depends on their involvement with the work of TC and EFC.

European Forestry Commission

13. Is the scope, structure and functioning of the EFC adequate to respond to its objectives? If not, what do you think are the main shortfalls of this body and how would you like to see it improved?

Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics

14. Is the scope, structure and functioning of the WPFES adequate to respond to its objectives? What do you think are the main shortfalls of this body and how would you like to see it improved?
15. What is your overall view of the objectives and for future work of this joint ECE/FAO programme and its intergovernmental bodies.?

Teams of Specialists

16. Are you familiar with the work of the teams of specialists? If yes, from which ToS?
17. How do you rate the work of the teams of Specialists? How do you think they contribute to the programme of work? What type of improvements would you like to see in the work of the ToS?
18. Any specific suggestions to the work of individual ToS?

C. Outputs

Seminars and policy forums

19. Are the seminars organized by the ECE-FAO Forestry and Timber Section useful to your country or organization? Do you think they tackle major policy issues in the region?
20. What other topics would you like to see discussed in seminar and policy forums?
21. Any other suggestions or specific comments on this activity?
22. What workshop-seminar in particular organized in the last five years do you regard as particularly useful and contributed to enhancing your knowledge on the topic? (Respondents will check off relevant events from a list)

Publications

23. How effective do you think are our communication activities (website, press releases, etc)? How could they be improved?
24. What major publication of the ECE-FAO Forestry and Timber Section are you aware of? Which ones did you use? (A list will be provided)
25. How do they contribute and assist your country/organization in bridging the knowledge gap on the issue and increase your capacity in the fields they address? Could you provide specific examples (e.g. “the forecasts of the Outlook Study were used in the planning of our biomass energy policy” etc.)
26. What do you think of the quality of the 2011 ECE-FAO-FE State of Europe’s Forests report and what do you think should be improved? (Rating of quality from 1 to 5)

27. What do you think of the quality of the 2011 ECE-FAO Outlook study on the forest sector in Europe and what do you think should be improved? (Rating of quality from 1 to 5)
28. What is your assessment of the Forest Products Annual market review and what do you think should be improved?
29. What do you think of the ECE-FAO technical series?

Capacity building activities

30. Capacity-building activities are currently limited by financial constraints. Do you think that ECE-FAO should reinforce these activities?
31. What should be the focus of capacity-building work? What subject areas should be covered? In which regions should capacity building be organized?

D. Countries and Organizations

Your country's participation and contribution

32. How do you assess your country/organization's participation in the work of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission and your country's contribution to the programme of work?
33. If participation is assessed as scarce, what are the main reasons that prevent your country/organization from increasing its presence in meetings and its contribution to activities (e.g. lack of funds, lack of information on issues at stake, topics discussed not political enough, lack of interest in subject matters)?

E. Secretariat

Role of the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section

34. What role do you see for the Section in the European forestry scene?
 35. What roles should be reinforced, if any?
 36. What role do you think the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section should play to contribute to increasing synergies among the many forest institutions operating within the ECE region?
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