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2013 Strategic Review of the ECE/FAO joint programme of work

Inputs of the joint bureaux to the 2013 Strategic Review and the 2014-2017 joint programme of work

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document contains a summary of the joint-bureaux discussions, which can be useful for the Timber Committee session when addressing the 2013 Strategic Review and the 2014-2017 programme of work.

A retreat with members of the joint bureaux was held back-to-back with the Working Party on Forest Economics, Statistics and Management on 29 March 2012 in Geneva to review the current joint ECE/FAO programme of work and share views and ideas for the 2014-2017 cycle. This was followed by a second joint meeting of the bureaux on 6 and 7 June 2012, in Geneva, Switzerland.

The joint bureaux reviewed the current programme of work and also discussed its structure and relevance in the light of evolving needs in the forest sector, and the socio-economic and environmental context. They also evaluated the role of the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, as well as its role in implementing their respective mandates.

At their second meeting, they reviewed the results of the general survey and those of the secretariat's retreat, drafted the main elements of the 2014-2017 joint programme of work and assessed the functioning of the Forestry and Timber Section.

I. Scope and structure of the programme of work

1. In this document, the term “bureaux” refers to the joint bureaux of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission (see ECE/TIM/2008/7 – FO:EFC/08/7).
2. When evaluating the scope and structure of the joint 2008-2013 programme of work, members of the joint bureaux highlighted issues that should be addressed when programming for the period 2014-2017. They found the objective of the current joint programme of work unclear, and the structure complex and confusing.
3. The joint bureaux suggested that the next programme should be less static and more focused. It should address current issues and changing needs; and because the sector has evolved, the scope of the programme should be expanded. Emerging issues such as climate change, genetically modified organism (GMO) trees and the green economy should be addressed. The bureaux also suggested improving the regional balance, as current activities were too “Eurocentric”.
4. Some work areas were found to be repetitive and overlapping. Even though this was inevitable, additional efforts should be made to re-define some of them, while ensuring that overall they equally and fairly address the three pillars of sustainable development.
5. The joint bureaux suggested redefining the work areas in terms of function rather than topic, and having the following functions: data monitoring and assessment; forest-policy dialogue and advice; communication and outreach; and capacity-building. The next programme should better reflect the scope of the work, which in addition to timber covered forest goods and services.
6. The bureaux insisted on the need to enhance communications in general; communicating the right message, and reaching out to audiences beyond the forest sector. They said that the new programme of work should be made more attractive to other sectors, especially the private sector. It should focus more on results, include fewer formalities and have a more businesslike or corporate look (e.g. improved names of work areas, tailored language to reach wider circles).
7. The bureaux appreciated the overall content of the joint programme of work, as the work areas focused not only on wood but also on other forest policies and cross-sectoral issues. They also welcomed the successful cooperation and collaboration efforts with various intergovernmental bodies and other networks. Since this should continue, the programme should also include measures/actions for increasing cross-sectoral, cross-regional networking.
8. They said that the current programme of work reflected good technical knowledge and expertise, and the next one should therefore continue building on that. Having a joint ECE/FAO programme of work was already a success in itself. They said that regular budget and extrabudgetary funds should be allocated at the time of priority setting. They also recommended looking at long-term extrabudgetary funding.
9. The following is a list of their recommendations to improve the scope, structure and funding of the joint programme of work:

Scope

- Include measures/actions for increasing cross-sectoral, cross-regional networking and private sector participation.
- Develop a strategy, including objectives, complemented by an Action Plan.
- Address the three pillars of sustainable forest management equally and fairly.
- Focus on forest goods and services (not just timber) and their sustainable production and consumption.

- Scope should reflect the possibility of picking up emerging issues, such as those related to climate change and the bio-based economy.

Structure

- Consider redefining the work areas in terms of function rather than topic and have the following functions: data monitoring and assessment; forest-policy dialogue and advice; communication and outreach; and capacity-building.
- Consider renaming work areas to communicate better the content of the work outside the sector.
- Change the name of the “Forestry and Timber” subprogramme to reflect all aspects of forestry, including products, goods and services.
- Provide room for emerging issues (climate change, biodiversity, GMO trees, green economy, market instruments).
- Structure, like scope, should reflect the possibility of picking up emerging issues, such as those related to climate change and the bio-based economy.

Funding

- Find long-term extrabudgetary funding
- Allocate regular and extrabudgetary funds when priorities are being set.
- Ensure relevant objectives and areas of work to increase chances to obtain extra-budgetary funds.

II. Scope, structure and functioning of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission

10. In general, members of the bureaux viewed the Timber Committee in a positive light. They were pleased with its structure and functioning. They mentioned a few challenges, such as a lack of commitment and ownership on the part of some member States. It was also felt that activities should be better linked to the objective of the Committee and that there was a need to better define priorities.

11. The bureaux, however, were pleased with the servicing of the body, and with the fact that long-term staff appointments generally worked on specific topics. They regarded the Committee as an excellent knowledge platform that had the potential to address the entire value chain (products, services, consumption). It gathered numerous experts on forest-related topics and was recognized as a “centre of excellence” for the forest sector.

12. The bureaux were satisfied with the yearly meeting schedule and the five-year review process. The numerous parallel public events organized on forest-related topics was highly appreciated as these opened up the work to other sectors and stakeholders. The bureaux recommended continuing to choose topics that were not only attractive and relevant to Governments but also targeted people from outside the sector.

13. The bureaux suggested renaming the Timber Committee the “Forest Products and Services Committee” to better reflect its areas of work.

14. The bureaux suggested that the structure and functioning of the European Forestry Commission needed some improving: its structure was highly technical, it was too focused on “housekeeping” matters, and its reporting lines were unclear. In addition, the bureaux saw its limited commitment to implementing activities as a missed opportunity. Its geographical coverage did not correspond to that of the Committee. Although South East Europe was part of the Commission, it was not actively engaged. Eastern Europe and the

Caucasus were also underrepresented. Financing their participation was therefore crucial. In terms of visibility, it was found that the Commission's role and activities were often lost in the reporting for the joint programme of work. The Commission should therefore work at strengthening its role and renewing its commitment.

15. The bureaux noted that the Commission had great potential in terms of opportunities for regional/global linkage. Its geographical scope provided excellent opportunities to tackle transboundary problems (e.g. water, biodiversity, wood mobilization and supply).

16. In terms of the structure, scope and functioning of the Committee and the Commission, there was clear consensus in the joint bureaux that regardless of which body was doing what, the outside world was only interested in what was being delivered and how. The two bodies needed to be integrated and further deliver their outputs together.

17. The bureaux suggested that it might be beneficial to invest in marketing activities to improve public understanding of the role, structure and image of the two bodies and the Working Party. Some sort of corporate identity and look should be developed, which might help the public better identify with their work.

18. The following is a list of recommendations to improve the scope, structure and functioning of the two bodies:

Timber Committee

- Address topics attractive to society.
- The work areas should reflect the three pillars of sustainable forest management, as well as forest goods and services.
- Ensure the long-term assignment of experts to the Timber Committee secretariat.
- Review the joint programme of work to make it more "strategic", integrated and dynamic, and clearly link actions with objectives.
- Make its work even more relevant to Governments and stakeholders.
- Change its name to "Forest Products and Services Committee".

European Forestry Commission

- Increase its policy profile by providing more policy advice and by producing more publications on forest-policy priorities.
- Strengthen cooperation with the North American Forestry Commission.
- Fundraise to support participation of low and middle-income countries.
- Clarify its profile vis-à-vis the Committee and Forest Europe.
- Develop more publications on forest-policy priorities.
- Do a mapping exercise to show its added value; clarify its deliverables and its relation to other bodies.
- Act as a key channel to take joint ECE/FAO work to a global level through FAO.

Timber Committee and European Forestry Commission (joint work)

- Bureaux should focus on strategic issues
- Bring the Committee and the Commission as close together as possible, while fully respecting their organizational structures, different geographical coverage and joint programme of work, joint bureaux and secretariat.

III. Scope, structure and functioning of the working parties and teams of specialists

19. The joint bureaux evaluated the teams of specialists positively, as these teams mobilized competence and resources. They reiterated that the teams being voluntary networks, it was important to maintain certain flexibility in the way they worked. Some teams were considerably more active than others. However, all teams mobilized a great deal of expertise. The bureaux did not decide on continuing or discontinuing the activities of any team, as this exercise was being done through the strategic review exercise.
20. They recommended reviewing the mandate of some teams to better reflect current needs and more up-to-date thematic issues. They even suggested that new teams should be created to take on topical issues and support the current/future needs of the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and the joint programme of work, e.g. “wood energy” “statistics” and “wildlife and biodiversity”¹.
21. The bureaux recommended that efforts should be also made to reduce overlapping activities of some teams and apply a more cohesive approach among the teams. They also recommended that the secretariat should provide more support to the work of the teams.
22. Suggestions were made regarding providing a more solid structure to guide the teams. This could include terms of reference for team leaders to help them understand the functioning of the teams and their work as leaders while also making them aware of the reporting lines of the teams. It might be useful if teams were given a set of guidelines on the role of the secretariat in relation to their teams. The bureaux also believed it was important to establish work procedures between teams and the secretariat.

Working Party on Statistics, Economics and Management

23. Bureaux members regarded the new mandate as an improvement in meeting country needs. It offered a good overview of the scope/structure and functioning of the teams of specialists and the Working Party itself. The Working Party also provided a good forum for developing policies. The bureaux said that it was too early to evaluate the new structure but agreed that it would support the secretariat in making it operational and successful. The assessment of its effectiveness would be made at a later stage.
24. If the current structure and functions of the Working Party was maintained, the bureaux supported the creation of a Team of Specialists on Statistics to offer a forum for discussing statistical issues.
25. The bureaux suggested exploring the possibility of creating a sub-group of the FAO Advisory Committee on Paper and Wood Products for the ECE region to strengthen the dialogue and collaboration with the private sector.

¹ As teams of specialists should be supporting the work areas under the joint programme of work, the bureaux suggested discontinuing the Team of Specialists on Forest Fires, as it was not linked to any programme areas so far proposed for the next programme of work. Moreover, issues relating to forest fires were also addressed at the global level and through regional networks.

Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds

26. In their evaluation of the Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watershed, the bureaux found its focus, scope and functioning unclear. Bureaux members noted that it worked in isolation. As a consequence, the results of its work were neither reported back nor disseminated.
27. The following is a list of recommendations to improve the scope, structure and functioning of the working parties and teams of specialists to help them better respond to their objectives:
 - Establish an Advisory Committee on forest industry.
 - Revise the terms of reference of the working parties and teams of specialists to become more up to date, integrated, time-bound and strategic.
 - Link the establishment of teams of specialists to the new programme of work.
 - Consider renaming some of the current teams of specialists (e.g. ECE/FAO/ILO team).
 - Consider whether to add a Team of Specialists on “wood energy”, “statistics” and on “wildlife and biodiversity”.
 - Think about ways to emphasize the management of forests as it relates to the work of the Working Party on Statistics, Economics and Management.
 - Consider different approaches for addressing different topics, e.g. teams of specialists, projects, roundtables.
 - Review the format of Working Party sessions to foster synergies among teams of specialists and address the needs of experts.
 - Map activities of the working parties and the teams of specialists to fit them into a coherent programme framework.
 - Increase the secretariat’s support to the work of the teams of specialists.
 - Make the review of the teams of specialists an integral part of their work (i.e. self-assessment).
 - Draw up terms of reference for leaders of teams of specialists.
 - Establish procedures for the teams of specialists to work with the secretariat and for the secretariat to work with the bureaux.

IV. Preliminary results of the general survey and suggestions and elements for the 2014-2017 joint programme of work emerging from the Survey

19. The bureaux noted the poor response rate from the private sector (see ECE/TIM/2012/7). The length and complexity of the questionnaire appeared to be detrimental to attracting a greater number of respondents, including from the private sector. For future reference, the bureaux recommended that the language and format used in such surveys be tailored to reach wider audiences.
20. They also suggested, for future evaluations, to have more focused target groups, with specific questionnaires for these groups. They recommended adding a question asking whether respondents were contributors to the joint programme of work or users of the Section’s outputs.

21. For improving the content of the joint programme of work, respondents suggested that topics such as wood energy and the green economy should be strengthened and capacity-building reinforced, especially in Central Asia. Some also suggested that additional efforts be directed towards reinforcing communication and outreach.

V. Results of the secretariat's retreat, in particular as regards the 2014-2017 joint programme of work.

22. The bureaux welcomed the assessment by the secretariat (see ECE/TIM/2012/8) and acknowledged the many similarities with their own one. They stressed the need to develop a joint programme of work that is simple and matches resources available. They recommended defining more target-oriented working modalities to produce more tangible outputs.

23. The work of teams of specialists should be aligned with the programme of work. Teams that are not aligned with the next programme of work might be discontinued. The remaining teams would have their mandate updated or revised to meet current needs and to reflect up-to-date thematic issues. Each team should be given clear goals/products to achieve. The bureaux also recommended that the secretariat should offer better support to the work of the teams.

24. Suggestions were made to provide a more solid structure to guide teams of specialists, e.g. terms of reference for team leaders to help them understand the functioning of the team and their work as leaders, while also making them aware of the teams' reporting lines.

25. The bureaux drew attention to the lack of resources and the need for the next PoW to align the Sections' main outputs with regular budget availability. Also mentioned was the necessity to cooperate with other sectors in the long-term. Finally, the bureaux reiterated the need for the Commission to strengthen its profile and share its experiences with other regional forestry commissions.

26. This could be achieved by putting "coordination of regional inputs" on the agenda of the meeting of chairs of the regional commissions that would take place within the framework of the next FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) meeting. The Commission should be providing the main inputs to COFO, notably the work undertaken on the role of forests in a green economy. A meeting with the Chair of each Commission could be useful for coordinating inputs to COFO.

VI. Overall goal and objective of the new joint programme of work

27. The bureaux refined the overall goal and mission statement for the new joint programme of work. The new statement gives as the overall goal: "to sustainably manage and use ECE forests to provide products and ecosystem services in order to benefit society".

28. The objective of the programme of work was also refined and now reads: "to support member countries of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission to achieve the overall goal by providing the best available information, facilitating policy dialogues and communications, and building capacity".

VII. Recommendations on functioning and modalities of the joint programme of work

29. The bureaux proposed reinforcing cooperation and aligning the programme of work between the Commission and the North American Forestry Commission.

30. The bureaux suggested continuing joint TC/EFC meetings and increasing their frequency, and recommended keeping a joint programme of work, joint secretariat and joint bureaux, as well as a joint profile or trademark and joint publications. They also reiterated the idea of recommending to countries that they appoint the same Head of Delegation for both the Committee and the Commission. They suggested that the chairs of the working parties should participate in meetings of the bureaux.

31. Joint Committee/Commission sessions should be called “Forest” translated in the host-country language and followed by the year in which the event is taking place (e.g. Orman 2011, Metsä 2013).

32. The bureaux then made some recommendations on how to increase the visibility of the two bodies. They suggested including a high-level segment in the joint Committee/Commission meeting to attract Governments and the private sector. They also mentioned the need to identify “hot” political issues.

VIII. Recommendations on funding for the joint programme of work

19. The bureaux suggested that the secretariat should create a PowerPoint presentation based on the programme of work to present to high-level managers and politicians as one way of creating funding opportunities.

20. The secretariat proposed pricing the programme of work. Funds are required for each activity. A funding proposal could then be submitted at the joint session in Metsä in 2013.

21. The bureaux proposed indicating needs for external funding but also identifying the areas where core funding should be allocated. The new programme of work should indicate which activities are funded through the regular budget and which need extrabudgetary funding. The bureaux, together with the secretariat, should ensure that adequate budget is allotted and seek further resources through partnership and co-funding opportunities (COFO, ECE).

22. They recommended being more proactive in drawing up funding proposals for Central Asia and the Caucasus. In terms of human resources, the secretariat was advised to maintain high competence in core activity areas. The secretariat could also benefit from expertise donated as resources in kind.

23. The bureaux suggested that Committee member countries work at a national level to seek funding opportunities. The private sector should be informed of the new joint programme of work and provide feedback. If an advisory committee is established, as a sub-group of the FAO Advisory Committee on Paper and Wood Products (ACPWP), the Chair of that sub-group could advise the bureaux on funding opportunities.

IX. Functioning of the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section

24. The bureaux recommended the alignment of resources with the areas of work of the new programme of work. They also recommended continuing to highlight examples of good cross-sectoral cooperation while increasing partnerships with other FAO regional

commissions. This means encouraging dialogue within ECE and the other FAO regional commissions and exploring the possibilities for partnerships on common work activities.

25. The bureaux suggested also renaming the Forestry and Timber Section to better reflect its current areas of work and to provide a more attractive image to its stakeholders and the general public.

X. Cooperation with other European organizations

26. The bureaux were presented with the result of a mapping exercise that had been done by the secretariat to show the different organizations and processes that focus on forest-related issues in the ECE region. The exercise was carried out to see if there were any potentially overlapping programmes and to improve cooperation between the ECE-FAO and other European programmes, in particular on substantive issues such as monitoring and assessment work, European Forest Types, and the green economy.

27. The bureaux welcomed the mapping initiative and suggested that work on this continue. They suggested organizing a roundtable and inviting different actors (Forest Europe, EFI, UNEP, etc.) to participate in a similar mapping exercise. The results from the roundtable would help the secretariat refine the picture and improve mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities of the various actors.

XI. Main recommendations for the 2014 -2017 joint programme of work

28. Based on the above contributions from the bureaux, the Committee might wish to consider the following recommendations in addressing this agenda item:

- (a) Redefine the work areas in terms of function rather than topic and have the following functions: data monitoring and assessment; forest-policy dialogue and advice; communication and outreach; and capacity-building.
- (b) Rename the Timber Committee and the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.
- (c) Strengthen the cooperation with the North American Forestry Commission.
- (d) Bring the Committee and the Commission as close together as possible and ensure that they deliver as one.
- (e) Recommend that countries appoint the same Head of Delegation for both the Committee and Commission.
- (f) Link the establishment of teams of specialists to the new programme of work (continue, update, terminate current teams of specialists and establish new ones: e.g. on wood energy, statistics, wildlife and biodiversity).
- (g) Establish an Advisory Committee on the forest industry/private sector.
- (h) Strengthen issues such as wood energy, the green economy, and capacity building.
- (i) Strengthen forest management aspects in the Working Party on Statistics, Economics and Management.