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Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry European Forestry Commission

**Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on
Forest Statistics, Economics and Management
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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda

GUIDANCE OF WORK AREA 2: POLICY DIALOGUE AND ADVICE

AGENDA ITEM 4 (b)

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

According to its mandate, the Working Party is expected to provide guidance to Work Area 2: Policy Dialogue and Advice. This document provides information about activities in this work area since the Working Party's last session and plans for the future, drawing the Working Party's attention to any specific issues where guidance is needed.

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I. Forest Policy

A. Implementation by the secretariat

1. The joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section (Joint Section), at the invitation of the Government of the Russian Federation, organized the seventy-second session of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) in Kazan, Russian Federation from 18 to 21 November 2014. More than 150 participants from the ECE region attended the session, with representation from 31 ECE Member States. The event was a unique opportunity for countries from the Commonwealth of Independent States and eight out of the nine Member States from the CIS attended the meeting.
2. The meeting focused on the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan (RAP) for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy. It showcased how actors within and outside the forest sector seized the opportunity to work together to make the best contribution to the emerging Green Economy. Their inputs were very diverse: from improving forest-based technologies to developing innovative wood and non-wood forest products; from making forest work safer to valuing and setting up payments for the multiple services that forests offer to the ECE region society.
3. Preparations are under way to organize the seventy - third session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the thirty - eighth session of the European Forestry Commission as a Joint Session from 2 to 6 November 2015. Switzerland generously offered to host the Joint Session as a European Forest Week, called “Silva2015”, in Engelberg, Switzerland.

Follow-up to the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy

4. The joint session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and the European Forestry Commission (EFC) held in Rovaniemi, Finland (Metsä2013), adopted the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy. The Joint Section prepared the publication of the Rovaniemi Action Plan based on the document adopted by Metsä2013 (see annex III of the meeting report ECE/TIM/2013/3–FO:EFC/2013/3). This publication was issued in the official languages of COFFI and EFC (English, French and Russian). Turkey has also informed the Joint Section that the Rovaniemi Action Plan was being translated into Turkish by the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs.
5. A meeting of the Team of Specialists on Forest Policy focussing on the Rovaniemi Action Plan took place in Krakow, Poland in September 2014 at the kind invitation of the Polish Government (see section C).
6. The meeting also provided inputs to the seventy-second session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry in November 2014. Ms. Marta Gaworska (Poland), leader of the ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Policy, informed delegates about the outcome of the Krakow meeting. She mentioned that the ToS meeting focussed on the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan at the national level. Participants of the ToS also reviewed the Rovaniemi Action Plan objectives, defining priority areas for work in forest policy and clarifying the assistance needed from the Joint Section to address them. Based on this input, the ToS on Forest Policy is developing its work plan, which will include exchange of information between members on relevant experiences as well as the development of tools for forest-related policy making.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

7. The Joint Section organized two related workshops on “*Forests and Sustainable Development Goals: a regional view*” in January and June 2014. Since then the Section continues to monitor the development of the political agenda on SDGs and engages in showcasing its work on monitoring and evaluation of all aspects related to the state of forests and sustainable forest management. The

work of the Joint Section in this area is of relevance for the implementation of the future forest related SDGs and targets (in particular target 15.2¹) as proposed by the UN's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

8. Between October and December 2014 the section collaborated with the International Institute for Environment and Development on a publication: *"Forests and SDGs. Progress in the UNECE region"*, where the results of the 2014 workshops were included. The publication is planned to be issued in early 2015.
9. In his synthesis report on the post-2015 agenda, *"The Road to Dignity by 2030"* in December 2014, the Secretary General of the United Nations suggested the Regional Commissions could play a role in the development of the monitoring and review mechanisms for the post-2015 agenda and recommended that *"under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission, a comprehensive programme of action on data be established"*.
10. In 2015 a series of intergovernmental consultation sessions on the post-2015 development agenda will be held to prepare for the UN Special Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015. The summit is expected to adopt the post-2015 development agenda including Sustainable Development Goals and targets, indicators and a framework for monitoring and review.
11. *"Member States may decide to task the United Nations System, in consultation with other relevant experts and through a multi-stakeholder dialogue, to develop a draft set of indicators"*². In response to the request by the Secretary General, the Joint Section contributed to various streams of work channelled through UN Headquarters in New York, i.e. the UNECE and FAO activities on data collection, evaluation and dissemination as well as forest criteria and indicators.
12. With regards to the proposed SDG target 15.2, the Joint Section presented through these official UN channels a new System for the Evaluation of the Management of Forests (SEMAFOR), developed to assess the sustainability of forest management at the national or subnational level in the ECE region. The system is based on the experience built during decades of joint work between the UNECE and FAO.
13. The Joint Section has been collecting statistical information related to forests and has contributed to regional and global forest resources assessments since 1948. The section has developed an extensive system of monitoring and evaluation of all aspects related to the state of forests, wood resources, forest functions and services, forest products and markets, and sustainable forest management. Currently the reporting covers all pillars of sustainable forest management (SFM) and includes most of the SFM indicators.
14. UNECE and FAO have been developing SEMAFOR with national and international experts in ECE Member States.
15. This experimental method is being applied on a pilot basis in 2014/2015. It aims to answer two questions:
 - What are the areas of concern with regard to sustainability (in a given country)?
 - How are the areas of concern (in a given country) being addressed now?
16. The system aims to identify strong and weak aspects of sustainable forest management in a given country and evaluates the progress made. The outcome of the evaluation is expected to provide valuable information for national decision makers, enabling them to develop corrective measures, if necessary.
17. The Joint Section also provided input to the official UN work on the indicators being developed for the SDGs. In February, the Joint Section provided a suggestion for an integrated indicator

¹ 15.2 by 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests, and increase afforestation and reforestation by x% globally

² *"The Road to Dignity by 2030"* page 38 para 139.

(SFM-FACE) related to target 15.2 through the Technical Support Team (TST)³ Partnership facilitated by the CBD and UNEP. The SFM-FACE indicator is an integrated indicator combining three component indicators that cover the three dimensions of the 15.2 target:

- Sustainable Forest Management – (component indicator SFM) area of forest under SFM
 - Deforestation, afforestation and reforestation – (component indicator FA) forest area
 - Degradation of forests – (component indicator CE) net carbon emissions from the above-ground forest biomass
18. The component indicators currently are applied in forest reporting as standalone indicators; however, in the context of target 15.2, none of them is sufficient to separately provide comprehensive information on achievement of the target. In its proposal, the Section also recognised that information on achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and their targets provided by indicators should be enhanced by a robust monitoring and review system on SDGs.
19. The Joint Section will continue to monitor the developments of the political agenda related to SDGs and contribute to the development of the indicators for the targets as well as the system of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of SDGs through the official UN system channels.

Publication of a study on policies and incentives to promote wood in construction

20. The Joint Section finalized the study on “*Promoting sustainable building materials and the implications on the use of wood in buildings*”. The study identifies and reviews six leading public building policies in the ECE region with a focus on i) information-based policy, ii) advancing environmental norms, iii) focus on the proportion of wood in buildings, iv) advancing technical specifications and structural norms, v) sustainable procurement and vi) policies that “*close the loop*” at end-of-life. The draft study was presented to the 75th session of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management, (Geneva, Switzerland, 8 - 9 October 2014) and a close to final version for comments and feedback was presented to the UNECE/FAO Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (Kazan, Russian Federation, 18 - 21 November 2014). An earlier version of the document has been shared with the Team of Specialists on Forest Policy for comments. The document is in press and an online version will be launched during the Working Party.

B. Meetings /Events (excluding capacity building)

National Forest Policy Dialogue

21. The aim of the National Forest Policy Dialogues is to share information and knowledge generated under COFFI and EFC with a large number of national experts (policy makers, forest managers, forest based industry representatives, researchers, etc.) and to draw on national experience for the international work by exchanging information about the state of forests, forest product markets, wood energy, forest sector outlook, etc. National Forest Policy Dialogues are co-organized with a host country in order to make the best use of experts' time and to adapt the material to the national situation.
22. Although National Forest Policy Dialogues are considered as an important tool of the policy development programme of the Joint Section, no NFPDs took place in 2014. One or two National Forest Policy Dialogues might be organised in 2015 in Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, but these are not yet confirmed.

³ An inter-agency technical support team (TST) has been established to support the Open Working Group, under the umbrella of the UN System Task Team. The TST is co-chaired by DESA and UNDP, and it consists of over 40 UN entities. The TST has been providing the SDGs process with technical support, including analytical inputs, background material and experts.

Twenty-second session of the FAO Committee on Forestry, 23-27 June 2014

23. The Joint Section participated in the Committee on Forestry (COFO) held 23-27 June 2014 in Rome. Among the side events attended were (i) the meeting of the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ) partners, (ii) the Forest Europe side-event on Green Economy and social issue and (iii) serviced a joint meeting of the COFFI Bureau and the EFC Executive Committee. The secretary of the ToS on Forest Policy met with the Team leader on the margins of COFO, to organize the Team meeting held in Krakow, 16-18 September 2014.

C. Team of Specialists on Forest Policy

24. The first meeting of the Team on Forest Policy under the new mandate for the period 2014-2017 was held in Krakow at the kind invitation of the Government of Poland on 16 - 18 September 2014. The meeting focused on establishment of the new ToS team, provided information on recent global and regional developments relevant to forest policy in the region, presented the Rovaniemi Action Plan, and discussed the different approaches to implementation of Rovaniemi Action Plan at national levels towards green economy. On the basis of case studies, the ToS reviewed objectives and expected impacts of the five key areas of the Rovaniemi Action Plan and provided guidance for the Joint Sections work on forest policies in regards to the ECE/FAO integrated programme of work.
25. The Team is conducting a priority setting exercise in order to develop the work plan and the agenda of the next meeting. It is expected to take place this year in Czech Republic but it is not yet confirmed. One of the issues for discussion will be support to the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan through regional dialogues (including exploring options for organizing National Forest Policy Dialogues), giving special attention to (i) collection of reliable data and conducting benchmarking studies; (ii) a stock-taking exercise and development of a study aiming to assess and provide information on potential impacts of the global and regional processes on forest policy-making in the region taking into account the ongoing international forest processes in 2015 (such as UNFF 11, WFC, SDGs etc.); (iii) detailed discussions on traditional forestry issues as well as emerging ones, and (iv) exploring tailored tools for communication within and outside the forest sector as well as material to support innovation and capacity-building in the countries.
26. The information on the status of this ToS after the recent nomination process can be found in the separate background document 4(b) 1 and will be uploaded to the UNECE/FAO website prior to the meeting

D. Key questions for guidance and discussion

27. The Working Party is invited to:
- a. Provide feedback on how has the Rovaniemi Action Plan been used or is being planned to be used, as a basis for policy-making at national or subnational level in your country?*
 - b. Provide guidance and advice to the Team of Specialists on Forest Policy on how to prioritize its proposed work related to the Rovaniemi Action Plan.*
 - c. Inform the secretariat on whether they envisage organizing a National Forest Policy Dialogue in 2015 or 2016 with the in-kind support of the UNECE/FAO secretariat?*

II. Forest Sector Outlook

A. Implementation by the secretariat

28. After the first meeting of the Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook in 2014, the Joint Section prepared, with the support of the ToS, a background document on “*Policy issues for the next round of outlook studies*” for the meeting of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (ECE/TIM/2014/INF.5). The document contains 16 policy issues which could have significant impact on the development of the forest sector in the future and was presented by the Joint Section during the plenary with a request for guidance. The Committee proposed that the ToS would consider the global policy issues outlined in the background document in the “*Contribution to the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests*” (ECE/TIM/2014/INF.3).
29. The Joint Section offered COFFI delegates the possibility to provide feedback, comments, suggestions and amendments on the above background document until 15 December 2014. Particularly notable were the comments from Sweden, with the general request that future outlook studies should be limited to modelling and analysis of the results of the scenarios and should refrain from policy guidance, since each country would find its own solutions to possible future challenges.

B. Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook

30. The secretary to the ToS on Forest Sector Outlook presented the guidance provided by the Committee and the policy issues to the second meeting of the Team that was held 22-23 January 2015 in Arona/Italy. The Joint Research Center of the European Commission - Ispra kindly organized the venue and local logistics. The Joint Section facilitated communication with and input from the ToS on Forest Policy, since the issues to be discussed were also of high relevance for this particular ToS.
31. The report of the meeting will be published in due course and the document with the policy issues will be shared again with the ToS on Forest Policy for feedback and guidance. Further information will be made available in the separate background document 5(b) 2 of this 37th Session of the Working Party and will be presented at the session. The next ToS meeting is planned to be held in September 2015.
32. The Joint Section also prepared at the request of the Team a draft outline of the work programme for the ToS. This foresees the following tentative steps for the next four years.
- 2015: Policy issues identified, modelling options discussed, draft budget(s) prepared.
- 2016: Fundraising / contributions in kind, decision on scope of Forest Sector Outlook Studies based on funding available.
- 2017: Modelling, first results available, consultation with member countries.
- 2018: Compilation of report, consultation with Member States, publication of report.

C. Key questions for guidance and discussion

33. The Working Party is invited to:
- a. *Inform on existing or future national forest outlook studies or forest resource forecasts of which the Team of Specialists and the secretariat should be made aware.*
 - b. *Provide guidance to the tentative workplan for the next Outlook study.*