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Economic Commission for Europe Food and Agriculture Organization
Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry European Forestry Commission

**Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on
Forest Statistics, Economics and Management
Thirty-seventh session**
Geneva, 18-20 March 2015
Item 5 of the provisional agenda

SELF - ASSESSMENT OF THE WORKING PARTY

AGENDA ITEM 5

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The document provides guidance on how the secretariat intends to organise the three hour session of the self-evaluation by of the Working Party. Members to the Working Party will be invited to contribute actively to the discussion, which will provide guidance on how to improve the achievement of the mandate of the WP, how to better prepare for the WP meeting and how to improve the communication between the Secretariat and member States.

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I. Background

A. Self - assessment of the Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management

1. The joint seventy - first session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and thirty - seventh session of the European Forestry Commission approved the current mandate of the Joint Working Party through the Terms of Reference (ECE/TIM/2013/2) (see ANNEX).
2. The Joint Working Party, during its thirty fifth session stressed the importance of conducting the self-assessment on a regular basis and requested that the secretariat organize the next self-evaluation during its 37th session.
3. The Secretariat will facilitate this self-assessment, via working groups, followed by a general discussion. The objective of the self-assessment is to take stock of the current situation and to discuss how to improve its effectiveness via the teams of specialists, relevant procedures, meeting structure and modalities of the Joint Working Party.
4. The outcome will be reported in the annex of the meeting report and will be transmitted to the next Joint COFFI/EFC session. The secretariat will report on the implementation during the thirty-eighth session of the Joint Working Party.

II. Questions for discussion

- a. How well is the WP accomplishing its mandated Terms of Reference?*

III. Procedures for the self evaluation

1. The delegates of the working Party will form four groups based on the first letter of their first name (given name):
 - a. A-E (e.g. Alexander through Eva) is group 1
 - b. G-L is group 2
 - c. M-N is group 3
 - d. P-Z is group 4
2. Each group will address the question for discussion using an “H” form. A member of the secretariat familiar with the procedures will be assigned to each group to facilitate this process. This exercise will take approximately one hour.
3. A member of each of the four groups will be appointed as rapporteur to report on the main findings and recommendations from their respective group.
4. After the “H” form is complete, there will be approximately 20 minutes for the participants of each group to visit with other groups and discuss their results and recommendations shown on their “H” forms.
5. Each of the four rapporteurs will have approximately 10 minutes to report the main findings and recommendations to the Working Party.
6. After each group has presented their results and recommendations, the working party can review and discuss the items raised.

ANNEX

A. Terms of Reference of the Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management (ECE/TIM/2013/2–FO:EFC/2013/2, Annex V)

1. The Working Party is a subsidiary body of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC) and contributes to the implementation of the integrated programme of work of those two bodies. It does so by coordinating the Teams of Specialists and the activities of the Integrated Programme of Work as well as providing technical advice. It takes instructions from the Committee and the Commission and meets annually to:
 - a. *Provide guidance on the implementation of all areas of the programme of work;*
 - b. *Supervise the work of Teams of Specialists and facilitate the exchange of information on their work;*
 - c. *Identify priorities for action and relevant emerging issues; and transmit suggested priorities and specific recommendations to the Committee and the Commission for consideration.*
2. The Working Party shall, for each work area, on the basis of a report from the secretariat, review and comment on the activities undertaken during the past year and the plans for the forthcoming year.
3. The Working Party shall review, on an ongoing basis, the work of the Teams of Specialists and their contribution to the work areas as well as work between the Teams of Specialists to ensure the most effective and efficient implementation of their activities. It will:
 - a. *Receive and discuss the reports from the Teams of Specialists in order to enhance the understanding of their activities and assess their work plans; when needed, the Working Party may review and recommend updated mandates for endorsement by the parent bodies;*
 - b. *Identify possible synergies; and facilitate the exchange of experiences between Teams of Specialists and delegations from member States;*
 - c. *Increase the visibility and impact of the work of Teams of Specialists among Member States and within the relevant bodies in the United Nations.*
4. The Working Party, as part of its work for the Committee and Commission, shall:
 - a. *Propose priorities for activities in the work areas and on relevant emerging issues;*
 - b. *Develop, upon request from the parent bodies, methodologies for use in economic analysis of the sector, as well as techniques for collecting, validating, analysing and disseminating information and statistics;*
 - c. *Undertake, upon request from the parent bodies, ad hoc projects in economics and statistics related to forestry, forest products and forest policies and institutions;*
 - d. *Contribute and provide technical advice to the Committee and the Commission on issues under consideration by those bodies, including the preparation of studies on the status and future of forests and on the forest industry such as the Outlooks and the Forest Products Annual Market Reviews;*
 - e. *Reach out to other sectors to discuss issues related to forest information and management matters of common interest, including best practices in sustainable forestry management and their impact on the overall sustainability of forests, natural resources management, and other issues such as biodiversity and climate change;*

f. *Work together with other international bodies, including Forest Europe, Eurostat, the International Tropical Timber Organization and the Conference of European Statisticians, with a view to coordinating activities and avoiding any duplication of effort.*

5. The work of this working party will be assessed after the next two sessions of this body.

B. Recommendations from the Working Party self-evaluation as approved in the 2013 meeting report (ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2013/2)

1. The Working Party recommends to COFFI/EFC to:

Mandate

(a) **Substantive focus**

Revise the mandate of the WP, and consider revising the working areas to be as follows:

- Forest economics and statistics including profitability and competitiveness in the construction sector
- Forest resources assessment
- Outlook studies
- The introduction of new methods for forest-related economic analysis
- Sound use of wood
- Work on environmental accounting

(b) **Role and function**

- Clarify the role and function of the WP, in particular to avoid duplication of work by the different bodies.
- Decide whether the WP has coordination, communication and outreach functions or it provides technical advice. This clarification would have to be extended also to the role of the WP vis-à-vis each ToS and the role of the ToS (for example, provide technical advice, develop methodologies, improve concepts and definitions).
- Conduct an in-depth review to streamline the WP mandate and ensure that only ToSs that contribute directly to the Program of Work, and for which the Secretariat has capacity to service, should be established.
- Create ToS with technical responsibilities on forests and forest industry statistics (This will allow more analysis to be done and to delete this issue from the WP mandate).

Organizational

(a) **Preparation of WP meetings**

- Ask member State delegates for better preparation, better coordination (between specialists and between the technical and

policy levels), and for better communication at the national level both before and after WP meetings.

Request the Secretariat to:

- Make meeting documents, preferably shorter, and available at least three to four weeks prior to the WP meeting in order to allow participants to consult with their colleagues.
- While preparing the Agenda provide the possibility for participants to include emerging issues or questions of interest for discussion.
- Highlight on the Agenda the main questions to be answered during the WP for a better preparation of the participants.
- Make a comprehensive list of abbreviations related to the WP work, with their full names and a brief description, and keep it updated.

(a) **Structure of WP meetings**

Request the Secretariat to:

- Encourage and facilitate roundtables during WP meetings to stimulate more in-depth discussions on key issues (these can be identified by ToSs).
- Develop more initiatives like the “Friends of the Outlook”, i.e. which assemble experts that work on a particular topic at the ECE level in order to work on issues of common interest.

(b) **Communication**

Request the Secretariat to:

- Improve communication through electronic means (e.g. through “live meeting” software, webinars, video telecommunications), and look into how to involve people in other ways.
- Establish a web-based platform accessible to delegates before WP meetings to provide on-line inputs or decisions.

(c) **Participants**

- Encourage countries to nominate and send specialists in forest economics.
- Encourage specialization of national correspondents and the participation of more than one participant from each country.
- To that effect, prepare a list of professionals for each country with their well-defined areas of speciality at the ECE level.

(d) **Monitoring and evaluation**

- Undertake regular self-evaluations of the WP, once every two years, to adjust its mandate whenever needed.

Work with other organizations and bodies

- Continue working together with other international organizations to avoid duplication, in particular continue working on an equal

footing with FAO, Eurostat and ITTO and agree all terms, definitions and methodologies for statistical data.

- Strengthen coordination with other government bodies of participating countries responsible for forest statistics.
- Enhance communication with other sectors; for example, for the broad dissemination of the action plan, through open workshops and at the next WP.

Statistics

- Enhance coordination and the comparison of data with other statistical databases.

Outlook

- Encourage Outlook studies to adopt a simple set of scenarios that can be modelled quickly and put funds towards that end so that studies are completed quickly.
- Integrate analysis and structural changes in EFSOS studies.