

**Mariánské Lázně +70: Celebrating 70 years of
ECE/FAO cooperation on forests
Mariánské Lázně, Czech Republic
5 to 7 September 2017**

1. Overview of the meeting

The Czech Republic hosted the International Conference “Mariánské Lázně +70” from 5 to 7 September 2017 to celebrate 70 years of fruitful ECE and FAO cooperation on forests. More than 70 participants from 25 different countries attended the meeting, including Government representatives from Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Uzbekistan, as well as representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations and the private sector.

2. Historical background of the meeting

In May 1947, an International Timber Conference was convened in Mariánské Lázně, former Czechoslovakia, to discuss the situation of forests and timber in post-war Europe, covering both the future demand for timber and the capacity of forests to supply the necessary wood. The Conference agreed on the establishment of the ECE Timber Committee (now the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry) and the FAO European Forestry Commission, which were established by their respective governing bodies. These two European intergovernmental bodies were tasked with mobilizing wood for the post war reconstruction and to coordinate and support national efforts to improve the state of forests in Europe, which included representation and cooperation from other sub-regions such as North America and the former Soviet Union.



For the last 70 years, these two intergovernmental bodies have been working in close partnership for forests and the forest sector. They were able to adapt to changing circumstances and needs, from a focus on urgent post war reconstruction to becoming a leader of analysis of the forest sector's long-term outlook and an advocate of a "dynamic forest policy". They offer a forum for exchange of experience and information, promote today's emphasis on monitoring and advocating sustainable forest management and support the forest sector's contribution to a green economy.

The 70th anniversary, generously hosted by the Czech Republic, served as a reminder



of the commitment of member States to regional cooperation, under the umbrella of the United Nations, to meet the multiple challenges of forests and the forest sector. The Committee and the Commission continue to provide a platform for cooperation and intergovernmental dialogue on a number of emerging issues in the forest sector. Whilst their joint efforts over the last seventy years have resulted in important achievements in protecting and managing forests in the region, new challenges require even stronger cooperation among countries and organizations. The partnership between the Committee and Commission, based on an open and pragmatic, flexible and evidence-based approach, is therefore more important than ever in addressing the complex issues linked to forest management today, and will be key to ensuring a sustainable future for the forest sector in the region.

3. Outline of meeting

During the celebrations of seventy years of this cooperation between ECE and FAO, participants were involved in various events, including a high-level segment on the past and future of the forest sector in the region, a roundtable discussion on “Forest certification in the ECE region – are there any limits?”, and a field trip to the Kladská Hunting Lodge and the Stora Enso sawmill in Plana. A tree planting ceremony to commemorate seventy years of cooperation was organized by the host country.

During the high-level segment, an Anniversary Message was discussed and endorsed. The message was then submitted as an informal document to “Las2017”, the joint session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission, which took place in Warsaw, Poland, from 9 to 13 October 2017. The Anniversary Message can be found in Annex I of this document.

The roundtable discussion on forest certification offered member States and organizations of the UNECE region the opportunity to highlight essential aspects of forest certification schemes. These included requirements for certification, the related processes for obtaining certification and their cost, and how to better facilitate certification for small and medium-sized forest-based enterprises. Key points from the roundtable discussion are summarized in Annex II.

In addition to the event, the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section has made available the following information about the past seventy years of collaboration between ECE and FAO:

- A historical timeline of the Forestry and Timber Section was published on the ECE website (<https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45674>);
- A booklet entitled “70 years working together in the service of forests and people” was published (<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/timber/publications/DP-anniversary-67-70.pdf>); and
- An exhibition of historical pictures of forests and forest work in the ECE region (ranging from 1902-2016), which were submitted to the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, was shown at “Mariánské Lázně +70” (https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/timber/meetings/20171009/Presentations/Historical_Forestry_Photo_Exhibition.pdf).

All presentations from “Mariánské Lázně +70” are available on the meeting website: <http://www.unece.org/forests/ml70.html>

Pictures from the meeting can be accessed here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/159584455@N07/sets/72157688693737126>



Annex I:***Mariánské Lázně Anniversary Message****5-7 September 2017*

WE, the PARTICIPANTS of the meeting in Mariánské Lázně, the Czech Republic, on 5-7 September 2017, convened to celebrate 70 years of fruitful cooperation between the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the European Forestry Commission (EFC) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO),

Recall that in May 1947, an International Timber Conference was convened in Mariánské Lázně, former Czechoslovakia, to address the situation of forests and timber markets in post-war Europe, addressing both the future demand for timber and the capacity of forests to supply it,

Recall that, subsequently, new intergovernmental bodies were created to improve cooperation and promote mobilisation of wood on a sustainable basis after the wartime levels of harvest: the UNECE Timber Committee, later renamed to the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI), and the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC), previously known as the European Commission on Forestry and Forest Products,

Honour the work of previous generations in implementing Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in the region, in line with the Statement of Forestry Principles adopted by the FAO European Commission on Forestry and Forest Products in 1950, which recognized that forests constitute an important contributor to economic stability and progress, and which highlighted already at the time the importance of the protection of forests, ensuring sustained yield, and the promotion of economic and rational methods of forest use in the production and utilization of forest products,

Recall also that for the last 70 years, the two intergovernmental bodies have been working in partnership for forests and the forest sector, also with other partners, including the process of Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Forest Europe) and the European Forest Institute (EFI): They were able to respond to the changing circumstances and needs, moving from a focus on urgent post-war reconstruction, to becoming a leader of analysis of the forest sector's long-term outlook, an advocate of a dynamic forest policy, and a forum for exchange of experience and information, resulting in today's emphasis on monitoring and advocating SFM and the forest sector's contribution to the emerging green economy, While recognizing the progress made since then, *reiterate* the importance of SFM, and continuous need to address current challenges in the region,

Acknowledge the importance of the Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) for adapting activities of UNECE-COFFI and FAO-EFC to the changing and evolving needs of the forest and the forest sector,

Are also mindful of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017 – 2030 (UNSPF), adopted by the UN General Assembly on 27 April 2017, that identifies regional bodies, notably the UN regional commissions and the FAO regional forestry commissions, and other regional and sub-regional bodies, as important partners for providing a crucial bridge between international policies and national actions in the implementation of the UNSPF and achieving its global forests goals and targets,

Are also mindful that regional and subregional bodies and processes, including those within the United Nations system, as well as the criteria and indicators processes, have been encouraged to build and strengthen synergies between the UNSPF and their policies and programmes, including in the context of their contributions to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG),

Recall also that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations acknowledges the importance of the regional and sub-regional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development, and the role that regional and sub-regional frameworks can play in facilitating the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at the national level,

Commend UNECE and FAO for their longstanding partnership on forest-related matters in the region, acknowledge further considerable potential for its development and invite the two organizations to continue and reinforce their partnerships on forests in a mutually beneficial way,

Encourage member States, all relevant stakeholders and experts to continue to support the joint work of UNECE-COFFI and FAO-EFC in order to enhance synergies at the regional level,

Invite member States to engage in and support the implementation of the IPoW 2018-2021, to be adopted at the joint session in Warsaw in October 2017, also by encouraging active participation of national experts in the work of the teams of specialists and by providing financial and in-kind support,

Encourage member States to strengthen regional and sub-regional forestry development, dialogue and coordination to advance the UNSPF and to achieve its six global forest goals and associated targets,

Invite the UNECE and FAO to cooperate in the future with all relevant regional and sub-regional processes and organizations, such as FOREST EUROPE and the EFI, in



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accordance with the UNSPF, which identifies regional bodies as important partners for its implementation,

In light of the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs, *encourage* UNECE and FAO to reach out to and cooperate with other relevant sectors to maximize the contribution of the forest and forest sector to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

Encourage relevant actors to continue the dialogue on forest certification in view of the interesting discussion here in Mariánské Lázně with the support of the joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section,

Invite UNECE and FAO to collect data related to certified forest products in order to improve the understanding of the role of forest certification in the region.

Annex II:**Outcomes of the Roundtable Discussion*****“Forest certification in the ECE region – are there any limits?”***

Forest owners, policymakers, forest certification organizations, the industry and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are all involved in forest certification. The roundtable discussion that took place during the event “Mariánské Lázně +70: Celebrating 70 years of ECE/FAO cooperation on forests” in Mariánské Lázně, Czech Republic, on 6 September 2017, addressed the question how these actors see their and other actors’ roles in developing forest certification in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region.¹

Objective

The objective of the roundtable was to provide a platform for forest owners, forest based industries, policymakers, forest certification organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders to discuss the latest trends and developments of forest certification in the ECE region, its future and its complementarity with current legislation, such as the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) and the US Lacey Act. In particular, the discussion aimed at addressing current issues with certification, including: (i) demands of certification schemes; (ii) advantages of certification and disadvantages of non-certification respectively; and (iii) the motivation and challenges of various stakeholders; thus bringing together policy and market perspectives. The event offered an opportunity for open discussion and dialogue between different stakeholders.

Structure

The panelists gave short initial presentations introducing themselves and their organization and provided some insights into how they see role of certification, as a vehicle for promoting Sustainable Forest management (SFM) and legal sourcing of wood. Following the presentations of the panelists and audience had an interactive discussion. The summary of key points of the discussion are listed below.

¹ The event was held under the Chatham House Rule, which enabled open and frank discussions Chatham House is the origin of the anonymity rule known as the Chatham House Rule, which provides that participants of a seminar may discuss the results of the seminar, but may not divulge the identify or affiliation of the speaker. The Chatham House Rule evolved to facilitate frank and honest discussion on controversial or unpopular issues with speakers who may not have otherwise had the appropriate forum to speak freely.

Key Points From the Roundtable Discussion “Forest certification in the ECE region – are there any limits?”

- Good forest legislation is key to managing forests sustainably;
- Forest certification is voluntary and an important tool to certify that forests are managed sustainably;
- Multiple certification is taking place, causing additional costs and administrative burden;
- In a number of countries certification requirements seem to be very close to legislation, raising the question whether forest certification is needed in cases where forest legislation and enforcement already ensures sustainable forest management;
- Certification is an important business-to-business tool;
- Certification could be an innovative tool that may serve many new services, such as: reporting on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) goals, etc.;
- More and better quality data on certified forest products in the market are needed (type of products, market shares, etc.);
- Certification should be made visible on wood products originating from certified sources in order to better inform final consumers and customers – preferably on iconic, beautiful long lasting products;
- Certification schemes were encouraged to improve communication and cooperation between themselves and to reduce cost and administrative burden for obtaining certification schemes - in particular for small forest holders;
- Participants suggested developing a checklist and standard procedures for interested stakeholders to better inform them how to certify their production and processing;

In preparation of the roundtable discussion, an online survey that had been conducted to gather data on perception of Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Certification (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/forest-management-and-certification>; 285 responses). A summary of the responses can be accessed online (http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/timber/meetings/20171009/Presentations/Outcomes_of_the_survey_on_perception_of_SFM_and_Forest_Certification-Steierer.pdf).