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Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

European Forestry Commission

**Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics,
Economics and Management**

Forty-second session

Geneva, 24-25 March 2020

Item 5 (d) of the Provisional Agenda

Guidance on Work Areas**Work Area 4: Capacity Building**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

In accordance with its mandate, the Working Party is expected to provide guidance on Work Area 4: Capacity-building. This document provides information about activities in this work area since the Working Party's last session in March 2019, as well as plans for 2020, drawing the Working Party's attention to any specific issues where guidance is needed. Activities in Work Area 4 for the year 2020 are made available in document ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2020/Inf.1 and discussed under Agenda Item 7.

I. Capacity-building**A. Forest Resources****1. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020 and the pan-European reporting on forests 2020**

1. Collection of national data for 2020 cycles of the FAO FRA 2020 and the Forest Europe/FAO/ECE Pan-European reporting was undertaken jointly. The ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section continues to be an active partner in both processes and to support member States in the regional and global reporting on forests and forest management. In 2019, the Joint Section assisted national correspondents in their work on compilation and submission of national data, by developing desk studies for several low-forest countries.

2. The finalization of the reports for the FRA 2020 reporting cycle will not discontinue support offered to countries for improving their national information systems. Future support will be focused towards increasing member States' capacities to develop specific tools, based on their needs, e.g., criteria and indicators, or monitoring damage and conditions of forests.

2. The State of Forests of the Caucasus and Central Asia

3. The publication was launched at a side-event during the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF14) on 7 May 2019. Experts from all eight countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia were involved in providing input and reviewing the publication “The State of Forest of the Caucasus and Central Asia”¹. The publication describes forest resources, the forest sector of the region, and major threats facing forests. It also covers forest sector policies, institutions and policy responses that are planned or already in place, and it lists the main issues and challenges facing the forest sector in the region. It was presented together with two other publications, the “Guidelines for the Development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management” and “Forest Landscape Restoration in the Caucasus and Central Asia”, at the event for Ambassadors of the region in Geneva (29 May 2019) and during the Forest Congress in Kyrgyzstan (28-31 May 2019).

3. Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge

4. The preparatory meeting on Forest Landscape Restoration under the Bonn Challenge for eastern and south-east Europe took place in Belgrade in December 2019. Over 40 representatives and experts attended the meeting², which provided information on the Bonn Challenge, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and ECCA30. The potential for forest landscape restoration at a national level and the commitment process were also discussed, along with needs and priorities of participating countries. All forest landscape restoration activities implemented by the Joint Section were supported by the government of Germany.

5. A study on degradation and forest landscape restoration for eastern and south-east Europe was developed in collaboration with the Bern University of Applied Sciences, School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences. The study was based on a national questionnaire on forest landscape restoration. This study will provide a background for the high-level Ministerial Roundtable for eastern and south-east Europe in May 2020, which will be on the topic of forest landscape restoration.

6. The country-owned Strategy for Landscape Restoration and Greening the Infrastructure of the Caucasus and Central Asia was developed with the support of the Joint Section. At the joint COFFI/EFC session (November 2019, Geneva, Switzerland), experts and government representatives from the Caucasus and Central Asia met to discuss and agree on objectives and expected outcomes of the strategy. The strategy is expected to be presented in May 2020 at the United Nations Forum on Forests meeting in New York. Subject to availability of funding, capacity-building workshops will be held in all countries implementing the strategy. These workshops will support governments with development of national action plans for the implementation of this strategy and involve relevant stakeholders, while strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation.

4. Forest Product Statistics and Wood Energy

7. In 2020 the Joint Section is planning to organize two capacity building workshops – both of them are subject to availability of resources.

8. The first workshop for countries in eastern and south-eastern Europe on “*Capacity Building in Forest Products Statistics*” is planned to be held in close cooperation with FAO and the Faculty of Forestry at the University of Belgrade. The event is planned to be held from 04 – 06 May 2020 in Belgrade, Serbia. The target audience of the workshop are national correspondents for the Joint ECE/FAO/EUROSTAT/ITTO Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire. The objective of the meeting is to improve their capacity in annual reporting on the production, consumption and trade of wood-based products. The funding of the workshop relies exclusively on the support by FAO, since the ECE is facing serious budget constraints. The University of Belgrade is making a significant in-kind contribution to the event. More details will be provided to member States during the session of the Joint Working Party.

¹ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51705>.

² Representatives from Bulgaria, Romania, Montenegro, Croatia, Republic of Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovakia, Germany, Ukraine, Slovenia, Republic of North Macedonia, Turkey and the Czech Republic.

9. The Joint Section is planning to organize a second workshop on wood energy statistics in the 4th quarter of 2020. The 2-day event is planned to focus on wood energy statistics and aims at improving member States capacity to report on the sources and uses of wood energy for the next round of the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry. The geographical focus of the two-day workshop is eastern and south-east Europe³ but is not limited to these. More details will be provided to member States during the session of the Joint Working Party.

B. United Nations Development Account Capacity-Building Projects

1. “Accountability Systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia”

10. The capacity-building project “Accountability Systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia” (originally from 2016-2019) is funded by the United Nations Development Account (UNDA), under the 10th tranche. The objective of this project is to strengthen the national capacity of Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to develop national sets of criteria and indicators (C&I) and reporting/accountability systems for sustainable forest management (SFM). The project was extended until the end of 2020.

11. Within the scope of the project, all five countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan) developed national criteria and indicator sets for sustainable forest management. Most of the countries (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) have submitted these to their national systems for approval. Armenia is still in the process of further developing its set.

12. In May 2019, countries were invited together with Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan to the Forest Congress for the Caucasus and Central Asia (28-31 May 2019, Kyrgyzstan). The Forest Congress covered recent forest developments while strengthening regional cooperation and outlined strategic common approaches for future projects in the region. The main topics were monitoring sustainable forest management, the presentation of national criteria and indicator sets, and the implementation of forest landscape restoration.

13. At the Forest Congress, all participating countries reflected on their national C&I sets. Armenia plans to create a short-list of indicators defining the assessment methods and gather data for them. The elaboration of factsheets for the agreed indicators is priority for Georgia. Georgia further plans to test the data collection for the C&I set at the local level. Kyrgyzstan considers it important to systematize and align the national-level C&I set with indicators of the SDGs. Kazakhstan intends to use the C&I set as a basis for the development of a national strategic document for forest policy. Uzbekistan plans to develop a C&I implementation mechanism or strategy.

14. Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are not part of the UNDA project but also consider the development and implementation of national-level C&I as a priority. Azerbaijan has already developed a draft C&I set under a FAO project, but requires support in testing and implementing it. Tajikistan and Turkmenistan would welcome support in developing C&I.

15. The publication “Guidelines for the development of a national criteria and indicator set for sustainable forest management”, published in English and Russian in May 2019, was another major outcome of the UNDA project. The publication, which provides step-by-step approaches for the development of a national criteria and indicator set was prepared to assist project countries in developing their sets. All major regional C&I processes, e.g. Forest Europe, Montreal and UNFF are presented in detail and a comprehensive overview of the different indicators under the seven global thematic elements is provided. Throughout the implementation of the project, the guidelines were applied in the project countries and improved by including the feedback from participants. In addition, the publication provides an overview of participatory workshop methods which can be used to structure a multi-stakeholder process for the development of national-level criteria and indicator systems (or other tasks requiring participatory approach).

³ Albania; Belarus; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Montenegro; Republic of Moldova; Serbia; Republic of North Macedonia; Turkey; Ukraine.

16. An additional \$90,000 were allocated to extend the project and implement the newly developed C&I sets. Three main activities are foreseen with the additional resources: (i) the advancement of the criteria and indicator set of Armenia; (ii) a regional workshop to strengthen capacity on methodologies for data collection for indicators; (iii) preparation of tailored methodologies for the national criteria and indicator sets (for priority indicators).

17. The final regional workshop will take place in June 2020 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The workshop will provide capacity-building and technical support to gather data under the criteria and indicators sets already developed. The results of the project will be published online. The project is expected to end in September 2020.

C. Team of Specialists on Green Jobs in the Forest Sector

18. The ToS supported the implementation of the ECE project on “Improving the capacity of the ECE member States to create green jobs in the forest sector”. In particular, the work on the “Guidelines on the promotion of the green jobs in forestry” and in the organization of the workshop on “Green Forest Jobs – Facing challenges and exploring opportunities and increasing capacity of ECE member States”. In addition, the ToS organized a side event during “Forêt2019” Joint Session of COFFI/EFC in Geneva, Switzerland.

19. During the reporting period the Team of Specialists on Green Jobs in the Forest Sector (Joint ILO/ECE/FAO Expert Network) met in Madrid on 27 June 2019.

D. Key questions for guidance and discussion

20. The Working Party is invited to:

- (a) Comment on the work and make proposals for future capacity-building work on the reporting on forests and forest management;
- (b) Suggest topics for possible future capacity-building workshops;
- (c) Comment on the ECE/FAO capacity-building projects focusing on eastern and south-eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia on the topics of forest landscape restoration and Sustainable Forest Monitoring (SFM).

Annex

Report by the Team of Specialists on Green Jobs in the Forest Sector (Joint ILO/ECE/FAO Expert Network)

This Team of Specialists report was not available in time to meet the document submission deadline. The report by the ToS will be posted on the website once it is available.
