

**Annual report to
FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics
31st Session, 31 March – 1 April 2009**

Introduction

1. This document is produced in accordance with the programme of work as approved by the Timber Committee in ECE/TIM/2008/7 and the requirement to report “Once a year to the Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics” as stated in the terms of reference of the Team of Specialists as approved by the Timber Committee. This report covers the activities for the period March 2008 to March 2009.
2. The Team officers are: Mr. Simon Gillam, Leader (United Kingdom), Mr. Andrius Kuliešis, Deputy Leader (Lithuania) and Mr. Brad Smith, Deputy Leader (USA). The secretary is Mr. Roman Michalak, UNECE/FAO Timber Section.

I. Team members

3. Following a call for nominations of members for the new period of the Strategic Plan, the team is of 36 officially-nominated members from the following 30 countries: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America and Uzbekistan. In addition, 7 experts from various organisations such as the European Forest Institute, the European Environment Agency, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the European Community, and the Liaison Office of the Montreal Process have so far been invited by the secretariat to contribute to the team. Reminders have been sent to countries who have not responded to the request for nominations.

II. Meetings held

4. The inaugural meeting under the Team’s new mandate was held on 25-27 February 2009 at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

III. Outputs during period by mandate item (quote mandate item and report accomplishments) and impact achieved:

5. For FRA reporting of “Permanent Forest Estate” and “Area under Sustainable Forest Management”, the Team established that there is wide variation in how countries in the region interpret the definitions. Some issues were resolved, which should result in some improvements in consistency of reporting for FRA 2010, but further analysis will be required after all countries have reported (*Output 1 “Regional contribution to the FRA 2010”*).
6. The Team recommended various steps to improve harmonisation of MCPFE reporting of quantitative indicators with FRA, by aligning the data collection cycles and by reviewing the definitions of specific indicators (*Output 2 “Assistance in the preparation and review of the next report on the State of Forests in Europe, for the next Ministerial Conference”*).
7. The team recommended using the new European Forest Type (EFT) categories in the next MCPFE reporting cycle, as a pilot implementation. Countries should use the EFT for reporting on area (1.1) and growing stock (1.2), and if possible also for age structure / diameter distribution (1.3), tree species composition (4.1), naturalness (4.3) and deadwood (4.5). Any recommendation for endorsement of EFT should be given after this pilot implementation (*Output 4 “Guidance on the implementation of the forest type classification”*).

IV. Expected outputs over next period by mandate item (cite mandate number and report accomplishments)

8. Team members who are FRA national correspondents will be involved with validation of their country reports in the summer of 2009. The Team will be expected to advise on measures to improve dissemination of European and national results, linked to the launches of the key findings and main reports in 2010. (*Output 1 “Regional contribution to the FRA 2010”*).

9. Team members will be asked to provide comments to assist development of the MCPFE questionnaire on quantitative indicators, to be used in the next reporting cycle in 2010. The next meeting of the team (provisionally Jan/Feb 2010 at JRC Ispra) will provide an opportunity to increase awareness of the work of international bodies (JRC and others) that can provide data relevant to monitoring SFM. (*Output 2 “Assistance in the preparation and review of the next report on the State of Forests in Europe, for the next Ministerial Conference”*).

10. Before use of the new EFT, there is a need to clarify category 14 (exotic/plantations) and reach a clear understanding of all definitions. Some Team members will volunteer to assist with a limited test of feasibility. All MCPFE countries will then be required to report using the new EFT, and will be asked for feedback on their experiences in 2010. (*Output 4 “Guidance on the implementation of the forest type classification”*).

V. Comments, lessons learned and issues for attention of Bureaux/Working Party

11. The Team was able to build on the work of the previous Team of Specialists on “Monitoring Forest Resources for SFM in the UNECE Region”. Team members all contributed to valuable discussions on reporting of forest resources. However there was less involvement with social and economic indicators, or the reporting on policies and institutions covered by the expanded mandate of the new Team.

12. There was a welcome increase in participation of eastern European countries, so the group now has reasonable geographic representation, although far from complete coverage. A continuing problem is how to involve countries that have limited resources for this work area (e.g. Caucasus and central Asian countries).

13. The continued participation of members from North America (along with the participation of Russia) brings a valuable insight to Montreal process developments, and is very welcome. However it also poses challenges in setting the agenda for meetings, to avoid having too much that is only relevant to the MCPFE process.

14. Please review the following issues:

(a) Current membership of the Team provides little expertise on policy and institutions. In 2009, other approaches will be applied to consult on the draft MCPFE enquiry on qualitative indicators. In the longer run, the Team will have to be strengthened if it is to meet its objective to advise on this work.

(b) The current Team also has a limited number of members with expertise on social and economic indicators (MCPFE criterion 6, Montreal Process criterion 6). It would be desirable to strengthen this, perhaps with members from academics or international bodies, if the desired expertise is not available from among national correspondents.

(c) Objective 3 (improve reporting capacity of countries weak in reporting) is unlikely to be achieved, because those who participate in regular meetings of the Team or email correspondence are unlikely to include many from the target group. Outreach activities would require additional resources.