



UNECE-FAO
FORESTRY AND TIMBER SECTION

Fourth (29th) meeting of the “UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on monitoring sustainable forest management”

Teams Meeting (online), 1st Session, 2 December 2020

Report from the meeting

Item 1. Opening and welcome by the representatives of FAO and UNECE. Adoption of the Agenda

Ms. Stefanie Linser, deputy leader of the Team and a chair of the meeting, welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting and introduced the webinar rules, before handing over to Mr. Örjan Jonsson, who welcomed everyone on behalf of FAO. Mr Roman Michalak (UNECE) welcomed everyone, and especially new members, on behalf of Ms. Paola Deda, Director of the UNECE Forests, Housing and Land Management Division and Mr. Gianluca Sambucini, Acting Chief of the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.

Ms. Linser presented an agenda of the session, which main topic would be forest damage assessment and reporting. The agenda (see Annex I) was adopted. The list of participants appears in Annex II.

Item 2. Update on the composition of the Team

Mr. Michalak, Secretary of the Team, updated the Team on the changes in the Team’s composition since the recent meeting held in December 2019 in Copenhagen. Current Team members are listed at the Team’s [website](#).

The former Team Leader, Mr Adrian Lanz, had left the team and it had not been possible to appoint a new team leader before this meeting. It was proposed to organize an election for a new team leader at the next session of the ToS meeting (probably in January/February 2021). Ms. Linser invited everyone to consider who might become the next team leader and would welcome suggestions of names, sent to the Secretariat before the next meeting.

Item 3. Presentation of the project “Assessment of forest damage/disturbance in the UNECE region”

Lead authors of the project “Assessment of forest damage/disturbance in the UNECE region”, which has been developed under the aegis of the Team, delivered a series of presentations introducing their respective chapters, all presentations are available from the meeting [website](#).

a. Introduction of the project – Michael Köhl, University of Hamburg, Germany, Project Coordinator

The project had been initiated by the ToS as a result of concern about increasing levels of damage across the region, such as the mountain pine outbreaks in Canada, and the frequent droughts and bark beetle epidemics in central Europe, all of which added to the urgency of finding improved ways of assessing, monitoring and reporting damage. Mr. Köhl outlined the overall structure and individual activities designed under this project.

b. Forest damage in the UNECE region (according to FRA 2020) - Markus Melin, Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke)

Mr. Markus Melin gave a quick overview of forest damage globally, and in the UNECE region. Globally, fire was the most significant cause of forest damage, whereas in the UNECE region, insects were the most damaging agent. The numbers of reports of damage vary widely and represent only a proportion of the countries that are covered by FAO Forest Resources Assessment 2020 (FRA). In 2015, 118 countries reported on fire damage, but the numbers fell to 62 for insect damage and only 51 countries reported damage due to diseases. There had been no significant change in the numbers of reporting countries over the period 2000 to 2017.

Reporting protocols would require careful consideration. Looking at the rank of countries, in terms of the extent of forest damage, he highlighted how the lists varied dramatically, depending on extent and share of damaged areas. Further Mr. Melin presented several examples of inconsistent and unharmonized reporting, resulting from differences in the source data availability and interpretation of reporting thresholds.

The activity would identify the most severe pests and diseases and assess how these have been changing over time. The envisaged outputs will include a report and a peer-reviewed article to raise awareness of the significance of forest damage/disturbance.

c. Analysis of the consistency of forest damage reporting in the pan-European region – Michael Köhl, University of Hamburg, Germany

The analysis identified a lack of clarity and consistency of data reporting for the pan-European area. It was not clear if variations in the extent of data reported were due to the inconsistent/lacking data or other factors. How could thresholds for measuring damage be defined? The project aims to define more clearly the standards for reporting damage to

achieve greater consistency between countries, and to identify harmonized methods for assessing and reporting damage.

There would be a drive to achieve transparency, completeness, consistency, comparability, and accuracy. Two related interim reports that could be of interest to ToS members were available, on application to Mr. Köhl.

d. *Conceptual aspects related to forest disturbance-damage reporting – Guy Robertson, Forest Service, United States*

Mr. Guy Robertson spoke about the planned content of what would be chapter 2 of a final report. He drew a distinction between disturbance, which would ideally have only natural values, and damage, to which human values would attach, such as the volumes affected or the economic value. The ultimate purpose of reporting disturbance/damage would be to improve understanding of forest ecosystem dynamics and thereby to produce policy and practical management guidance. Forest management could be precautionary or preventative (before disturbance events), combative (during events), or responsive and adaptive (after the event).

Measuring disturbance/damage could take different forms, ranging from full-scale forest inventories to remote sensing. He showed how US Forest Service spending on putting out fires had taken 16% of the budget in 1995, a figure that had grown to 56% in 2016, and that projections suggested could take 67% in 2025.

e. *Methodological aspects of forest disturbance-damage reporting – Frank Koch, Forest Service, United States*

Mr. Frank Koch reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of different methodologies for assessing or monitoring forest disturbance/damage. These ranged from the traditional ground survey approach of forest inventory, through field-based automated sensor systems, to aerial surveillance and remote sensing, using satellites. It was likely that an innovative and integrated approach would be needed. Whatever methodologies were selected, it would be important that they would be cost-effective and feasible for everyone.

The goal must be to establish harmonized survey systems that identify aspects of forest damage/disturbance that could be measured universally, and to develop methods that everyone could use.

f. *Next steps and general discussion.*

Presented material covered first activities under the project, which will provide the basis for the development of the improved reporting format and undertaking a voluntary survey, based on this format. It is planned that interim results will be discussed with the Team and relevant experts at the workshop in 2021, while the final workshop is planned for 2022 to summarize results of the project.

In the concluding discussion, participants highlighted the issue of scale and the need to focus at national levels – the main reference levels in the UNECE reporting. There would need to be a clear understanding of why information was being collected and what purpose it would serve. The challenge would be to assimilate all the knowledge that will be gained, and to recognize what could be of immediate use for national reporting, and secondly to produce recommendations that, over a longer period, might take the form of practical guidelines for countries.

The ToS members were invited to consider how they might become involved in the project, either as contributing authors or national, reference experts, and to inform the Secretariat.

Item 4. Plans for the next sessions

It was proposed to continue meeting in this virtual format. The next session would be dedicated to the pan-European reporting and FRA 2020. It would examine the main conclusions and look at results over the past three decades. The meeting was expected to take place by the end of February 2021.

UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, expects to complete work soon on its new data platform, in association with colleagues in Poland, and to organize a meeting in mid-January to share this with the ToS on Monitoring SFM and the ToS on Forest Products Statistics that was involved in developing the data platform.

Item 5. AOB

Mr. Rastislav Raši of FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit Bratislava announced that the SoEF2020 report was due to be launched in two weeks' time. An electronic format would be available from the FOREST EUROPE [website](#). It would be published in paper format in 2021.

Mr. Michalak informed the Team that a printed version of the UNECE/FAO study of Forest Ownership in the UNECE region was available for free distribution.

Mr. Guy Robertson reported that the Montreal Process would have its next meeting soon.

Members' attention was drawn to a webinar on Forest Monitoring and Restoration in the Caucasus and Central Asia, on 9 December. The morning would discuss the results of the UNDA project about developing C&I for SFM in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The afternoon session would focus on forest landscape restoration work in the region.

Item 6. Closure of the session

The meeting was closed at 17:55 on 2 December 2020.

Annex I

Fourth (29th) meeting of the “UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on monitoring sustainable forest management”

Teams Meeting (online), 1st Session, 2 December 2020

Agenda

Wednesday, 2 December 2020

- Item 1. Opening and welcome by the representatives of FAO and UNECE. Adoption of the Agenda.
- Item 2. Update on the composition of the Team, Secretary.
- Item 3. Presentation of the project “Assessment of forest damage/disturbance in the UNECE region” (each subitem followed by Q&As):
 - a. Introduction of the project
 - Michael Köhl, University of Hamburg, Germany;
 - b. Forest damage in the UNECE region (according to FRA 2020)
 - Markus Melin, Natural Resources Institute, Finland;
 - c. Analysis of the consistency of forest damage reporting in the pan-European region
 - Michael Köhl, University of Hamburg, Germany;
 - d. Conceptual aspects related to forest disturbance-damage reporting
 - Guy Robertson, Forest Service, United States;
 - e. Methodological aspects of forest disturbance-damage reporting
 - Frank Koch, Forest Service, United States;
 - f. Next steps and general discussion.
- Item 4. Plans for the next sessions.
- Item 5. AOB.
- Item 6. Closure of the session.

Chair: Stefanie Linser, Deputy Leader

Logistics: Microsoft Teams

Meeting hours: Wednesday, 2 December 2020 15:00 – 17:00 (Geneva time)

Annex II

Fourth (29th) meeting of the “UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on monitoring sustainable forest management”

Teams Meeting (online), 1st Session, 2 December 2020

List of participants

Title	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Country
Mr.	Carl	Amirgulashvili	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	Georgia
Mr.	Alper Tolga	Arslan	General Directorate of Forestry	Turkey
Dr.	Annemarie	Bastrup-Birk	European Environment Agency (EEA)	
Mrs.	Albena	Bobeva	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests	Bulgaria
Mrs.	Cristina	Brailescu	European Commission,	
Mr.	Svante	Claesson	Swedish Forest Agency	Sweden
Mr.	Douglas	Clark	Independent forestry consultant	
Dr.	Loïc	Dutrieux	European Commission	
Dr.	Andrey	Filipchuk	All-Russian Research Institute of Silviculture & Forest Mechanization (ARISFM/VNIILM)	Russian Federation
Dr.	Christoph	Fischer	Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL	Switzerland
Mr.	Johannes	Hangler	Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Regions and Tourism	Austria
Mr.	Pierre	Hermans	SYLVA NOVA	
Mr.	Andrei	Iugov	All-Russian Research Institute of Silviculture & Forest Mechanization (ARISFM/VNIILM)	Russian Federation
Dr.	Marek	Jabłoński	Forest Research Institute	Poland
Mr.	Orjan	Jonsson	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	
Dr.	Frank	Koch	U.S. Forest Service	United States of America
Ms.	Hélène	Koch	Confederation of European Forest Owners	
Prof.	Michael	Köhl	University of Hamburg	Germany
Dr.	Kari T.	Korhonen	Natural Resources Institute Finland	Finland
Mr.	Goran	Kovač	Hrvatske šume d.o.o. (Croatian forests Ltd.)	Croatia
Mr.	Jaroslav	Kubista	Forest Management Institute (FMI)	Czech Republic
Ms.	Fanny-Pomme	Langue	Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF)	
Ms.	Johanna	Leinonen	Metsähallitus	Finland

Mr.	Markus	Lier	Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke)	Finland
Dr.	Stefanie	Linser	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU) and EFI Forest Policy Research Network	Austria
Prof.	Marco	Marchetti	University of Molise	Italy
Dr.	Markus	Melin	Natural Resources Institute Finland	Finland
Mr.	Roman	Michalak	UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section	
Dr.	Thomas	Nord-Larsen	Faculty of Science University of Copenhagen	Denmark
Mr.	Mustafa Kağan	Özkal	General Directorate of Forestry	Turkey
Dr.	Sara	Piloni	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies	Italy
Dr.	Enrico	Pompei	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies	Italy
Mr.	Christopher	Prins	Independent Expert	
Mr.	Rastislav	Raši	FOREST EUROPE - Liaison Unit Bratislava	
Mr.	Guy	Robertson	U.S. Forest Service	United States of America
Mr.	Sandro	Rukhadze	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	Georgia
Mr.	Friedrich	Schmitz	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture	Germany
Mr.	Matej	Schwarz	FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit Bratislava	
Ms.	Roksolana	Shelest	UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section	
Dr.	Andrzej	Talarczyk		Poland
Mr.	Sander	Teeuwen	Probos Foundation	Netherlands
Ms.	Satu-Marja	Tenhiälä	Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners	Finland
Mr.	Paata	Torchinava	Department of Biodiversity and Forestry, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia	Georgia
Mr.	Mati	Valgepea	Estonian Environment Agency	Estonia
Mr.	Joost	Van De Velde	Independent Expert	
Dr.	Veronika	Vysna	European Commission	
Dr.	James	Westfall	U.S. Forest Service	United States of America
Sra.	Belén	Zubieta	Ministry of Ecological Transition	Spain