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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, 22-24 March 2021  
Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

**Guidance on the possible structure and scope of Teams of Specialists  
in support of the future Integrated Programme of Work 2022-2025**

AGENDA ITEM 6 (b)

Information document on the synergies of the Teams of Specialists

*Summary*

This information document is to facilitate discussion among member States on streamlining the work of the Teams of Specialists in support of the next Integrated Programme of Work (2022-2025). This document provides a brief description of the role and function of the Teams of Specialists, outlines resources available in the secretariat for servicing the Team of Specialists, and briefly summarizes recent discussions on the topic. The paper assesses existing synergies among Team of Specialists considering experts having membership to several Teams. It also considers synergies and cooperation among various teams in meeting the aims of the current Integrated Programme of Work (2017-2021).

The secretariat would like to emphasize that Teams of Specialists made significant contributions to the implementation of the current Integrated Programme of Work. The secretariat concludes that resources available within the Forestry and Timber Section and the need to implement the tasks in the future Integrated Programme of Work, allow for the servicing up to four Teams.

Mindful of the ECE guidelines on Teams of Specialists, the resources available and based on the information provided, the secretariat proposes the following:

- o Confirm the mandate of the Team of Specialists on Boreal Forest and include specific tasks and outcomes for the period of its mandate;
- o Renew the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management;
- o Renew the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Forest Products;
- o Merge the Team of Specialists on Forest Products Statistics with the Team of Specialists on Wood Energy into one new team called Team of Specialists on Forest Products - and Wood Energy - Statistics;
- o Nonrenewal of the Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook for the duration of the Integrated Programme of Work;
- o Nonrenewal of the Team of Specialists on Green Jobs and the Team of Specialists on Forest Communication.

## A. Introduction

1. The four-year Integrated Programme of work of the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section (Joint Section) expires at the end of 2021. The secretariat has engaged with member States to prepare the next Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) for the period 2022-2025.
2. The seventy-eighth session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 4 to 6 November 2020 requested the secretariat to [[ECE/TIM/2020/2](#)]:
  - Prepare a background document on how to enhance synergies between the Team of Specialists (ToS) and present it at the next session of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management;
  - Consult with the Joint Working Party on the merging of the ToS on Wood Energy and ToS on Forest Products Statistics;
  - Consider an alternative format to continue the work on green jobs, should the work of the ToS on Green Jobs be discontinued.
3. This background document aims to address the three requests above and will serve as a basis for discussion during the 42<sup>nd</sup> session of the Joint Working Party (22 to 24 March 2021) in Geneva, Switzerland as outlined in the annotated agenda of the meeting (ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2020/1).

## B. Background information

4. As outlined in document ECE/EX/2/Rev.1, the ECE ToS are expert bodies established through a procedure set by the ECE Sectoral Committee and supervised either directly by the Sectoral Committee or by one of its Working Parties.
5. In the case of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry, the primary role of the ToS is to support the implementation of the Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) of the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section (Joint Section) as expressed in their respective Terms of Reference.
6. Teams are to be established for advisory purposes or to carry out a specific task. *“Teams are to have a term of two-years and exceptionally can be renewed”<sup>1</sup>.*
7. The resources required for implementing the work plan have also to be identified; depending on the amount of regular budget resources that can be devoted to servicing the ToS and the magnitude of the work to be undertaken, the ToS may raise funds and/or solicit in-kind contributions in support of its activities, in compliance with the relevant UN rules and regulations<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from GE.06-25837 (available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/585347/usage?ln=fr>) and ECE/TIM/2017/2 FO:EFC/2017/2 (available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=54734>)

## 8. The Joint Section currently services seven ToS:

Team of Specialist	Area of Work	Task/ General Advice	Specific tasks	Years in operation
Sustainable Forest Products	WA1: Data and Assessment	General Advice		20 years
Forest Products Statistics	WA1: Data and Assessment	Task	<b>Annual:</b> Organize and structure the gathering and use of forest products statistics in the ECE region	8 years
Wood Energy	WA1: Data and Assessment	Tasks	<b>Every second year:</b> (Organize and structure the gathering and use of wood energy statistics in the ECE region	8 years
Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management	WA1: Data and Assessment	Task	<b>Every four years:</b> Organize and structure the gathering and use of forest resources statistics and indicators of sustainability in the ECE region	20 years+
Forest Sector Outlook	WA2: Policy Dialogue and Advice	Task	<b>Every ten years:</b> Organize carry out the Forest Sector Outlook Study	20 years+
Green Jobs*	WA4: Capacity Building	General Advice		20 years+
Boreal Forests	WA2: Policy Dialogue and Advice	General Advice		1 year

\* Successor of the former Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training (1954-2004).

## 9. The Team of Specialists on Forest Communication (Forest Communicators Network) is currently serviced by FAO in Rome.

Team of Specialist	Area of Work	Task/ General Advice	Specific tasks	Years in operation
Forest Communication	WA 3: Communication	General Advice		20 years+

## 10. There are several issues to consider when looking at the information in the tables above. Apart from the ToS on Boreal Forests, all teams fall into the “exception” category and have been continuous for many years, one for more than sixty years. Moreover, it should be considered that the task-oriented Teams also provide advice and only occasionally perform specific tasks.

### C. Status of discussion

11. The ToS support for the implementation of the Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) of the Joint Section and their Terms of Reference are closely tied to the Strategic Review of the Integrated Programme of Work. It is therefore important to recall that steps were already taken by the secretariat, member States and stakeholders to revise the IPoW and with it, possible amendments to the composition and tasks of the ToS.
12. The Strategic Review was launched during Forêt 2019 - the joint 77th session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and the 40th session of the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC), held from 4 to 7 November 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland [[ECE/TIM/2019/2-FO:EFC/2019/2](#)].
13. The secretariat launched a survey to gather views from all stakeholders who participated or shown interest in the implementation of the of the current IPoW and formulation of the new IPoW. The secretariat prepared an [initial review of the results](#) from this survey for the [Informal discussion on key findings of a survey for the Strategic Review of the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work \(WIPoW\) 2018-2021](#).
14. The assessment revealed that most teams were still needed. Nevertheless, the ToS on Green Jobs and the ToS on Forest Communication were considered no longer as relevant by some also echoing some of the responses to previous questions regarding the alignment of ToS to the relevance of themes and objectives if the IPoW.

	Good performance and should be continued		Good performance but no longer relevant	
	Percent	Number of responses	Percent	Number of responses
<b>Team of Specialists</b>				
<b>Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)</b>	74.6%	47	6.4%	4
<b>Sustainable Forest Products (SFP)</b>	71.2%	42	6.8%	4
<b>Wood Energy (WE)</b>	57.9%	33	8.8%	5
<b>Forest Products Statistics (FPS)</b>	75.0%	42	8.9%	5
<b>Forest Sector Outlook (FSO)</b>	67.8%	40	8.5%	5
<b>Green Jobs (GJ)</b>	43.6%	27	9.7%	6
<b>Forest Communication (FCN)</b>	55.7%	34	9.8%	6

15. The [moderators' report from the Virtual Discussion on Strategic Review of the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work](#), 18 June 2020 indicated that discontinuing the ToS on Green Jobs and Forest Communicating were again mentioned by meeting participants and the moderator concluded that:
  - It is important to involve more people with field experience in the ToS, as well as to promote greater cooperation between different ToS.
  - Strategies to increase the visibility and outreach of the work of ToS should be pursued, and engagement of Russian, Spanish, and French speaking experts, audiences activities and outputs – not everything can be translated, but key publications could be, subject to interest and available resources.
  - The possible nonrenewal of the ToS on Forest Communicators and the ToS on Green Jobs was mentioned. These ToS have done excellent work and seem to have fulfilled their role.
16. The survey and the outcome of the informal discussion suggested that the Teams on Green Jobs and Forest Communication received the least support for continuation. There were several comments pointing out that the ToS on Forest Sector Outlook will not be required in the next IPoW.
17. This information was conveyed to the 78<sup>th</sup> session of the COFFI and the secretariat provided various options in the background document about which ToS should be maintained during the period of the next IPoW 2022-2025 [[ECE/TIM/2020/7](#)]. COFFI did not reach consensus on how to streamline the ToS in the next IPoW and asked the Joint Working Party [[ECE/TIM/2020/2](#)] to address this matter during its 42<sup>nd</sup> session.

#### **D. Resources available by the secretariat in 2022-2025:**

18. The secretariat acknowledges the contribution of all Teams and believes that the focus of each Team is a worthwhile topic. However, the work of Teams vary in relevance at various times, as a result of the shifting priorities within the IPoW and the forest sector itself. The secretariat needs to ensure sufficient staff and resources to service the Teams that are of high priority. It considers therefore important to discontinue those Teams that have either fulfilled their tasks or are addressing a topic of lower priority within the IPoW. This is also in compliance with ECE guidelines, stressing the time bound nature of Teams of Specialists. Given the current staff XB resources available, the Joint Section can effectively support up to four ToS.
19. It is important to note that the ECE guidelines on Teams underscore the temporary nature of Teams of Specialists. It is understandable that Teams develop a sense of purpose, comradery and a sense of institution. The ECE guidelines take account of past experience, which has shown that some ToS, having accomplished their tasks within the IPoW, would like to continue contributing. However, the result is that Teams will often initiate activities that are outside of what is needed, often requiring secretariat time that is taken from other important tasks, and on occasion without the knowledge of the secretariat.

## E. Possible synergies arising from team memberships

20. 252 experts are the total members of the ToS serviced by the Joint Section as of 01 January 2021. This excludes the members of the ToS on Forest Communication since the team is no longer serviced by the Joint Section. The table below highlights the number of members by ToS.

<b>Current number of ToS members [double counting of experts due to multiple membership]</b>	
<b>SFP</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>SFM</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>FSO</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>FPS</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>WE</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>GJ</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>BF</b>	<b>18</b>

Note: SFP: Sustainable Forest Products; SFM: Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management; FSO: Forest Sector Outlook; FPS: Forest Products Statistics; WE: Wood Energy; GJ: Green Jobs; BF: Boreal Forests

21. 80 percent of the experts in the ToS are member of one single team. However, often experts are members of two, three or even four ToS.

<b>50 experts are member to more than one team</b>	
<b>205 experts</b>	<b>are member of 1 Team</b>
<b>31 experts</b>	<b>are member of 2 Teams</b>
<b>13 experts</b>	<b>are member of 3 Teams</b>
<b>3 experts</b>	<b>are member of 4 or more Teams</b>

22. These absolute numbers of team members do not correctly reflect the share of ToS members that are members of at least one other team. The table below very clearly indicates that the ToS on Forest Products Statistics has an exceptionally high share of overlap in members with one or more other ToS:

<b>Share of ToS members that are member of at least one other ToS [percent]</b>	
<b>FPS</b>	<b>73.2%</b>
<b>WE</b>	<b>48.3%</b>
<b>FSO</b>	<b>35.6%</b>
<b>SFP</b>	<b>34.1%</b>
<b>GJ</b>	<b>21.7%</b>
<b>SFM</b>	<b>17.2%</b>
<b>BF</b>	<b>16.7%</b>

Note: SFP: Sustainable Forest Products; SFM: Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management; FSO: Forest Sector Outlook; FPS: Forest Products Statistics; WE: Wood Energy; GJ: Green Jobs; BF: Boreal Forests

23. In terms relative to the team size, almost every second member of the ToS on Forest Products Statistics is at the same time member of the ToS on Forest Products and every fifth expert on the ToS on Forest Products Statistics is also a member of the ToS on Wood energy.

<b>Top three overlap memberships of the ToS on FPS [percent]:</b>	
<b>46%</b>	<b>of the ToS on FPS are member of the ToS on SFP</b>
<b>22%</b>	<b>of the ToS on FPS are member of the ToS on WE</b>
<b>20%</b>	<b>of the ToS on FPS are member of the ToS on FSO</b>

Note: FPS: Forest Products Statistics; SFP: Sustainable Forest Products; WE: Wood Energy; FSO: Forest Sector Outlook.

24. The ToS on Wood energy shares 31% of its experts with the ToS on Forest Products Statistics and 31% of its experts with the ToS on Sustainable Forest Products.

<b>Top three overlap memberships of the ToS on WE [percent]:</b>	
<b>31%</b>	<b>of the ToS on WE are member of the ToS on FPS</b>
<b>31%</b>	<b>of the ToS on WE are member of the ToS on SFP</b>
<b>10%</b>	<b>of the ToS on WE are member of the ToS FSO</b>

Note: WE: Wood Energy; FPS: Forest Products Statistics; SFP: Sustainable Forest Products; FSO: Forest Sector Outlook.

25. Based on existing overlap in team membership of experts, the secretariat recommends to the Joint Working Party merging the ToS on Forest Products Statistics and the ToS on Wood Energy.

## **F. Synergies between ToS**

26. This section is to provide delegates with information on cooperation between various ToS during the period of the IPoW 2018-2021 and how more synergies between the ToS could be nurtured in the future.
27. ToS are established for advisory purposes or to carry out a specific task and there is no programmed interaction between the various ToS since most of the tasks are very specific. Secretaries of the various ToS do facilitate communication and cooperation between various ToS on an ad hoc basis when tasks and activities require it.
28. Teams with significant overlap in experts have the advantage of an increased awareness of activities undertaken by the other team(s) and with it a higher likelihood of good communication and cooperation on their specific activities and outputs.
29. Cooperation and communication is easier for those ToS which contribute to the same Work Area of the IPoW. This is clearly seen with the four ToS under Work Area 1 (Data, monitoring, assessment and reporting), which had much more exchange between each other than the three ToS under the other three Work Areas.

30. The secretariat wishes to emphasize that the annual reporting to the Joint Working Party is very useful exercise for reducing the risk that teams work in isolation (“silos”). While participants of the Joint Working Party may benefit from this exercise, members of the ToS’s may not necessarily get the information as they often do not attend the Joint Working Party meeting.
31. Delegates from member States, other stakeholders, secretaries and ToS members all receive a good overview of the activities undertaken during the last year and planned activities for the coming year. It is transparent and allows for interaction between the ToS and member States.
32. The secretariat believes that the following measures will help to further improve cooperation and cross-pollination of expertise between ToS in the future:
  - Reducing the number of ToS to four will help to significantly reduce the risk of creating “silos” and secretaries can easily coordinate within the secretariat and with the ToS they service;
  - Co-organize webinars/briefings with two or more ToS, on selected activities/outputs relevant to their work;
  - Maintain the ToS annual reporting to the Joint Working Party and consider intensifying this exercise (e.g. more interactive focus session);
  - Inform members of all ToS once a final version of a ToS meeting report is available.

### **G. Synergies between organizations**

33. Seeking synergies and avoiding overlaps in work undertaken by other actors and organizations is an imperative principle for the ECE. Applying this principle becomes even more important in times of severely constrained resources.
34. In the context of streamlining its resources in servicing ToS and maximising synergies with other organizations, the secretariat would like to discuss how to best use synergies with FAO and Forest Europe.

### **ToS on Forest Communication**

35. FAO already provided the secretary for the ToS on forest communication in the past two years. This cooperation and support has contributed to reducing the workload at the Joint Section and the secretariat would like to express its gratitude to Ms. Maria de Cristofaro, FAO Forestry Officer, for her support and service as secretary of the team.
36. Given FAO’s leadership on the topic of communication, the fact that the secretary to the ToS is a staff member of FAO Forestry Department in Rome and that FAO has an existing infrastructure of communication Teams, the secretariat proposes that the Team be integrated into FAO’s responsibility.



### **ToS on Green Jobs**

37. No consensus was yet reached, there seems to be strong evidence from the survey and the Informal discussion on Strategic Review of the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work (WIPoW) 2018-2021, that the ToS on Green Jobs has completed its mandate and is no longer a high priority and thus should not be renewed.
38. The issue of green jobs remains an element of the IPoW but does not need a dedicated ToS supporting such work. Moreover, Forest Europe is also addressing green jobs in their work; sharing many of the same experts with the ECE/FAO ToS on Green Jobs. Member States may consider a joint group of experts on ToS on Green Jobs that would to be led by Forest Europe. Thus, avoiding overlaps.

### **H. Recommendations**

39. The secretariat wishes to make the following recommendations for consideration by the Joint Working Party:
  - Renew the mandate of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management. This Team has regular tasks related to two processes (The State of the World's Forests and the State of Europe's Forests) as well as other tasks and related monitoring activities which are the core work of the Joint Section in Geneva;
  - Confirm the mandate of the Team of Specialists on Boreal Forest which has been recently been established, fully complies with ECE guidelines for expert bodies and importantly, does not rely on regular budget resources from the secretariat. For measuring the future performance of the ToS and its contribution to the IPoW, the secretariat highly recommends developing Terms of Reference with specific tasks and outcomes for the period of its mandate;
  - Merge the Team of Specialists on Forest Products Statistics with the Team of Specialists on Wood Energy into one new team called Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics;
  - Re-name the ToS on Sustainable Forest Products;
  - Nonrenewal of the Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook for the duration of the Integrated Programme of Work;
  - Nonrenewal of the Team of Specialists on Green Jobs and the ToS on Forest Communication.

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