
UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests

Fourth meeting (online), 13 October 2021, 15:00-17:00 CET

MEETING REPORT

OFFICIAL OPENING

The meeting took place on 13 October 2021 at 15:00 CET (online) with Russian and English interpretation. The Secretariat took notes of the main points and decisions taken. The list of participants is attached in Annex II. 19 experts from 7 countries took part in the meeting. Countries represented included: Canada, Finland, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, Russian Federation, and the United States of America. Representatives from the International Boreal Forest Research Association (IBFRA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) attended, as well as researchers from other institutions (for a comprehensive list of all organizations, please see Annex II).

The meeting was opened by the Secretary of the Team of Specialists (ToS), Ms. Leonie Meier, followed by opening remarks from the Director of the UNECE Forests, Land and Housing Division, Ms. Paola Deda.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (ITEM 1)

The leader of the ToS, Mr. Darren Sleep (Canada), chaired the meeting and tabled the proposed agenda. The Team adopted the agenda. The final version of the agenda of the meeting is included in Annex I.

IBFRA CONFERENCE FOLLOW-UP (ITEM 2)

(a) Update by Mr. Florian Kraxner (President of IBFRA)

Mr. Kraxner underlined the important value that the collaboration between IBFRA and the ToS brings to boreal science and policy discussions. He reported about the outcomes of the IBFRA conference, which took place from 16 to 20 August 2021 in a fully virtual format. The conference featured a first comprehensive presentation of the IBFRA Insight Report. He invited a selected group from the ToS to sharpen the policy messages in the publication before the end of the year. The group will report back about it at the next meeting of the ToS. The IBFRA Insight Report is planned to be officially launched during a side event at the World Forestry Congress in spring 2022. The next IBFRA conference will be held in Finland together with colleagues from the Russian Federation in Summer/Autumn 2022.

ToS members welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback on the IBFRA Insight report.

(b) Moderator's report of the side event "The science and policy of wildfires in the boreal biome" by Ms. Maria Sokolenko (Russian Federation)

Ms. Sokolenko presented the programme of the side event which featured expert discussions on the trends and factors, as well as international exchange of experience in managing forest fires in the boreal zone. It was suggested that the topic of forest fires could remain on the agenda of the

ToS, and that information from the side event could be used by ToS members in future activities on forest fires. For example, the issue of forest fires can further be discussed during follow-up events (e.g. a webinar). For a comprehensive summary of the 20 August IBFRA side event, please find her presentation [online](#).

(c) Moderator’s report of session 13 “Session 13: Public policy and boreal science-why do we need to work together?” by Darren Sleep (Canada)

Mr. Sleep briefly summarized the topics discussed during “Session 13: Public policy and boreal science-why do we need to work together?” which took place during the IBFRA conference. They include: the history of fire and forest management and policy in Alaska; science and policy issues focused on wildfires; boreal forest management in Sweden and Fennoscandia; natural disturbances in forests in Japan; science needs to meet sustainable forestry in Canada; wildfires in the northern Hemisphere and how remote sensing could help to detect them.

REPORT FROM THE MONTREAL PROCESS WORKING GROUP MEETING (ITEM 3)

Mr. Robertson (United States), reported about the 30th Montreal Process Working Group meeting, which took place from 14 to 15 September 2021. For a comprehensive overview of his report, find the presentation [online](#).

His conclusions on the relevance for boreal forests included the following points:

- Boreal forests are rarely mentioned explicitly in MP discussions and reporting, and the distinction between boreal and temperate forests is seldom made;
- In MP countries with boreal forests, the MP C&I is evenly applied to temperate and boreal forests, though challenges in inventorying boreal forests are noted;
- Discussions around “primary” forests and related definitions mirror concerns about application of these definitions to boreal forests.

PROPOSAL FOR A POSSIBLE MINISTERIAL MEETING ON BOREAL FORESTS IN 2022 (ITEM 4)

The Secretariat noted that the proposal for a possible ministerial meeting on boreal forests had been raised during the 3rd meeting of the ToS on Boreal Forests on 23 June 2021, and a concept note had been circulated to the ToS before this meeting. A ministerial meeting was proposed to enable high-level decision makers to adopt an Action Plan addressing the main objectives and actions that the boreal forest community needs to take over the next decades. The Ministerial meeting would adopt an Action Plan to provide guidance to country-level decision-making. The Secretariat noted that the [Rovaniemi Action Plan](#) could serve as example. The ministerial meeting would take place under the aegis of UNECE/FAO, but it would not need to be approved beforehand by the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry.

The ToS generally welcomed the proposal, recalling boreal forests’ important role in carbon and climate management, and noting that a ministerial meeting would provide an excellent opportunity to highlight the relevance and interdependence of boreal forest issues vis-à-vis global challenges. The ToS agreed to take an active role in drafting the Action Plan. They noted that it would be important for the Action Plan to address ongoing international processes and commitments (particularly in relation to climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development). Further, they asked the Secretariat to revise the proposal with more details regarding logistics and timeline, so that it can be shared with relevant decision-makers.

DISCUSSION ON THE FINALIZATION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS NOTES PREPARED BY RUSSIAN FEDERATION (ITEM 5)

The chair provided a brief background to the process: the draft outlines of the notes were reviewed at the previous meeting of the ToS in June, the full texts were received in early September and shared with ToS for review before this meeting. The chair thanks the Russian Federation for their

leadership and efforts and thanks ToS members for their comprehensive input and feedback. Many comments were received, some substantial questions regarding the science remain and should further be worked out with the help of IBFRA. ToS members underlined the importance of clarifying the target audience, namely policymakers, and, therefore, the need to adapt the language of the current drafts. In their current shape, the drafts could serve as the scientific background for communications notes which are relevant and targeted to policy makers.

The Secretariat offered to assist with professional writing, editing, and layouting of the notes, but asked the ToS to come up with concrete policy questions to be addressed in the communications notes.

The authors of the drafts, Mr. Aleksey Ilintsev and Mr. Ivan Nedbaev, generally welcomed IBFRA's offer to review the science. At least one month would need to be factored in for this review.

The Russian Federation suggested that the Work Plan should be reviewed and updated at the next ToS meeting. The United States offered to review items on the Work Plan to see where it could support implementation.

Timeline

- IBFRA provides the ToS with its suggestions to the two draft information notes, prepared by the Russian Federation (preferably by 29 November, 2021)
- The ToS members review IBFRA's comments and provide Russian authors with their comments, (preferably by 6th - 10th of December)
- The Russian authors revise the drafts and share the updated drafts by the end of December, 2021.
- The ToS - to determine questions relevant for policy makers
- Secretariat to produce policy briefs based on science in the drafts
- The ToS to consider opportunities for relevant publications based on the information notes on definition and forest-climate interlinkages.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE BOREAL: POSSIBLE UPCOMING WEBINARS - TOPICS AND TIMELINE (ITEM 6)

The chair proposed to discuss the possibility of organizing webinars in order to effectively communicate about the boreal and as a way to exchange information on pertinent topics within the UNECE region. The chair noted that two webinars per year were realistic, given the limited resources of the Secretariat. Two topics were proposed: (1) the importance of boreal forests globally vis-à-vis climate change and ESG reporting requirements for companies; (2) wildfires and climate change impacts.

The ToS discussed the possibility of holding the webinars as part of a series with external research organizations. This would also diffuse expenses given the limited availability of funds. Ms. Maureen Whelan (Canada) offered to develop a concept note to approach other organizations like IUFRO and IBFRA with a proposal to organize a joint webinar series on particular topics such as wildfires, with due regard given to already ongoing discussions and processes.

The ToS considers the webinars as additional activities of the ToS which can help to exchange experience on the relevant issues, as well as to communicate knowledge about boreal forests. It was noted that the ToS should make use of such webinars and other international activities, to communicate about boreal forests and in order to present the Team's work.

COORDINATION MEETING WITH IUFRO BOREAL GROUP: OBJECTIVES AND TIMING (ITEM 7)

In order to strengthen ties with other research organizations, the ToS agreed to reach out to the IUFRO boreal group. The ToS leaders, the Secretariat and a few interested ToS members will be invited to discuss timing and objectives of the meeting separately.

Mr. Kraxner offered to establish contact with the leader of the IUFRO boreal group, and reminded ToS members about the IUFRO regional conference which will take place in Moscow/St Petersburg next year and provide a great opportunity to foster collaboration.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 8)

ToS members indicated that the next meeting could be held at the end of February 2022. The Secretariat took note of this proposal and will develop the agenda together with the co-chairs. The meeting format (virtual, in-person) will be established closer to the date.

ANNEX I

Meeting agenda:

15:00 – 15:05	<i>Welcome by Ms. Paola Deda, Director, UNECE Forests, Land and Housing Division</i>
15:05 – 15:10	Item 1: Adoption of the agenda <i>Documents: provisional agenda</i>
15:10 – 15:30	Item 2: IBFRA conference follow-up (a) Update by Florian Kraxner, President of IBFRA (b) Moderator’s report of the side event “The science and policy of wildfires in the boreal biome” by Maria Sokolenko, Russian Federation (c) Moderator’s report of session 13 “Session 13: Public policy and boreal science-why do we need to work together?” by Darren Sleep, Canada
15:30 – 15:40	Item 3: Report from the Montreal Process Working Group Meeting, 14-15 September 2021 by Mr. Guy Robertson, United States
15:40 – 16:00	Item 4: Proposal for a possible ministerial meeting on boreal forests in 2022 <i>Documents: concept note shared in advance</i>
16:00 – 16:15	Item 5: Discussion on the finalization of the communications notes on the definition of boreal forests (3.1. of Workplan) and interlinkages of boreal forests and climate change (3.2. of Workplan) prepared by Russian Federation <i>Documents: communications notes shared in advance</i>
16:15 – 16:35	Item 6: Communicating about the boreal: possible upcoming webinars - topics and timeline
16:35 – 16:50	Item 7: Coordination meeting with IUFRO boreal group: objectives and timing
16:50 – 16:55	Item 8: Date and place of the next meeting
16:55 – 17:00	Item 9: AOB
17:00	Closure

ANNEX II

List of Participants

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Liliana	Annovazzi-Jakab	UNECE/FAO Secretariat
Paola	Deda	UNECE/FAO Secretariat
Vladimir	Dmitriev	Federal Forestry Agency of Russia
Andrey	Eritsov	Aerial Forest Protection Service, Russian Federation
Andrey	Filipchuk	All-Russian Research Institute of Silviculture & Forest Mechanization
Aleksey	Ilintsev	Northern Research Institute of Forestry
Viktor	Karamyshev	Saint Petersburg Forestry Research Institute
Roman	Kotelnikov	Centre for Forest Pyrology, All-Russian Research Institute
Florian	Kraxner	IIASA
Aleksandr	Kryshen	Forest Research Institute of the Karelian Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences
Leonie	Meier	UNECE/FAO Secretariat
Ivan	Nedbaev	Saint Petersburg Forestry Research Institute
Knut	Oistad	Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research NIBIO
Guy	Robertson	US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
Talha	Sadiq	Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)
Kenichi	Shono	FAO
Darren	Sleep	The Sustainable Forestry Initiative
Maria	Sokolenko	Federal Forestry Agency of Russia
Johan	Svensson	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Tatu	Torniainen	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Maureen	Whelan	Canadian Forest Service
Christopher	Woodall	US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service