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Food and Agriculture Organization

European Forestry Commission

Revision of the Rules of Procedure for the Joint Working Party

Note by the secretariat

This informal note is intended to serve as the basis for the discussion on the revision of the Rules of Procedure for the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management.

The Joint Working Party is invited to adopt the new set of Rules of Procedure.

Draft Rules of Procedure for the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management

Background

1. At its forty-first session in March 2019, the secretariat informed the ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management (Joint Working Party) that Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) had approved new Rules of Procedure during its seventy-sixth session, Vancouver, Canada, November 2018. The secretariat explained that these Rules could also be applied to the Joint Working Party, should its membership agree. In light of COFFI's ongoing discussions on its newly adopted COFFI Rules of Procedure, The Joint Working Party deferred a decision to its 42nd session since member States intended to further amend COFFI Rules of Procedure. In November 2019, the COFFI adopted the final set of the COFFI Rules of Procedure at its seventy-seventh session (see Annex of document ECE/TIM/2019/2–FO:EFC/2019/2).
2. Therefore, at its 42nd session in March 2021, and in line with the “Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies” adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe at the fifth meeting of its sixty-fifth session on 11 April 2013 (E/ECE/1464), the Joint Working Party decided to be governed by the “Rules of Procedure of the ECE” (E/ECE/778/Rev.5).
3. During the ensuing discussions, the Joint Working Party highlighted that while the ECE Rules of Procedure applied to the Joint Working Party, some of its provisions might not be suited to the Joint Working Party. Therefore, delegations requested the secretariat to develop new draft Rules of Procedure for its consideration and possible adoption.
4. From 29 April 2022 until 12 May 2022, the secretariat consulted with to the Heads of Delegations and members of the Joint Working Party on the ECE Rules of Procedure (E/ECE/778/Rev.5) to establish which of the provisions, in their view, to make them more consistent with the Joint Working Party's established practices.
5. The replies received by 12 May highlighted 3 main areas of the ECE Rules of Procedure (E/ECE/778/Rev.5) which according to delegations would require more customized procedures for the Joint Working Party. They included:
6. Rule 12 *“The Commission shall, at each biennial session, elect a country from among its members to hold the chair for the period of the biennium. The representative of the elected country will be the Chairperson. The Commission will also, at the same meeting, elect two countries whose representatives will become the Vice-Chairpersons for the period of the biennium. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission will also serve as the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Executive Committee for the period of the biennium.”* (E/ECE/778/Rev.5)

7. Delegations highlighted that:
 - (a) The Joint Working Party meets annually and not every two years;
 - (b) The Chairperson is elected to hold office until the end of the next session;
 - (c) The Joint Working Party elects individual experts officially representing their country as members of the bureau.
8. Rule 18 *“After discussion with any specialized agency functioning in the same general field, and with the approval of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission may establish such continually acting sub-commissions or other subsidiary bodies as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions and shall define the powers and composition of each of them. Such autonomy as may be necessary for the effective discharge of the technical responsibilities laid upon them may be delegated to them.”* (E/ECE/778/Rev.5)
9. Delegations highlighted that:
 - (a) The Joint Working Party did not decide on subsidiary bodies in previous years.
10. Rule 42 *“All elections shall be decided by secret ballot, unless, in the absence of any objection, the Commission decides to proceed without taking a ballot on an agreed candidate or slate.”* (E/ECE/778/Rev.5)
11. It was also indicated that the Joint Working Party did not hold secret ballots to elect the bureau in the past. The secretariat, however, strongly recommends keeping this rule unchanged, as a necessary means to reach a decision in case of lack of consensus.
12. Two responses indicated that they did not see any conflict with the ECE Rules of Procedure (E/ECE/778/Rev.5).
13. Based on this feedback prepared proposed new draft provisions replacing ECE Rules of Procedure (E/ECE/778/Rev.5) provisions 12, 18 and 21 (see Section XX).
14. In addition, the secretariat also proposes that the JWP consider complementing Chapter XIV “Relations with non-governmental organizations” of the ECE Rules of Procedure (E/ECE/778/Rev.5) by a rule on “Representation and accreditation” (see Section IV). The new draft proposal elaborated by secretariat is based on COFFI’s Rules of Procedure Annex VI (ECE/TIM/2019/2 FO:EFC/2019/2)
15. The Joint Working Party is invited to discuss the proposed amendments and decide on possible next steps.

Proposed draft Rules of Procedure for the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management

1. Introduction

16. The following JWP draft rules of procedure have been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines on Procedures and Practices for ECE bodies adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe (E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464, annex III, appendix III).¹ In any area not covered in this document, the Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Europe shall apply, as appropriate, the Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council, taking into account the Guidelines on Procedure and Practices for ECE bodies *mutatis mutandis*.

2. Organization of the Joint Working Party sessions

17. Sessions of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management (Joint Working Party) shall be held regularly once a year. Additional meetings may be convened by the Bureau² in consultation with the Joint Bureau of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission and the secretariat.

18. At its session, the Joint Working Party decides on the dates of the next session. Changes in previously agreed dates of sessions due to unforeseen circumstances can be initiated by the Bureau in consultation with the secretariat.

19. The provisional agenda for the upcoming sessions of the Joint Working Party shall be drawn up by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau and shall be circulated to member States at least six weeks³ in advance of the meeting.

20. The agenda of the individual sessions of the Joint Working Party shall cover, *inter alia*, a review of the implementation of its programme of work, including a review of capacity-building activities, policy-relevant documents developed in the context of the integrated programme of work, as well as deliberations on future activities in accordance with its Mandate and Terms of Reference, as contained in the latest Integrated Programme of Work of the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.

21. The Bureau in consultation with the secretariat shall suggest substantive issues within the aforementioned Terms of Reference to be addressed during the substantive segment of the sessions.

¹ Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE (E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464, annex III).

² See section V.

³ Rules of procedures of UNECE, Decision 2010/19, Rule 7.

3. Representation and accreditation

22. The rules for representation and participation in the Economic Commission for Europe (E/ECE/778/Rev.5)⁴ and the Guidelines on Procedures and Practices for ECE bodies adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe (E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464, annex III, appendix III) shall be applied.

23. Representatives of non-governmental organizations, private sector and academia and other entities whose work is relevant to the forest sector and COFFI, which do not have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council⁵, and have informed the secretariat of their desire to be represented at least 20 days in advance of the meeting may be allowed to participate as observers without a right to vote, subject to the approval of the secretariat.

24. The list of participants in the Joint Working Party sessions shall be communicated by the secretariat to the Permanent Representations of member States to the United Nations Organizations in Geneva at the latest five working days prior to the starting date of the session.

4. Officers

25. The Joint Working Party shall elect a Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons among individuals officially representing a member States of ECE in the Joint Working Party. The Joint Working Party Bureau shall consist of those three officers.

26. The term of office shall be one year. Bureau members can be re-elected for maximum five additional terms. Efforts shall be made to ensure continuity within the Bureau, as appropriate. The terms of office of elected officials will begin at the end of the session in which they are elected. This will allow the current officers to preside over the session that they have prepared and organized.

27. Candidates for the Bureau of the Joint Working Party shall be nominated by member States based on the person's expertise, professionalism, and expected support from the membership.

28. Geographical balance should be taken into due consideration when examining the candidatures of potential Bureau members.

29. Member States, while making their nomination, shall ensure that candidates or their employers have no contractual agreement with ECE, from which they or their employers may financially benefit, in order to avoid conflicts of interest.

30. The elections for the Bureau will take place in accordance with the Guidelines on Procedures and Practices for ECE bodies (E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464, annex III, appendix III).

31. If the Chairperson is absent from any meetings or part thereof, a Vice-Chairperson shall perform the functions of the Chairperson. If no Vice-Chairperson

⁴ Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Europe – Fifth edition (E/ECE/778/Rev.5).

⁵ Non-governmental organizations recognized by the Economic and Social Council are covered in document E/ECE/778/Rev.5, which is referred to in paragraph 8.

is present, the Joint Working Party shall elect an interim Chairperson for that meeting or that part of the meeting.

32. If the Chairperson can no longer perform the functions of the office, the Bureau of the Joint Working Party shall designate one of the Vice-Chairpersons as interim Chairperson to perform those functions pending the election of a new Chairperson by the Joint Working Party. The interim Chairperson shall have the same powers and duties as the Chairperson.

33. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons serve collectively in the interest of all member States of the Joint Working Party and not as official representatives of their Governments, and act within the Terms of Reference of the Joint Working Party and these Rules of Procedures. The work of the Bureau is carried out in a way that is member driven, consensus-oriented, transparent and accountable.

5. Functions of the Bureau

34. The key functions of the Bureau are those detailed in the Guidelines on Procedures and Practices for ECE bodies (E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464, annex III, appendix III).

35. In addition to these key functions, the Chairperson of the Joint Working Party Bureau will be invited as an observer to attend the meetings of the joint Bureaux meetings of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry bureau with the FAO European Forestry Commission Executive Committee.

36. The Bureau shall report to the Joint Working Party.

6. Procedures for the adoption of decisions and Joint Working Party meeting reports

37. The Joint Working Party shall make all possible efforts to take decisions on the basis of consensus. If voting is used, the Chapter on Voting in the Rules of Procedure of the ECE shall apply.

38. A draft report of the meeting, which reflects in a concise and factual manner the discussion and the views expressed by participants, should be circulated before the end of the meeting for comments and adoption by member States at the end of the meeting.

39. If the draft report cannot be circulated at or adopted during the meeting for technical reasons, the Joint Working Party will distribute it to all Geneva Permanent Representations for subsequent approval no later than ten days after the conclusion of the meeting.
