
UNECE-FAO
FORESTRY AND TIMBER SECTION

**Third (3rd) meeting of the “UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on
Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management”**

*Larnaca, Cyprus, 17-19 April 2024
Sun Hall Hotel*

*Hosted by
the Department of Forests
of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Environment of Cyprus*



Report of the meeting



Item 1. The meeting was opened and chaired by Mr. Friedrich Schmitz (Germany), the leader of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management. He welcomed the participants and presented the objectives of the meeting.

Mr. Andreas Christou, Acting Director of the Department of Forests, welcomed the Team on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Environment of Cyprus.

Mr. Anssi Pekkarinen, Leader of the FAO Forest Resources Assessment Team, addressed the Team on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Mr. Roman Michalak, Secretary to the Team, welcomed the Team on behalf of the Joint United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.

Item 2. The Team adopted the agenda of the meeting without further changes (Annex I).

Item 3. In her presentation, Ms. Areti Christodoulou, Department of Forests of Cyprus, introduced participants to forest ecosystems and forest inventory practices in Cyprus. Ms. Christodoulou highlighted the types of forest vegetation on the island, as well as the main principles, objectives and activities of forest monitoring in Cyprus.

Item 4. Updates on forest information related developments were given by Mr. Anssi Pekkarinen (FAO). He informed participants about the recent progress in the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2025, as well as regional workshops held in 2023. In addition, Mr. Pekkarinen provided an overview of the enhanced and extended features of the FRA reporting platform. In particular, the new geospatial modules allow for satellite imagery an access to data on indicators such as tree cover, burned area and protected area. Furthermore, methodological work on the FRA remote sensing survey and planned thematic studies were outlined.

Ms. Jingpin Lei (Montréal Process Liaison Office, China), in her video address, introduced the Montréal Process and its recent work. Ms. Lei informed participants of the key findings of the latest Montréal Process Synthesis Report, published in 2023, which compiles information on eleven indicators across all Montréal Process criteria. The focus of the current work of the Process is on deforestation and forest degradation, through the micro-symposia on this topic and the implementation of the Sydney Initiative, which aims to stimulate discussion on how criteria and indicators can be used for this purpose.

Mr. Bernhard Wolfslehner (European Forest Institute FOREST EUROPE Support Team) informed participants of forest information-related work of FOREST EUROPE and highlighted the work on the future of SFM including related scientific publications and background documents. In addition, Mr. Wolfslehner highlighted other activities of the Liaison Office, such as the preparations for the FoRISK facility and the work on biodiversity and green jobs indicators. Furthermore, he informed about ongoing preparations for the 9th Ministerial Conference, as well as next steps in the Joint UNECE/FAO/FOREST EUROPE Pan-European Data Collection and production of the next edition of the State of Europe's forests report.

Mr. Nicolas Robert (European Environment Agency) informed the Team about

the objectives, current updates and ongoing developments of the Forest Information System for Europe (FISE), along with tools for data and information dissemination processes. Furthermore, Mr. Robert highlighted recent research updates relevant to forests and forestry and potential future extensions and developments of FISE, in particular its reporting page.

Mr. Roman Michalak (Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section) provided an update on the Joint Section's activities in different work areas, including recent publications, communication highlights, such as the UN forest podcast and events at the COP28 and the International Day of Forests 2024. In addition, Mr. Michalak highlighted the upcoming studies on forest damage in the UNECE region and boreal forests and provided an overview of the Joint Section's activities projected for 2024.

Item 5. Mr. Roman Michalak (Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section) provided updates and information on the 2025 Joint UNECE/FAO/FOREST EUROPE pan-European Data Collection (JPEDC) cycle. He presented the new data collection interface, outlined its functionalities, and highlighted further accomplishments such as the guide document and the Helsinki capacity building workshop for National Correspondents, along with an overview of the status of reporting.

Item 6. Mr. Marco Onida (European Commission) outlined the rationale and considered timeline behind the proposal for a "Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a monitoring framework for resilient European forests". In addition, Mr. Onida presented the corresponding objectives of the EU Forest Strategy for 2030, the related policy context of the EU forest monitoring law and highlighted the related benefits for policy makers, forest managers and businesses and the considered scope of the proposed monitoring set-up for harmonization and standardisation of forest data.

Item 7. Mr. Andrzej Talarczyk (Forest and Natural Resources Research Centre / Taxus IT) presented the benefits of integrated Forest Information Systems (FIS) for forest management, policy and communication, and highlighted the progress made within the related project. He informed the Team about the work done, including study visits and meetings (e.g. the UNECE/FAO Regional Forest Information Week for countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia) as well as about the finalized study and guide on strategic planning and organization of the development of forest information systems.

Item 8. Mr. Michael Köhl (University of Hamburg) presented the main results of the project on the assessment of forest damage/disturbance reporting in the UNECE region. In particular, Mr. Köhl outlined the key findings of the chapters on conceptual foundations, forest damage/disturbance reporting in the region, FRA reporting on forest damage/disturbance, as well as interpreting forest damage/disturbance data and innovative tools for monitoring and data analysis. Mr. Michael Köhl then summarised the main findings of the project on forest damage/disturbance assessment in the UNECE region and presented the implications towards a refinement of the global and pan-European on forest damage/disturbance reporting.

In the group work that followed, the Team discussed the specific purposes of international reporting on forest damage, its relevance, implications and possible actions.

The feedback provided during this exploratory process should be viewed as constructive input to inform ongoing efforts, rather than representing any formal consensus recommendations from the Team.

The open exchange of perspectives served as a valuable resource to guide the refinement of methodologies for future forest damage and disturbance data collection initiatives. The secretariat appreciated the insightful contributions shared, which will support the next steps in this process.

With regard to prioritised objectives of forest damage/disturbance reporting, participants emphasised the importance of specific purposes such as early warning/prevention/resilience mechanisms, monitoring the overall condition of forest ecosystems, as well as improving related internal and external communication to support management responses, policy formulation and risk awareness.

Likewise, participants highlighted the need for improved reporting of the temporal and spatial distribution of forest disturbances on a global scale to ensure completeness, to differentiate the causes of damage, and to facilitate the detection of accumulated forest damage.

In the second exercise, the Team considered desirable reporting modalities for the identified purposes to that would support harmonisation of data from different sources despite national and regional patterns of forest damage and disturbance, along with avoiding the risk of double counting.

In this context, Team members discussed the periodicity of a potential forest damage reporting system, as well as common thresholds to facilitate the definition of severity of forest damage and disturbance.

Participants perceived the establishment of common thresholds in forest damage monitoring and reporting as complex and difficult to harmonise. The collection of national data on forest damage is already complex at the national level and often consists of dedicated independent thematic inventories/monitoring developed using different methodologies. The need to ensure consistency in reporting trends was therefore considered more important than comparisons between reporting countries.

Considering the complexities involved, participants emphasized the importance of aligning the frequency of data collection to the specific reporting topic, user requirements, and availability of national data, while taking into account reporting capabilities.

It was observed that the possible improvement of reporting modalities on the cause and timing of damage, focusing on sub-regional situations, may lead to an imbalance of data between sub-regions. This uneven coverage must be accepted in order to obtain a more accurate picture.

The distinction between forest damage and forest disturbance was considered important for a future specialized reporting system, however posing significant challenges. In particular, considering the effects of climate change and the expansion of societies' objectives regarding the multiple benefits of forest ecosystems.

It was also noted that in addition to the delineation between damage and disturbance, it is, for a variety of reasons, extremely challenging to define appropriate thresholds for what constitutes "disturbance" versus "normal" variability. The Team noted the increasing obsolescence of forest disturbance reference levels due to the effects of climate change and extreme weather events, which are altering historical patterns of forest disturbance.

In addition to reporting formats and definitions, the Team endorsed the importance of developing communication capabilities, including web tools for data communication and publication formats that include both comprehensive reports and concise policy briefs.

This group work revealed also a wide variety of understandings and expectations regarding future reporting of forest disturbance and damage, which should be taken into account in the next step of proposal development.

The insights and perspectives shared by the Team members represent a portion of the valuable feedback received. The Secretariat and the Team's Core Group appreciate everyone who took the time to provide thoughtful input, as it helps to understand diverse viewpoints and identify areas for improvement.

Moving forward, all constructive comments will be carefully considered to enhance and narrow down the proposal for an improved specialized international reporting on forest damage and disturbance.

Item 9. Mr. Roman Michalak (Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section) presented prior studies of the Joint Section on forest ownership in the ECE region and highlighted some examples of the recent second reporting cycle (2015) results (pattern of public and private ownership along with information on different property rights and user groups). In addition, Mr. Michalak outlined plans for the initiation of the work on the 3rd reporting cycle based on the results of the 2nd reporting cycle, which fully relies on the availability of extrabudgetary resources (not yet available).

Item 10. Mr. Roman Michalak (Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section) presented the work of the Joint Section related to boreal forests and implemented activities, produced outputs and communication materials by the Joint Section. Furthermore, Mr. Michalak outlined the global importance of boreal forests and highlighted their wide-ranging benefits for the society outlined in the upcoming study.

Ms. Melinda Dosa, DG Eurostat, European Commission, gave a presentation on European Forest Accounts and highlighted its coverage of data and availability of information. In addition, Ms. Melinda Dosa informed about related definitions and key statistics on indicators such as deforestation, afforestation, wood removals and annual increment, and presented some examples of analytical work done using the data collected.

Ms. Stefanie Linser, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, presented an analysis of forest biodiversity indicators in the UNECE region. Ms. Linser presented an overview of indicators, current and planned international schemes (Global Core Set of Forest-Related Indicators, EC Proposal, FOREST EUROPE and other processes for criteria and indicators), and the availability of biodiversity-related information collected by countries and highlighted possible

directions for the development of international systems.

Mr. Michael Köhl, University of Hamburg, provided a presentation, prepared jointly with Ms. Stefanie Linsler, on the undertaken work of the FOREST EUROPE Think Tank for SFM in regard to the future SFM concept in Europe. He recalled the historical development process of the concepts and highlighted the increasing multifunctional demands on forest ecosystems.

Item 11. No additional matters were raised.

Item 12. The Team leader, Mr. Friedrich Schmitz (Germany) informed the participants that the next in-person meeting is planned for spring 2025.

Item 13. The Team expressed its sincere gratitude to the Cypriot hosts, the Department of Forests of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment of Cyprus, for the kind invitation and assistance in the organisation of the meeting, as well as for the exceptional hospitality received in Cyprus.

Special thanks were expressed to Mr. Andreas Christou, Acting Director of the Department of Forests, as well as to Mr. Antonis Sarris, Forest Officer 1st Grade, and Mr. Savvas Andrea, Senior Conservator of Forests, for their contribution and commitment to the preparation and organisation of the event, as well as to all the Cypriot experts involved in the organisation of the meeting and the study tour, for their highly professional support, helpfulness and warm welcome to Cyprus.

The third (3rd) Meeting of the "UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management" was closed at 14:54 on 19 April 2024.

Annex I

Third (3rd) meeting of the “UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management”

*Larnaca, Cyprus, 17-19 April 2024
Sun Hall Hotel*

Agenda

First day, Wednesday 17 April 2024

Meeting started at 10am GMT+2 Cyprus time.

- Item 1. Opening and welcome by Team Leader, and representatives of:
 - a. Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment of Cyprus and its Department of Forests.
 - b. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
 - c. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.
- Item 2. Adoption of the Agenda.
- Item 3. Forests and forest monitoring in Cyprus.
- Item 4. Updates by organizations on forest information related developments of the:
 - a. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
 - b. Montréal Process.
 - c. FOREST EUROPE and the European Forest Institute.
 - d. European Environment Agency.
 - e. Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.
- Item 5. Update on the progress of work on the FAO Forest Resources Assessment and the UNECE/FAO/Forest Europe Joint pan-European Data Collection.
- Item 6. Presentation of the proposal for a “Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a monitoring framework for resilient European forests”.
- Item 7. Forest information systems.
 - a. Main results and conclusions of the project.
 - b. Discussion on results, conclusions, and possible follow-up activities.

- Item 8. Future forest damage/disturbance monitoring in the ECE region.
 - a. Conclusions of the project.
 - b. Discussion on future forest damage data collection in the ECE region.

Second day, Thursday 18 April 2024

Field trip to Troodos Forest (entire day)

Third day, Friday, 19 April 2024

Meeting started at 9am GMT+2 Cyprus time.

- Item 8. (cont.) Future forest damage/disturbance monitoring in the UNECE region.
 - c. Group work.
 - d. Concluding discussion and next steps.
- Item 9. Forest ownership reporting in the ECE region.
- Item 10. Ongoing activities of the Team and the Secretariat.
 - a. Boreal forests.
 - b. European Forest Accounts.
 - c. Forest biodiversity.
 - d. SFM 2.0.
 - e. Other topics and activities.
- Item 11. Any Other Business.
- Item 12. Date and place of the next meeting.
- Item 13. Closure of the meeting.

Annex II

List of participants

First Name	Name	Organization	Country
Savvas	Andrea	Department of Forests	Cyprus
Andreas	Andreou	Department of Forests	Cyprus
Evangelos	Andreou	Department of Forests	Cyprus
Albena	Bobeva	Executive Forest Agency	Bulgaria
Konstantinos	Charalambous	Department of Forests	Cyprus
Areti	Christodoulou	Department of Forests	Cyprus
Konstantinos	Dimitrakopoulos	Department of Forests	Cyprus
Ioannis	Dionysiou	Department of Forests	Cyprus
Johannes	Hangler	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management	Austria
Pierre	Hermans	SYLVA NOVA	Belgium
Marek	Jabłoński	Forest Research Institute	Poland
Örjan	Jonsson	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	
Michael	Köhl	Universität Hamburg	Germany
Goran	Kovač	Hrvatske šume d.o.o. (Croatian forests Ltd.)	Croatia
Jaroslav	Kubišta	Forest Management Institute	Czech Republic
Jingpin	Lei	Montréal Process Liaison Office	China
Markus	Lier	European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development	
Stefanie	Linser	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (BOKU)	Austria
Achilleas	Michael	Department of Forests	Cyprus
Roman	Michalak	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe	
Bożydar	Neroj	Directorate General of the State Forests	Poland
Marta	Nurczyńska-Dańek	Directorate General of the State Forests	Poland
Marco	Onida	European Commission, ENV	
Jonas	Paulsson	Swedish Forest Agency	Sweden
Anssi	Pekkarinen	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	
Nicolas	Robert	European Environment Agency	
Antonis	Sarris	Department of Forests	Cyprus

Friedrich	Schmitz	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture	Germany
Teemu	Seppä	Metsähallitus Forestry Ltd	Finland
Byron	Smiley	Canadian Forest Service	Canada
Bastian	Stahl	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe	
Andrzej	Talarczyk	Forest and Natural Resources Research Centre	Poland
Angelos	Tsianakkas	Department of Forests	Cyprus
Mati	Valgepea	Estonian Environment Agency	Estonia
Melinda	Verebelyine Dosa	European Commission, Eurostat	
Bernhard	Wolfslehner	European Forest Institute	
Anna	Żornaczuk-Łuba	Directorate General of the State Forests	Poland
Belén	Zubieta de Piquer	Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico	Spain