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**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations****Economic Commission for Europe****Food and Agriculture Organization****Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry****European Forestry Commission****Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics,
Economics and Management****Forty-fifth session**

Geneva, 22–24 May 2024

**Report of the forty-fifth session of the Joint Economic
Commission for Europe and the Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United Nations Working Party on Forest
Statistics, Economics and Management****I. Introduction**

1. The Joint Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management (henceforth referred to as the “Joint Working Party”) held its forty-fifth session from 22 to 24 May 2024. Meeting documents as well as presentations (whose content and conclusions are not part of this report) are available at: <https://unece.org/info/Forests/events/386476>.
2. The meeting was opened by Mr. Michal Synek, Czech Republic, Chair of the Joint Working Party.
3. The Chief of the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, on behalf of the Director of the Forests, Land and Housing Division, ECE, welcomed delegates. She highlighted the tasks ahead for the Joint Working Party, with a particular focus on forests and forest products from forests in the ECE region at the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan (2024) and COP 30 in Belém, Brazil (2025)). She further highlighted the important role of the Joint Working Party and thanked member States and the Teams of Specialists for their technical input and excellent cooperation.



II. Attendance

4. Delegations from the following member States participated in the meeting: Armenia, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan.
5. The following United Nations agency participated in the session: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
6. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated in the session: AirClim - Air Pollution and Climate secretariat, Forest and Natural Resources Research Centre, Norwegian Forest Owners' Federation, Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), World Business Council for Sustainable Development.
7. Representatives of other organizations, the private sector, local entities and academia attended as observers: Ecologie and Communauté SARL, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU).

III. Adoption of the agenda

8. The Joint Working Party adopted the agenda.

IV. Matters arising since the last session

9. The Chief of the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, on behalf of the Director of the ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division highlighted the United Nations' current budget crisis and its implications on meetings and operations. She also highlighted the successful session of the ECE Committee on Forests (COFFI) and the European Forestry Commission (EFC) held in San Marino in November 2023 as well as the events organized at COP 28 in Dubai that resulted in the creation of the Alliance of Trees in Dry Cities (supported by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)). She also mentioned that ECE had a new Executive Secretary, Ms. Tatiana Molcean of Moldova. ECE was currently chairing the informal European Forest Alliance whose first joint findings on biodiversity monitoring were published by Forest Europe in March 2024. She also highlighted the Section's work on follow-up to the Economic Commission for Europe decision on digital and green transformations (B70, E/2023/37 E/ECE/1503) which included the development of a new data collection system, updating of INForest, an online pan-European reporting platform as well as a new forest knowledge platform.
10. The Director of the FAO Liaison Office Geneva informed delegates about ongoing efforts by FAO to transform food systems. He highlighted the conclusions of the thirty-fourth Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) and upcoming events including the twenty-seventh meeting of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) from 19-26 July 2024. He confirmed that through the EFC and the FAO Forestry Division at FAO headquarters, FAO is committed to deliver on the request for strengthened cooperation within the ECE/FAO Joint Section contained in the ERC report (ERC/24/13 Rev.1) on the outcomes of the debate of the Joint Session of the forty-second session of the EFC and the eighty-first session of the ECE Committee on Forest and the Forest Industry, and the request of the ERC. He mentioned the move of a new staff member to the Joint Section replacing the departing one. He took note of the request for inviting the Chair of EFC to the ERC meetings and conveying it to the relevant team.
11. The Joint Working Party took note of the information provided by the secretariat and expressed its expectation that the FAO would comply with the ERC request to utilize all resources earmarked for the Joint Section to strengthen the implementation of the Integrated Programme of Work in a timely manner.

V. Thematic focus: Climate change and forests

12. The session moderator (Switzerland) welcomed panellists, noting that the timeliness and relevance of the topic, as climate change was shaping increasingly the management of forests in the ECE region in the long term.

13. A representative of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of Brazil, in her video keynote address, outlined the Brazilian Government's commitments resulting from the impact of climate change on domestic and global forests, and the need for considering the experience in the South and North to inform next steps, and national and global partnerships.

14. In his keynote address, a representative of the AirClim presented his organization's views and a recent study on climate change impacts on Northern forests. He emphasized the need for coordination and the synergies among organizations and stakeholders to bring Northern forests and their role to global climate-related processes.

15. In his keynote address, a representative of the Canadian Forest Service outlined his country's domestic climate change policies and measures as well as Canada's international engagement in climate processes.

16. A representative of the Forest Management Institute, Czech Republic, outlined his country's experience with climate change impacts on Czech forests as experienced because of recent bark beetle outbreaks, which resulted in the need for new adaptation policies.

17. Two presenters from Poland from the Ministry of Climate and Environment and the General Directorate of State Forest introduced Poland's challenges related to adaptation and mitigation as well as ongoing project developments. They highlighted the results of the National Forest Dialogue, in particular strengthening public participation, biodiversity protection and forest in urban areas.

18. A representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland provided an overview of Finland's policies and programmes designed to respond to climate change challenges, including its Climate Plan for the Land Use Sector, National Climate Change Adaptation Plan and National Forest Strategy.

19. A follow-up discussion showed that the topic of climate change and its impact on forests was high on member States' agendas. The need for research, development of new tools as well as international and domestic cross-sectoral cooperation were widely recognized.

20. During group work on Climate Change and Forests – Roadmap to UNFCCC COP 29/30 and beyond, delegates in the three groups highlighted that (a) national priorities on climate change mitigation and adaptation included the active management of forests or efforts to increase forest cover through afforestation (e.g. by alternative tree species, promotion of wood as a product of sustainable forest management), (b) national activities addressing those priorities included the development and implementation of adaptation and mitigation policies, laws, rules and regulations as well as the identification of funding sources and communication networks, (c) raising the profile of ECE forests for example through potential collaboration with United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) at COP 29 (Baku, Azerbaijan) as well as an exchange of information and knowledge sharing among member States via the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.

21. The Joint Working Party welcomed the choice of the thematic focus and the information provided on climate change impacts on national forests and on trees in urban spaces.

22. The Joint Working Party agreed that this timely initiative will facilitate preparations for the UNFCCC COP 30 to be held in 2025.

23. The Joint Working Party requested the secretariat to coordinate with member States on the development of a substantive document on "UNECE Forests and Climate Change" as well as further climate change related outputs and activities.

VI. Reporting on implemented and ongoing work

24. The leader of the Team of Specialists (ToS) on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management presented an overview of activities. At its third meeting, held in Larnaca, Cyprus (17 to 19 April 2024) the Team discussed and exchanged information on national, regional and global forest monitoring initiatives, and support to the implementation of the Integrated Programme of Work. He expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment of Cyprus for hosting the meeting. The leader of the Team highlighted the contribution of the ToS to the development of the forest damage/disturbance assessment in the region and the forest information systems, as well as the regular global and regional reporting on forests.

25. The secretariat informed delegates about the progress made on the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2025 and the 2025 Joint ECE/FAO/Forest Europe Pan-European Data Collection (JPEDC) on forests and sustainable forest management. He noted that the national reporting for the FRA process is in its final phase and is being followed by the ongoing JPEDC.

26. The secretariat also briefed delegates on the progress of work on forest disturbance/damage assessment in the ECE region. The final study “Reporting on forest damages and disturbances in the UNECE region” is available at <https://unece.org/info/Forests/pub/391138>, while the work continues on the development of future forest damage reporting.

27. The secretariat informed delegates about the work on boreal forests, which focused on the preparation of a scoping study on forests and the forest sector in the boreal biome. Norway enquired whether member States involved in the scoping study will have a possibility to check the text before it is published. The secretariat indicated that a review of the scoping study by member States was not foreseen but member States will be invited to review their country profiles.

28. The Joint Working Party was informed about the Team’s and the secretariat’s planned activities, including the preparation of analytical and communication materials based on the data collected for the 2025 reporting cycle. In addition to continuing the work on forest damage assessment, the next cycle of initiating the reporting on forest ownership in the ECE region is planned, subject to resource availability.

29. Delegates appreciated the coordinated work on global and regional data collection processes on forests and sustainable forest management which reduced their reporting burden at the national level, avoided duplication of reporting, optimizes resource use and improved the consistency of reported data.

30. Delegates also underlined the importance of improved reporting on forest damage and disturbance and the need for involving all organizations and partners active and interested in that area, including the Forest Europe Forest Risk Facility, to reduce the risk of duplication and incentivize collaboration.

31. Given the dynamic nature of data monitoring, assessment and reporting, delegates underlined the need for continuing substantial, structural, and technological updates of the global and regional data collection systems. They also highlighted the increasing importance of collecting information on urban and peri-urban forestry and the need to reflect this in international data collection systems.

32. The Joint Working Party:

(a) Took note of the report of the Joint ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management and the secretariat;

(b) expressed appreciation for the progress of work on the 2025 cycle of the Joint Pan-European Data Collection and the Global Forest Resources Assessment, including the new online tools developed for this purpose;

(c) took note of the results of work, including on developing forest information systems (ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2024/5 and ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2024/6) and assessing

forest damage/disturbance in the ECE region, and provided input for future work in those areas;

(d) supported the proposed activities, including the reporting on forest ownership in the ECE region, and invited member States and organizations to support that process.

Forest products and wood energy statistics

33. The secretariat and the Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics updated the Joint Working Party on Forest Products.

34. The secretariat informed delegates that the reporting deadline for the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JFSQ) is 10 June 2024 and presented an update on the development of a central data platform that will replace the current JFSQ database.

35. The secretariat informed delegates that the Timber Forecast Questionnaire will be sent on 30 August 2024 and the deadline for replies is 1 October 2024.

36. A representative of the Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics, on behalf of the Team Leader, presented the activities of the team and its two ad hoc task groups. She noted that the ToS identified funding for digitalization as a top priority because it would significantly enhance data gathering and analyses.

37. The secretariat highlighted that the ToS strongly supported a proposal to fund a multi-year, multi-donor project to support the digitalization of forest products and wood energy statistics, via the Central Data and Information Platform hosted by ECE, and invited member States to contribute to such a project, noting that no regular budget resources were available.

38. The Joint Working Party:

(a) Took note of the report of the Joint ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics, including areas of growing interest to member States;

(b) supported the activities proposed by the Team of Specialists and provided guidance on priorities;

(c) took note of the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire and Timber Forecast Questionnaire reporting deadlines and updates;

(d) invited member States to provide support to the secretariat to manage and enhance the customized Central Data and Information Platform for forest sector statistics hosted by ECE including by contributing funds to a multi-donor, multi-year trust fund.

Forest products markets

39. The secretary and the deputy leader of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Forest Products updated the Joint Working Party on forest products. In their joint presentation, they highlighted their excellent cooperation and stressed the important support of the ToS to the secretariat's work on forests products and markets. They highlighted the input of the Team to the annual Market Discussions, chapters and sub-chapters of the Forest Products Annual Market Review and their support to events on new market-related issues. The Deputy Chief of the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section informed delegates about the 2024 edition of the Forest Products Annual Market Review.

40. The deputy leader of the ToS highlighted the Team's activities related to low carbon construction, discussions on deforestation-free supply chain legislation and its impact on forest products' markets. The secretary informed the Joint Working Party about the planned market discussion session at COFFI on the theme of deforestation-free supply chains. He thanked member States for submitting their Country Market Statements in 2023. In 2024, the request for statements will be sent out in early August with a submission deadline of 11 October 2024.

41. The secretariat informed delegates that the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry for data for the reference year 2021 was close to finalization and that the most recent information could be found at <https://unece.org/info/Forests/events/386695>. The secretariat indicated that the final results and assessment will be published in the second half of 2024.

42. The Joint Working Party:

(a) Took note of the report by the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Forest Products;

(b) confirmed the importance of deforestation-free supply chains for forest products and noted that the secretariat intends to include the topic during the Market Discussion of the eighty-second session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry in November 2024;

(c) provided guidance on the priority types of forest products in future market assessments;

(d) invited member States to provide support to the secretariat for the assessment of forest products markets.

Communication and outreach

43. The secretary of the Team of Specialists on Forest Communication presented the work and events of the ToS in 2024 and screened the video produced on the 2024 International Day of Forests. She outlined the changes in communication work and challenges faced. She also highlighted the need to connect with the non-forest sector and their participation in various for a to strengthen synergies and links. She presented FAO's #growthesolution campaign in collaboration with partners globally.

44. The Chief of the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section presented ongoing communication and outreach work promoting the work of the Joint Section, highlighting events, social media campaigns, the Forest Billboard, and new episodes of the "The UN Forest Podcast". She mentioned the many events organized at COP-28 in Dubai which had led to the formation of the new Trees in Dry Cities Coalition under the urban action work. She also mentioned the highly mediatized event in Geneva on the 2024 International Day of Forests. She also updated on communication activities planned for 2024-25 and thanked the delegations of Canada, Finland and Switzerland whose financial contribution made this work possible.

45. The Working Party:

(a) Took note of the report by the Team of Specialists on Forest Communication;

(b) welcomed the secretariat's work on communication and outreach through an increased engagement on its social media channels, the Forest Information Billboard and other outlets;

(c) welcomed the secretariat's and the ToS' many promotional activities, including special events, social media campaigns, flyers and podcasts, and requested them to further improve cooperation and increase outreach and joint work with the help of member States.

Capacity building

46. The secretariat updated about its capacity-building activities since the previous session. These included a regional workshop, a scoping study, a practical guide and an online training course on the development of Forest Information Systems (FIS) under the project "Strengthening capacity of policy and decisions makers, and forest service specialists to develop national forest information systems in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia"; regional capacity building workshops for National Correspondents to the 2025 cycle of the FAO Global FRA and the Joint Pan-European Data Collection, organized by ECE, FAO and Forest Europe in Helsinki, Finland, in September 2023 and by ECE and FAO in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in October 2023; a capacity building workshop on forest reproductive material for forests landscape restoration in the Republic of Moldova (Chisinau, October 2023); an overview webinar on the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire, organized in April 2024 and the series of events of the Informal Experts Network on Urban Nature.

47. The secretariat outlined the planned capacity-building activities for 2024/2025, including the release of the forest knowledge platform, a regional ECE/FAO capacity building workshop on forest fires and remote sensing in Antalya, Türkiye (July 2024);

assistance to Armenia in developing its national forest inventory and to Uzbekistan in enhancing forest landscape restoration, trainings on circular value chains for forest products; and webinars by Informal Experts Network on Urban Nature.

48. The Joint Working Party:

(a) Took note of the secretariat's implemented and planned work on improving capacities in member States;

(b) took note of emerging needs and declining resources the need to further strengthen the secretariat's capacity-building efforts and invited member States to provide additional funding opportunities and increase the involvement of member States in capacity-building work.

VII. Update: Review of the Integrated Programme of Work

49. The secretariat informed delegates about the outcomes of the hybrid consultations with member States and stakeholders on the zero draft of the Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) for the period 2026-2029 held on 22 May 2024. The meeting was attended by 49 participants from 25 member States. The Joint Working Party briefly reviewed the zero draft IpoW text and delegations proposed changes. The secretariat explained that the revised draft IpoW and a list of tasks, priorities and funding would be shared as post-session documents and were open for comments until 30 June 2024.

50. The secretariat informed the Joint Working Party that during the hybrid consultations the possible future format of the Joint Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management had also been discussed.

51. In reply to a request, the secretaries of COFFI and EFC outlined the legal status, rules and procedures applying to the Teams of Specialists.

52. The Joint Working Party:

(a) Took note of the hybrid consultations with member States and stakeholders on the zero draft of the Integrated Programme of Work for the period 2026-2029 held on 22 May 2024;

(b) took note of the proposed changes from the hybrid consultations to the document "Zero draft of the 2026-2029 Integrated Programme of Work" (ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2024/7) and the indicative table of thematic priorities with organizational responsibilities, regular budget fund allocations and requirements for extrabudgetary resources;

(c) took note of the discussion on a possible revision of the format and timing of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management, requested the secretariat to create a task force to consult with member States and to further discuss the outcome of the consultations at COFFI's eighty-second session;

(d) took note of the discussion on the Team of Specialist on Forest Communication and requested the secretariat to continue discussions at COFFI's the eighty-second session;

(e) requested the secretariat to issue the post-session document, "Draft 1 of the Integrated Programme of Work 2026-2029" to reflect all changes discussed and to highlight pending issues in square brackets as well as Annex III "Indicative list of activities, priorities, lead organization and funding". Member States are invited to provide written comments to the secretariat on the post session document by 30 June 2024.

VIII. Overview of forest and forest sector related work by the Economic Commission for Europe and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations that are not covered by the Integrated Programme of Work

53. The secretary of the ECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management informed about the Committee's subsidiary bodies, its work and key publications promoting sustainable housing, urban development, and smart sustainable cities as well as its tools on climate neutrality. She highlighted the upcoming Forum of Mayors scheduled to be held in Geneva from 30 September to 1 October 2024. She mentioned the ongoing work on the country profile on urban development, housing and land management in Armenia and highlighted the support provided to Ukraine under the UN4UkrainianCities Project.

54. The secretary of the Joint Working Party briefly summarized the presentation by the ECE Sustainable Energy Division highlighting synergies with the work of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy (GERE) on wood energy and other forests-related topics. The secretariat conveyed the invitation by GERE to relevant experts from member States to join the Task Force on Quality Biofuels Standards.

55. A representative from the ECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution informed delegates about recent developments under the Air Convention, emphasizing the effects of air pollution on forests and work undertaken by the International Cooperative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests (ICP Forests). She highlighted exchanges at institutional levels, the organization of policy events and participation in EU funded projects relevant for the forest and wood sector. She briefly outlined the two upcoming meetings at the 11th Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Conference (FORECOMON) (June 11 to 12, 2024) and a session at the 26th World Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) in Stockholm in 2024 on nitrogen depositions in forests in a changing climate. She invited the Joint Working Party to consider regular exchanges of information including on the work related to sustainable forest management, forestry and forest services.

56. A secretariat member from the ECE Statistics Division provided an overview of the work of the ECE Statistical Division and the Conference of European Statisticians highlighting the environment-related activities of the Division. He informed the Joint Working Party about the recently published report on "Sustainable Development in the ECE Region: Facing a Headwind in 2024" which highlights that "...desertification and land degradation" and "...loss of biodiversity" show reverse trends in the ECE region. He noted the planned update of the Central Framework of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting beginning in 2025. He also mentioned the role of forest and wood-related aspects in forest and ecosystem accounts, and invited experts to participate in this process. He also highlighted the potential for joint capacity development activities on forest accounts and for cross-fertilization among forest experts and statisticians.

57. A secretariat member from the ECE Environment Division provided an update on the latest Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs) and thanked the Joint Working Party for its recommendation to include a forestry and forest management chapter. He briefly outlined how the various EPRs were implemented, including the steps, partners, and contributors. He mentioned that the EPRs were now in their fourth cycle with changed EPR methodologies and structures applied. He also highlighted that the chapter on forestry was gaining in importance and was requested more often by member States. He stressed the excellent cooperation with the Joint Section and invited delegates to consider strengthening contributions to upcoming future EPRs at the national level, such as the EPR of Moldova (2024).

58. A Forestry Officer from the FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Türkiye, presented the activities of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. He noted that assistance to FAO beneficiary countries was provided within the framework of regional priorities through regular FAO resources and extra-budgetary funds. Regional priorities currently address food security and malnutrition, sustainable rural development,

food system transformation as well as sustainable natural resource management with focus on biodiversity preservation and increase of resilience to climate change.

59. The Joint Working Party:

(a) Took note of the forest and forest product related activities by ECE and FAO in the ECE region not covered by the Integrated Programme of Work 2022-2025;

(b) emphasized the importance of including forestry experts in discussions, activities and processes related the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA).

IX. Election of officers

60. The meeting elected Mr. Michal Synek (Czech Republic) as Chair, Ms. Consuelo Brandeis (United States of America), Ms. Graça Louro (Portugal) and Mr. Talha Sadiq (Canada) as Vice-Chairs until the end of the forty-sixth session. The Working Party thanked Ms. Magdalena Wolicka-Posiadała (Poland) for her excellent support of the Bureau of the Joint Working Parts as chair and vice-chair in the past five years.

X. Date and place of next meeting

61. The Joint Working Party decided to hold its forty-sixth session from 14-16 May 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland, as an in-person meeting.

XI. Any other business

62. The secretariat informed that there will be a change in the secretariat of the Joint Working Party. Mr. Peter Pechacek will be the incoming new secretary.

63. The Joint Working Party expressed its deep appreciation and gratitude for the excellent work and services of the outgoing secretary, Mr. Florian Steierer, during the past years.

XII. Adoption of the report

64. The Joint Working Party adopted the report of its session and requested the secretariat to have it translated and published on the secretariat's website.
