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JOINT FAO/ECE WORKING PARTY ON FOREST ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS
Twenty-second session, 26-28 May 1999

Temperate and Boreal Forest Resource Assessment 2000:
review of final draft, consideration of future work

(Item 2 of the Provisional Agenda)

Note by the secretariat

The final draft of the Temperate and Boreal Forest Resource Assessment (TBFRA-2000) will be presented to the Joint Working Party.

The draft TBFRA-2000 report has been prepared on the basis of the proposals of the Team of Specialists and the "Kotka III". Thorough work has been done on the validation of the original country data, organisation of meetings with experts on specific thematic areas, consultancy and analysis of the material, etc. The co-operation with the Pan-European process on the protection of forest in Europe has contributed to the TBFRA-2000 process and preparation of the publication.

The preliminary draft report has been sent for checking to national correspondents, and by the time of the Working Party session, the draft will be reviewed by the Team of Specialists (Geneva, 22-24 March 1999). The recommendations of the Team of Specialists on the Main TBFRA-2000 Report will be presented to the Working Party. The TBFRA-2000 has also been structured in an electronic database which will be available and accessible on the Internet in the Year 2000.

The Joint FAO/ECE Working Party is invited to:

- (a) review the draft TBFRA-2000 and make suggestions for improvements;
- (b) discuss and approve methods of dissemination of the results of the Assessment;
- (c) consider a possible TBFRA follow-up work and preparation for future activities in this area.

1. The information on the forest resources of the temperate and boreal zones (including industrialised countries outside the UN/ECE region) has been collected, processed, analysed and published in the context of the FAO global forest resources assessment, for already many years, under the guidance of the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics.

2. The present Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment (TBFRA-2000) is being carried out in accordance with the programme element A.1.2 - "Forest Resources Assessment 2000 (temperate and boreal forests)" of the integrated programme of work of the UN/ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission (ECE/TIM/91).

3. The main instrument of data collection for the TBFRA-2000 was a detailed enquiry built on the global framework proposed by the "Kotka-III" expert consultation (June 1996, Kotka, Finland). The scope and coverage of the assessment, as well as the enquiry structure and contents, including TBFRA terms and definitions, were discussed at the 21st session of the Joint Working Party in May 1997 (TIM/EFC/WP.2/27).

4. The Working Party noted "the high ambitions of the enquiry to collect a comprehensive set of data which would meet the much higher expectations of the international forest community as regards information on the resources." It also noted that "This ambition had generated new topics, new approaches and new partnerships", and "new risks as well". The recommendations of the Working Party were taken in full consideration in the final version of the TBFRA-2000 enquiry. The enquiry with the secretariat guidelines and the set of terms and definitions was sent to national correspondents of the 55 temperate/boreal industrialised countries in August - September 1997.

5. The first country replies to the enquiry were received by the UN-ECE/FAO secretariat in February-March 1998. The majority of countries had satisfactorily replied to the challenging enquiry by August 1998. Although the quality and completeness of the country replies differed from country to country, the information was quite good in general, taking account the complexity of the task for correspondents to respond to all the questions and to adjust national data to the TBFRA standards. While the TBFRA-2000 is clearly an ambitious and challenging project, it had been proved that the detailed enquiry provided an indispensable instrument to implement the assessment successfully.

6. The process of the validation of country data and maintaining the dialogue with the national focal points on the subject played an important role in the project implementation. Following the recommendations of the Working Party the secretariat asked countries to check and complete their data and related information to the extent possible.

7. The status and progress made in the TBFRA-2000 implementation was reviewed at the meeting of the Team of Specialists (ToS) held in March 1998 (Ispra, Italy). The ToS noted achievements and gains, as well as difficulties and problems to be overcome within the project. The team defined the scope of work which had to be done in the forthcoming months and provided, in particular, useful recommendations on the preparation (on the basis of the preliminary TBFRA information) of the interim report for the pan-European Ministerial Conference.

8. The preliminary TBFRA results were summarised in the report presented to the Lisbon Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe (Lisbon,

June 1998). Although these interim temperate/boreal FRA-2000 data on the 36 participating countries (28 tables accompanied by charts, graphs and explanations) still had to be significantly improved for publishing in the Main TBFRA-2000 Report, the study proved to be an important area for the fruitful and mutually beneficial co-operation between the UN-ECE/FAO and the pan-European process. The Conference acknowledged the collaboration with the TBFRA, and particularly the "support given in data collection by inclusion of most of the existing pan-European quantitative indicators (of SFM)" in the temperate and boreal forest resources assessment programme.

9. After the Lisbon Ministerial Conference the secretariat, in collaboration with the national correspondents, has continued the process of checking and validation of the statistical and other forest resources information received from countries, mainly beyond Europe (i.e. Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Russian Federation, United States, some other countries), and establishing the TBFRA-2000 electronic database.

10. The validation process has helped to improve significantly the original country replies to the TBFRA enquiry. The completeness and consistency of the information was verified with the so called "tables of essential (must-have) data". Only a few countries were not in a position to provide the data for all the parameters included in this table. In case where official data were not available, estimates were made by the correspondents in co-operation with the secretariat. The "Table of essential (must-have) data" will be a part of the country files in the final TBFRA report.

11. The UN/ECE Timber Committee 56th session (28 September - 01 October 1998) confirmed the highest profile of the project, as well as the great expectations from the TBFRA process as an invaluable contribution in support of the international dialogue on sustainable forest management.

12. The TBFRA information, including statistics and the descriptive part of national replies to the enquiry (comments, explanations, supplementary and supportive data, etc) has been loaded into the electronic database, so as to facilitate the data handling and analysis in the process of their publication and dissemination. The ultimate target is to make the TBFRA-2000 database in available and accessible in a user-friendly format on Internet.

13. A number of important meetings with the high level experts (consultants) were held in 1998-1999 with the main objective of reviewing and discussing methods and practical issues of the Assessment, as well as the presentation of different thematic topics (general forest resources information, ownership status, biodiversity, wood supply and carbon sequestration, forest condition and damages to forest and other wooded lands, NWGS, etc) in the main TBFRA-2000 publication.

14. The meeting of the team of specialists on TBFRA-2000, scheduled for 22-24 March 1999 in Geneva (i.e. after this note is prepared), will review the TBFRA first draft results and provide its final recommendations to be taken into account by the 22st session of the Joint UN-ECE/FAO Working Party. It is expected that the Working Party will advise to the secretariat on how the TBFRA-2000 Main Report should be finalised before the survey is published.

15. Generally, the progress made so far in the TBFRA implementation has been satisfactory and encouraging, keeping in mind the scope of the information to process, and a very tight time-schedule in the preparation of the draft Main TBFRA-2000 Report.

16. The following factors underle the good level of cooperation with the TBFRA national correspondents, and generally satisfactory response from countries to the demanding and challenging enquiry:

- TBFRA-2000 has been initiated by participating countries, and its general scope and coverage has been defined from the very beginning with countries' support; The TBFRA countries, through their national correspondents, have demonstrated their good will and provided necessary support at each stage of the project implementation.
- The Joint FAO/ECE Working Party has provided clear and helpful guidance for the implementation of the study; The network of TBFRA National Correspondents was established on an official, ministerial (or governmental) basis, and in good time before the project initiation;
- The network has been kept operational from the very beginning of the process through the information needs enquiries, adjustment issue, data checking and updating figures for SOFO-97, other concise queries, Gmunden and Geneva briefing meetings, etc;
- The cooperation with the pan-European Ministerial Conference (Lisbon, June 1998) was a stimulating factor for accelerating the whole project;
- The role and contribution of the team of specialists on TBFRA-2000, as a factor in this successful development of the project has been vital;

- TBFRA-2000 as a part of the Global FRA-2000 process has been receiving important support and partnership from the number of international organisations, as well as encouragement from the CSD/IPF/IFF international forest policy dialogue;
- Good partnership and the important support which TBFRA, as part of the Global FRA-2000, has been receiving from the FAO Forestry Department and the FAO European Forestry Commission;

Results and findings of the Assessment

17. 51 temperate/boreal industrialised countries (of a total 55) have replied to the TBFRA-2000 enquiry. The quality (completeness, consistency, etc) of the final national replies is generally quite good, and the information received from countries is fairly well documented. The missing replies are mainly from countries in the Balkans and central Asia, which are no doubt finding it difficult to handle an enquiry of this complexity for the first time, or which do not have the necessary basic information gathering systems. Informed estimates by the secretariat are being used and applied to close gaps in the information from the missing countries.

18. The range of the information which was received from countries and included in the main TBFRA-2000 report is extremely wide. The TBFRA voluminous statistics are compiled into approximately 80 main summary tables. For some parameters, information was requested by the TBFRA-2000 enquiry in a descriptive format, rather than as absolute figures. For these variables, country replies are summarised on a thematic basis.

19. The final draft of the Temperate and Boreal Forest Resource Assessment (TBFRA-2000) will be presented to the Joint Working Party in two volumes as the conference room documents. Volume I includes the introduction, general explanatory notes, executive summary of the Assessment, core chapters of the Main TBFRA-2000 Report and main summary statistical tables with the forest resources data. The country files employed in Volume II will include the tables of essential data, explanations, comments, supplementary and comparative information provided by national correspondents and by the UN-ECE/FAO secretariat.

20. The statistical and descriptive information has been analysed by high level experts in the specific thematic areas, and the following Chapters have constituted Volume I of the Main TBFRA-2000 Report:

- Chapter I: Area of Forest and OWL: Situation and Changes
- Chapter II: Ownership and Management Status of Forest and OWL
- Chapter III: Wood Supply and Carbon Sequestration: Situation and Changes
- Chapter IV: Biological Diversity and Environmental Protection
- Chapter V: Forest Condition and Damage to Forest and OWL
- Chapter VI: Protective and Socio-Economic Functions

21. The TBFRA-2000 data set, appears to be the most comprehensive international assessment ever made of the temperate/boreal forests resources. It has been able to provide objective information on most of the indicators of sustainable forest management drawn up by the pan-European process, and could, if necessary, respond to other post UNCED-Rio initiatives, such as the Montreal Process, as well as to provide information for the international policy dialogue within CSD/IFF, and for a number of international conventions.

22. Although the TBFRA-2000 presents a unique database on the temperate/boreal forest resources, nevertheless there is still considerable scope for improvement in the international forest and forestry relating data sets for policy discussion, notably in the following areas:

- measurement of change: to remedy this implies continuity and stability in the core TBFRA terms and definitions;
- in some areas, notably protection of biodiversity (protection areas), biomass assessment, non-wood goods and services and forest damage, there is need for further reflection on how to evaluate the data already collected and how to improve their comparability;
- there may be a need to expand in future assessments the information in the field of social and economic aspects, and to initiate data collection in these areas;
- countries should review their regular national information collection systems on the forest resource and their methods of adapting national data to international definitions, to ensure that they will be able to continue to provide on a regular basis the information necessary for international discussion of developments in the forest sector;
- international organisations involved in the collection and dissemination of information on sustainable management of the forest resource should continue to co-operate and harmonise their activities, sharing information collection and dissemination activities as appropriate.

23. There should be a strong UN/ECE and FAO commitment to keep the TBFRA-2000 terms and definitions, which are being used at present internationally, substantially unchanged and stable in future assessments. If any changes were to appear necessary, they should be undertaken immediately on completion of the FRA-2000 project, and on the basis of its results. This should be the subject

of the consideration of the ToS on TBFRA and the Joint Working Party, as well as at the global level for all parameters which could be collected for all countries.

24. The accomplishment of the core part of the TBFRA-2000 by the end 1999 will not close totally the work on the FAO/ECE forest resources assessment programme. Extra work will be necessary, notably for the further improvement of the data quality, make it available in a user-friendly form (CD-Rom, website, Internet), further analysis of the country data, and preparation of the TBFRA satellite and accompanying papers. There is a need for more intensive exchange of information and opinion on difficult parts of the data set, such as those concerning biodiversity, protection status, etc.

25. The Joint FAO/ECE Working Party is invited to:

- (a) review the draft TBFRA-2000 and make suggestions for improvements;
- (b) discuss and approve methods of dissemination of the results of the Assessment;
- (c) consider a possible TBFRA follow-up work and preparation for future activities in this area.

26. The recommendations of this Working Party session will be incorporated into the final version of the Main TBFRA-2000 Report, which has to be sent for publication (and translation into the ECE working languages in August - September 1999. The TBFRA results will be submitted to FAO, Rome for the preparation of the Global Synthesis of Forest Resources Assessment 2000 (Global FRA-2000). Simultaneously, the work will be done on the preparation and presentation of the TBFRA-2000 electronic database in the most user-friendly format within the Internet environment (UN/ECE Timber Committee home page <<<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber>>>). In fact, this database could be considered (and further developed) as a specific product elaborated in the process of the Assessment 2000.

Distribution of draft TBFRA

27. The draft TBFRA is quite voluminous (about 250 pages) and cannot be circulated as an official document. The first draft is therefore being circulated to members of the team of specialists and national correspondents. This will be modified in the light of the team's discussion at the meeting on 22-24 March and re-circulated, to Working Party delegates expected to attend the meeting. It is unfortunately not possible to circulate this document to everyone on the Working Party meeting list. If you are interested in receiving the draft TBFRA before the Working Party session, please inform the secretariat by fax (+ 41 22 917 00 41) or e-mail (<romi-chopra@unece.org>).

