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on Forest Economics and Statistics

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Guidance on Work Area 2: Forest Resources Assessment
and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management
in the Region

AGENDA ITEM 7.1 – REVIEW AND PLANS

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The document presents an overview of the activities in Work Area 2, Forest Resources Assessment, and highlights the topics and issues to be addressed by Working Party, as follows:

(a) Meetings of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management;

(b) Update on the recent developments of global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 preparation; UNECE/FAO contribution to the process and assistance to national reporting for Forest Resource Assessment 2010;

(c) Results of the review of reporting process and the report on state of forests and sustainable forest management for the Warsaw Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe;

(c) Data collection process for the elaboration of the State of Europe's Forest 2011 report, planning process and arrangements for the next Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe;

(d) Development of the new European forest types' classification, pilot application of the classification in the pan-European criteria and indicators reporting.

The Working Party is invited to provide guidance on current and future activities in Work Area 2.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The activities in Work Area 2 for the reporting period (April 2009 – March 2010) focused on the contribution to the FAO global Forest Resources Assessment (GFRA), evaluation of the report and reporting process for the Warsaw Ministerial Conference in 2007 and preparations for the new reporting process for the next Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (now called Forest Europe). This document provides information about activities in this work area that have taken place since the Working Party's last session. In addition, this note presents plans for the future and seeks the Working Party's guidance on specific issues where it is needed.

II. UNECE/FAO TEAM OF SPECIALISTS ON MONITORING SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

2. The inaugural meeting of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management was held on 25-27 February 2009, in Geneva. The Working Party was informed about the meeting's results at its 31st session. The report from the meeting, presentations and all relevant documents are available at the website: <http://timber.unece.org/index.php?id=130>.

3. The second meeting of the Team was hosted by the EU Joint Research Centre and was organized on 26-28 January 2010 in Ispra, Italy. The meeting was an opportunity for exchanging information on the ongoing activities related to forest assessment in the UNECE/FAO region. The participants were updated with the recent developments in the FAO Forest Resource Assessment 2010 programme. Information was presented about policy and institutions reporting under GFRA, Montreal Process and Forest Europe. Detailed presentation of the reporting for the next Forest Europe conference on quantitative indicators (National Enquiry) included presentation and discussion of the proposal for pilot reporting on the new European forest types.

4. In addition to the aspects directly related to reporting by criteria and indicators or global variables, the Team deliberated on relations between the international and national reporting. Based on examples of connecting those two levels of reporting, the Team shared ideas on how to improve the situation, and at the same increase the utility of national reporting at international levels and vice versa.

5. Reporting on health conditions of forests in the UNECE region was the special topic of the 2nd Team meeting. Despite that information on forest damage seem to be one of the most requested parts of the forests assessments, the results do not necessarily meet expectations. Relevance of the issue is expected to increase in the context of discussions and activities related to the climate change, adaptation of forests to future climate conditions in particular. The Team session demonstrated a variety of actions undertaken at national or international levels that aimed at collecting more relevant information about forest health and disturbances. The relevance and topicality of the issue suggest dedicating much attention for this area in future activities of the Team.

6. The second meeting of the Team showed a difference of expectations among the members regarding the role of the Team. The amount of time spent on the reporting issues for the next Forest Europe conference diminishes the attractiveness of the Team for non-Forest Europe countries. The Ispra meeting was an attempt to merge those interests; however, its results suggest diversification of

future forms of the Team's activities. The future meetings should be more focused and better suited to the profile of attendants.

7. More information about the Team and its activities are available in the Team Leader's report. The report, which includes evaluation of the actions undertaken, will be presented to the 32nd session.

8. *The Working Party is invited to review and comment on the past and to advise on the future activities of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management.*

III. REPORT ON OUTPUTS AND PLANS 2009-2010

A. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010

9. The GFRA 2010 Assessment was requested by the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) at its March 2007 meeting. The Assessment is based on a comprehensive country reporting process and a global remote sensing survey. A number of thematic studies linked with GFRA 2010, cover special issues, and constitute an integral part of the Assessment.

10. The main tool for the GFRA 2010 implementation was the comprehensive National Enquiry consisting of reporting tables, specifications and guidelines. Compared to GFRA 2005, the 2010 scope of national reporting was extended by five new tables: forest establishment and regeneration, policy and legal framework, institutional framework, education and research, public revenue collection and expenditure.

11. GFRA 2010 covers 233 countries and territories, and 178 officially nominated national correspondents provided national information for most of them. However, for the remaining 47 countries or territories, desk studies had to be prepared. The FRA region of Europe consists of 50 countries; national reports were received from 40 countries, and desk studies were produced for the remaining 10 countries or territories.

12. The FAO GFRA team and the UNECE/FAO Timber Section worked together to help countries in the UNECE region prepare national reports to the GFRA 2010. The Timber Section assisted the countries from the eastern Europe, central Asia and Caucasus with validation of their national reporting. Involvement of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management into the GFRA process contributed to streamlining regional discussions on harmonised reporting to the GFRA2010.

13. The release of the GFRA 2010 is planned for the 20th Session of COFO on 4 October 2010. The key findings from the report are expected to be presented earlier, during the sessions of the FAO regional commissions scheduled for spring 2010.

B. State of Europe's Forests 2007 (SoEF)

14. Following the decision on the continuation of the SoEF report evaluation, the UNECE/FAO Timber Section has reviewed the use of the report *State of Europe's Forests 2007* as well as assessed the level of satisfaction of its readers. The results of this review were combined with an evaluation

of the report and the reporting process done by the report's producers, UNECE/FAO and Forest Europe. The evaluation also included the results of the enquiry on the report's use and other available material related to the report's use. The collected material was the basis for a comprehensive analysis of the reporting process and the final product.

15. The results of this evaluation¹ confirmed the high value of the *State of Europe's Forest 2007*. Responses showed that 78% of users were satisfied with the overall content of the report, more than 85% of users were satisfied with the overall design, and nearly 91% of users agreed that the report added value to their work programme or activities.

16. The report was in general perceived as responding to the demand. Practically all elements, as well as the overall concept of the report, were evaluated to be of high quality and relevance. The same positive evaluation applies to the report's production process. The means of production and cooperation were seen as effective and efficient. Finally the report was assessed as being useful and adding value to the user's work programme and/or activities.

17. While positive in general, the evaluation provided more detailed comments and suggestions for future improvements. The report's producers called for better communication among process participants, especially during the data verification stage. Several proposals referred to the form and contents of the final report, highlighting the problem of better interrelating of the report's parts. Recommendations also concerned the extent of the report's promotion, and included calls for new, further elaborated products, better suited to the needs and more attractive for new users.

18. Reviewers underlined the need of better coordination between forest reporting processes (SoEF and GFRA) and enhanced use of synergies from this cooperation. In particular, A better interlinking of reporting on the regional Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (C&I for SFM) with the data collection on the global variables, including harmonization between regional and global reporting cycles. Harmonisation of the reporting should ensure achieving the goals with reduced efforts; thus this will result in an economisation of the secretariat's resources and a diminishing a reporting burden for countries.

19. Comments and suggestions received through the review are valid, and particularly important as they were often formulated by experts who were deeply involved in the report's production process. Circumstances of the report's production must also be taken into account. It should be noted that the total resources necessary for the 2007 report production extended well beyond their internal budgets dedicated for this activity. Thus production of the report demanded proper coordination between the responsible units and mobilisation of additional resources (financial and in-kind).

20. While the issue of coordination was resolved efficiently, mobilisation of resources was insufficient to satisfy the needs of the process. The above situation resulted in some delays, noticed by reviewers, and in the need of completion of many tasks within extremely short deadlines, often with the use of smaller number of staff than originally planned. When mentioning the good overall result of the 2007 process, it must be underlined that this result was achieved mainly thanks to additional voluntary contributions from national and international experts, as well as extraordinary involvement of secretariats, authors and other persons participating in the process.

¹ <http://timber.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/publications/soef-2007-self-evaluation.doc>

21. Experience collected through this exercise is of utmost importance, and should be used in production of the SoEF 2011. The detailed results of the review have been incorporated, to the extent possible, in the reporting for the next Ministerial Conference. The conclusions from this review can be found in the Annex 1 of this document. It should be mentioned, however, that the overall financial condition regarding the report's production has not improved since the previous reporting cycle. In addition, despite the fact that the length of the reporting cycle for the next Ministerial Conference is the same as the previous one, increased quality and quantity of reported information are expected.

22. Due to the higher expectations and increased costs of the report production process, the understaffing and deficit of the current report's budget is higher than those for the 2007 report. Obviously elaboration of the SoEF 2011 will benefit from the experience gathered during the previous reporting cycles and increased efficiency. Unfortunately this would be insufficient to effectively implement all advice received during the self-evaluation process, especially the recommendations on supplementary publications.

C. *Reporting for the State of Europe's Forests 2011*

23. The planning and preparations for the next report on the *State of Europe's Forests* for the 6th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe is ongoing. The UNECE/FAO Timber Section leads the process in close cooperation with the Forest Europe Liaison Unit Oslo, with support from the FAO GFRA Team in Rome.

24. Procedures are in line with former practices. An Advisory Group was established for the elaboration. The Group, which met two times in 2009, gave advice on all aspects of the report elaboration. Special attention was paid to the data provision process, national enquiries on qualitative and quantitative indicators in particular. Valuable inputs were also provided by members of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management and FAO GFRA national correspondents, who actively participated in the preparatory process.

25. The new enquiry on quantitative indicators was substantially developed compared to the 2011 reporting. The new form² is consistent with the previous one, and a substantial part of the information already reported for past periods could be used for the ongoing reporting. Further improvements were made on indicators that have proven to be difficult. More clarifications were provided in particular for reporting on protected and protective forests and socio-economic indicators.

26. Due to the short period between the GFRA 2010 and the SoEF 2011, the SoEF enquiries are prepared in a way that would allow utilisation of the information reported for GFRA to the maximum extent. This will help lessen the reporting burden on countries, while still giving the possibility to provide updated data.

27. Wherever possible the SoEF 2011 enquiry will be pre-filled with information already reported to the GFRA 2010 or other relevant processes. Another proposal that aims at decreasing the reporting burden is to simplify the verification procedure of information collected through international data providers where data collected for the needs of other processes or projects will be directly utilised in the report.

² <http://timber.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/publications/soef2011-enquiry-quantitative.doc>

28. The preliminary drafts of the enquiries were disseminated in mid-January 2010. The pre-filled draft of the enquiry on quantitative indicators was delivered to countries at the beginning of March. The countries will be asked for replies by 1 May 2010. The enquiry on qualitative indicators is planned to be disseminated in spring 2010. The above deadlines should allow for the review and compilation of the source data by September 2010, which would enable elaboration of the first draft of the report by the end of this year.

29. *The Working Party is invited:*

- (a) to review the regional UNECE/FAO contribution to the GFRA 2010 process;*
- (b) to discuss results of the review of the SoEF 2007 reporting and*
- (c) to provide advice on harmonisation between SoEF and GFRA reporting in ongoing and future reporting cycles*
- (d) to provide comments and suggestions in relation to the ongoing reporting process for the next Ministerial Conference in 2011*
- (e) to provide support for the delivery of replies by the 1 May 2010 deadline*

IV. UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF WORK ON EUROPEAN FOREST TYPES CLASSIFICATION

30. Seven of the “Improved Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management” (out of 35) require reporting ‘by forest type’. In the past, reports used three types (predominantly conifers, predominantly broadleaved, mixed). Following the provisions of the Forest Europe Work Programme and the Integrated Programme of Work of the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission, the UNECE/FAO Timber Section has, together with partners, worked further on the refinement and pilot application of the new classification of forest types.

31. The basis for the work was the new European forest types’ classification elaborated by a consortium lead by the Italian Academy of Forest Sciences (EEA Technical report No 9/2006). The classification was a subject of discussion in a series of meetings, including the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management as well as the Advisory Group on SoEF 2011 elaboration. Further guidance on this issue was given by the Working Party in 2009. A proposal of refinement modalities was presented to the Forest Europe Expert Level Meeting (November 2009) for evaluation and approval.

32. Following the general recommendations, the proposal on the final shape of the new classification and a format for pilot reporting were elaborated. The proposal was presented to and discussed by the 2nd meeting Team on Monitoring SFM (January 2010). The SoEF 2011 cycle will be used to test reporting according to the new forest type classification. Reporting according to the old classification in parallel will be requested for indicator 1.1 (Forest area) only. This should be a compromise solution that will reduce the burden and ensure the comparability between those two systems.

33. The reporting according to the new classification will be carried out as a pilot implementation of the new European forest types, with specific rules for individual indicators. All countries are asked to report on indicators 1.1 (Forest area) and 1.2 (Growing stock) according to the new forest types. Reporting on the other indicators according to the new forest types is of voluntary character.

34. Due to concerns regarding the definition of the new classification's category 14 (plantations or exotic tree species) an additional testing (limited to countries with the highest shares of plantations and introduced species) was carried out. Following the result of the test and Team discussion, it was decided that the category 14 would include introduced species only. Plantations of native species will be reported under the other categories.

35. The reporting by forest types constitutes a part of the main enquiry on quantitative indicators, therefore the same deadlines are valid here (please see paragraph 28). However, because of the pilot character of this reporting, and problems that countries may face during the application of the new classification, it was decided that a separate workshop dedicated to this issue will be organised. The workshop, which will be held on 19 - 21 May, in Bordeaux, France, will serve as a forum for sharing experience from the implementation of the new European forest types' classification. The workshop should help the countries with their reporting, as well as further contribute to the refinement of the classification and reporting.

36. The Working Party is invited:

- (a) *to take note of the general scope and direction of work on refinement and pilot application of European forest types' classification;*
- (b) *to advise the UNECE/FAO on testing the new classification,*

Annex I**Review of elaboration process, contents, dissemination and use of the MCPFE³/UNECE/FAO Report on State of Europe's Forests 2007**

(Multidimensional evaluation for the period 2008-2009)

Final conclusions and recommendations for the future activities

As presumed in the self-evaluation terms of reference, this review was expected to give answers to a set of questions pertinent to the last as well as future editions of the report. The answers provided below are elaborated on the basis of the material collected, and intended to address the most important issues; however, the complete information that explores the questions in depth are available in the above thematic chapters of this evaluation.

- **Does the report achieve its stated purpose?**

The primary goal of the report *State of Europe's Forests 2007* was to provide the 5th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe with the latest available, objective, reliable, and comprehensive information on the status and developments of forests and sustainable forest management in the member countries, and in the region as a whole. The report successfully accomplished this role through its use as an informative background document for discussions at the MCPFE Conference held in Warsaw in November 2007.

After the Warsaw Conference, the forest policies of the MCPFE countries could be based, further elaborated and developed on the very good (best currently available) information on the status and trends in the forestry sector of the region. The deep expert analysis of the success (or their lack, in some cases) of the SFM developments helped to better understand processes in individual countries and sub-regions.

The factual information presented in the report, and easily available via the Internet, or in the printed format, has helped member countries to improve their internal evaluation and assessment of national forest resources, thus contributing also to their reporting within the global Forest Resources Assessments.

The SoEF 2007 report reaffirmed the role of the criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management as an efficient tool for monitoring, assessing and reporting progress on SFM. The report provided highly valued data and its analysis for further elaboration and presentation of many pan-European level and country-level reports.

The process of the collection of data for the SoEF 2007, processing of data, analysis and preparation for their publication contributed to maintaining and further development of strong professional links with the partner organizations, various other related international data providers and, first of all, with the network of country experts and national correspondents. For example, it strengthened the network of national correspondents in the period between the GFRA reporting cycles.

³ Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe

- **Which impact did the report achieve?**

The MCPFE process has formulated and retrieved the concept of sustainable forest management. To monitor the implementation of the SFM at the regional and country level, accurate and up-to-date information and quantitative data are needed. This information was provided in the *State of Europe's Forests 2007* report and accompanying database. The participants of the latest MCPFE Conference considered the SoEF 2007 report as "of high value".

The information reported in the SoEF 2007 serves as a basis for submitting proposals and projects to Governments and Governmental institutions, thus influencing the SFM in Europe context. This refers to all the report coverage, including forest resources and carbon cycle, forest ecosystems health, productive functions (wood and non-wood), biodiversity, protective functions (soil and water), socio-economic aspects and developments.

The report presents considerable information, which was not reported previously, also on the reason of the limits of National Forest Inventories, Accounts and Assessments, or even national reporting capacities, could be collected and presented, thus enriching the informative basis of SFM policies. The national and pan-European data/ information published in the report have enabled comparisons with national indicators, and SFM developments at the national level in individual countries.

The report contributed to the input of the European component of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment. The high-level scientific standards of the SoEF 2007 data analysis and presentation showed the direction for possible up-grading such multi-layer studies in the future.

- **Who are the primary users of the report? How many users were reached? Where are they located? Which potential users were not reached?**

The forest sector policy-makers, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, including the sectoral and sub-sectoral associations, the civil society and public in large, also outside the forest sector, are the main users of the report. However, the self-evaluation process indicated lack of balance between the groups of users.

The FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics urged its delegates to establish contacts with members of the Forest Communicators Network in their countries, with the purpose that the SoEF report would reach more users in individual countries and the region. The report is easily available and can be obtained from the MCPFE Liaison Unit Oslo (www.mcpfe.org). The electronic versions of the report, the interactive, user-friendly database, and other relevant documents are available on the UNECE portal (<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/fra/outputs.htm>).

Based on the analysis on the dissemination process it could be assumed that the report reached all key institutions and organisations dealing with forestry in Europe. It is difficult to evaluate dissemination of the report within countries, but based on some comments from users, the situation could vary among states.

The report is predominantly visible within the limits of the forest at national and international levels, and for purpose of science. This reaffirms that the report seems to reach its primary target group and meets its main goals. Also the report's role as a source of information for scientific purposes was reflected in this analysis, while the impact of the SoEF2007 on and visibility in other sectors and

levels is more limited. While the above analysis includes direct impact, it is likely that information from the report was used for other needs through indirect ways, which was impossible to detect in this analysis.

The online database with the SoEF 2007 data was made available. Still, more targeted and “persistent” information on this important product should flow, also on such occasions as MCPFE meetings, FRA-related events, in correspondence linked to the SFM developments, etc. The translation of the future reports into the UNECE working languages would facilitate reaching a wider circle of potential users. The dissemination of SoEF outputs in CD format has helped to widen the circle of potential users.

- **In which manner could the production process of the report be improved?**

Although some respondents to the “*internal report-usage enquiries*” stated that the “*report is excellent in its present form*”, still there is a room for further improvements and up-grading of this publication, including the process of its production, and substantive contents.

The data supplied by international data providers, those which are the subject for the verification by countries, should be submitted to national correspondents for review, giving sufficient time to consult other sources and improve the data and its analysis.

In the forthcoming report (SoEF 2011), maximum use should be made of the GFRA 2010 data, thus helping to avoid unnecessary adjustments, taking into account that forest inventories rarely provide annual data.

The analysis of the data and information collected in the process of the SoEF report production could be deeper and more detailed, especially on a sub-region level. However more time and resources would need to be allocated for this work. The more straight-forward and clear formulation of conclusions, proposals and recommendations for decision-making and their highlighting in the relevant chapters (for each indicator) would make the production of the report more “demanding” and more “demanded”.

- **In which manner could content and the presentation and of outputs be improved?**

More detailed information on the state of forests in all European countries, allowing a comparison of trends and the state of the forest management at the pan-European level could contribute to the improvement of the SoEF outputs. For example, the data on economic function of forests could be further elaborated, including the role of industries. A neutral interpretation of trends in corresponding chapters and sections of the report could be helpful for users.

The emerging and/ or “*hot policy*” developments (e.g. renewable energy in Europe) should be addressed in more detail. At the same time, widening the range of parameters to be reported under the individual C&I for SFM should be balanced with the potential burden to country correspondents to report these data/ information.

A summary of the SoEF report and publication of accompanying individual leaflets on the basis of the main report in the UNECE working languages would be helpful and would find its own niche of users.

Improving the quality of graphic material in the published report, as well as its layout as a whole, could make the report more user-friendly and attractive for potential users. Employing professional editors and publishers would contribute to that, but necessitates the availability of resources.

- **How could the report's life be extended?**

Additional analysis of the data/ information collected, as well as the material published in SoEF report (its outputs), could be published in scientific and mass-media sources and would prolong the life of the report and the added value to it. The inclusion of photographs could improve the attractiveness of the report.

The publication of the SoEF 2007 results in the national reports based on C&I, e.g. "*State of Finland's Forests 2007*", gives an opportunity to provide a balanced set of information at the national level on the status and trends of sustainable forest management, and extending the life of the regional reports on SFM. Encouragement of development of other national and international reports based on SoEF 2007 would extend its usefulness and recognition.

Although the report was evaluated as the milestone for determination of a contemporary forest policy and strategy on European, regional and national levels, some of the reviewers observed that the report had not provided enough real solutions of existing problems yet. More "authoritative" and clearly formulated conclusions and recommendations on specific aspects of SFM in the SoEF reports would promote desirable activities and policies at the national level, affecting forest sector.

- **Could the promotion of associated outputs (database, national country reports) be improved?**

The provision of online database(s) of the reported data/ information should be completed in parallel to publication of the report. This would allow an immediate involvement of researchers/ analysts in their deeper processing and value-adding, and would prevent the dissemination of the explanatory notes behind each observation. Ideally the database should make it possible to extract all the data for a single country, including the information provided by international data providers

More active involvement of the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network, as well as a more frequent publication of press-releases linked with each important action done in this area were recommended. It was also observed that press-conferences devoted to the most important events, associated with the elaboration and publication of the SoEF reports (and related outputs) would be helpful.