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Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy

Forest Policy in a Green Economy Outcome of the first meeting of the ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Policy

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document presents the outcome of the first meeting of the ECE/FAO Team of Specialists, which aimed to support the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy at the national level.

Delegates are invited to take note of this outcome and to take it into account when providing guidance on further work to be undertaken for the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan (see also document ECE/TIM/2014/4).

I. Introduction

1. The Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy was adopted at “Metsä2013”, the joint session of the Committee with the FAO European Forestry Commission held in Finland, from 9 to 13 December 2013. The parent bodies also decided to extend the scope of the ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Policy, which previously focussed on Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, to the whole ECE region.

2. The first meeting of this Team was held in Krakow at the kind invitation of the Government of Poland from 16 to 18 September 2014.

3. The meeting agenda featured the following:
 - (a) Information on recent global and regional developments relevant to forest policy in the region;
 - (b) Establishment of the new Team (Terms of Reference, election of Team Officers, list of Team Members);
 - (c) Presentation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan;
 - (d) Presentation of case studies: Spain on the Plan for the Socio-Economic Development of the Spanish Forest Sector, Poland on green economy projects, the Alpine Convention on its Protocol on Mountain Forests;
 - (e) Group work on how to use the Rovaniemi Action Plan at the national level.

II. Implementing the Rovaniemi Action Plan at the national level

4. Forest policy in the region often lacks a strong vision, clear directions and political support. The Green economy, whether used as a tool to gain visibility or as an ultimate goal, can: help policy makers to highlight the contributions of forests and the forest sector to the well-being of society; highlight the wealth of products and services provided by forests; gain visibility for the forest sector; attract funding and facilitate the adoption of regulations in support of the forest sector.

5. Following the main idea of keeping the “big picture” in mind instead of only addressing requests in an ad hoc manner, participants worked in groups on the objectives of the Rovaniemi Action Plan and on possible approaches to forest policies, which address the transition to a green economy. The group work was therefore divided into two sessions addressing the following:

- (a) Session1: four groups reviewed the Rovaniemi Action Plan objectives while addressing three questions:
 - What would be the most relevant objective(s) for your country?
 - Why is the objective relevant to your country and what are the expected impacts?
 - What kind of assistance could the secretariat provide you to define objectives for your country (data and information, reasoning, policy dialogue...)?
- (b) Session 2: two groups conducted a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of two forest policy approaches in the context of the green economy:
 - The sectoral approach: National Forest Programme or Forest Sector Action Plan;
 - The cross-sectoral approach: National green economy Policy or Strategy for Sustainable Development.

A. Review of the Rovaniemi Action Plan objectives

6. Each group reviewed the entire Rovaniemi Action Plan and rated the most relevant objectives under each pillar according to their relevance for participants’

countries. The objectives that gathered more than 20% of the support (within one pillar) are reflected in the following table.

A: Sustainable production and consumption of forest products		Expected impacts
Objectives:		(Summary)
A.3: To ensure that wood supply from the region's forests is sufficient to satisfy, on a sustainable basis, society's needs for renewable raw materials and sources of energy.	29%	Well informed consumers Better conditions for wood promotion Increased area of sustainable forest area Increased use of forest products, including as substitutes for non-renewable and less environmentally-friendly products Distribution of benefits along the whole value chain
A.4: To promote innovation in forest management and in the production and use of forest products and the related services so that the forest sector is a competitive supplier of renewable and sustainably produced goods and services.	21%	
B: A low carbon forest sector		
Objectives:		
B.1: To encourage the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases by substituting wood from sustainable sources for non-renewable materials and energy.	58%	Forest contribution to climate change mitigation Huge opportunities for the forest sector, including higher profitability and increased used of wood in construction However, adaptation strategies are needed to preserve forests and their role in the carbon cycle
D: Long term provision of forest ecosystem services		
Objectives:		
D.0: To develop and communicate ambitious and realistic strategies for the valuation of and payment for forest ecosystem services.	39%	Improved communication to convince policy-makers and the general public about the benefits of forests for the society Recognition of non-marketed services and Inclusion of the real value of forests in decision making Preservation of forest services Increasing implementation of PES schemes
D.1: To support the assigning of economic value to non-marketed forest goods and services and to enhance the understanding and recognition of the public goods provided by forests.	26%	
D.2: To promote best practice in the development and implementation of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) in order to ensure the continued provision of forest environmental services.	21%	
C: Decent green jobs in the forest sector		
Objectives:		
C.1: To ensure that the workforce has the necessary skills at all levels to carry out the increasingly complex tasks associated with sustainable forest management.	35%	Sustainable skilled workforce for sustainable forest management Better practices, higher levels of health and safety Increased attractiveness of forestry work Adapted curricula to face forest challenges including the green economy Improved knowledge of the socio-economic benefits of forest employment for rural populations
C.4: To promote the use of tools to assess the socio-economic impacts of green economy policies on the forest sector.	24%	

E: Policy development and monitoring of the forest sector in relation to a green economy		
Objectives:		
E.4: To improve communication with the public and policy makers about the forest sector's actual and potential role in the green economy and facilitate public participation in the debate on the green economy.	33%	Outreach campaign for the promotion of the forest sector based on the image of a green sector, which can demonstrate its sustainability
E.1: To review existing forest sector policy instruments in the light of the requirements of a green economy, and, if necessary, make proposals for a new approach, while improving synergies at the international level.	27%	Suitable policy instruments to unlock the potential of the forest sector for the transition to greener economies

7. It should be noted that among the 29 objectives of the Action Plan, only four (A0, B4, C2 and E0) received less than 5% support, which means that the Action Plan as adopted in December 2013 remains relevant, from the participants' point of view, almost in its entirety.

8. As guidance to the secretariat's work on forest policies, participants formulated over 60 proposals, which can be classified under the four work areas of the ECE/FAO integrated programme of work:

- (a) Data and monitoring;
- (b) Policy dialogue and advice;
- (c) Communication and outreach;
- (d) Capacity building.

9. In general, participants expect the secretariat to provide relevant information and reliable data on which to base their proposals and national approaches, more opportunities to discuss traditional issues (certification) as well as emerging ones (implementation of procedures applicable to illegal timber), more tailored tools for communication within and outside the forest sector as well as material to support innovation and capacity-building in their countries. However, the large number of proposals for the secretariat's work requires that a priority setting exercise be undertaken. There is also a need to better inform Team members of existing publications and other sources of information that are relevant to policy making.

B. Comparison of different approaches for the transition of the forest sector towards a green economy

10. Two groups assessed the sectoral approach and the cross-sectoral approach to forest policies in order to address the transition to a green economy. In conclusion, participants discussed the pros and cons of the two approaches.

11. The sectoral approach (national forest programmes, forest sector action plans) is well known and "controlled" by the forestry community; it ensures a holistic approach to forests and the definition of relevant policy options, based on reliable data and technical expertise while reflecting the needs of the sector. It highlights what forests can offer to society in terms of products and services. It creates a sense of ownership and, probably higher, commitments as the actors are directly involved. However, the importance of follow-up work and of local initiatives are often overlooked, thus failing to deliver on objectives and creating disappointment and lack of interest, especially among private forest owners. Even if

participation is now an integral part of sectoral processes, they also tend to isolate the forest sector that, nevertheless, needs to manage conflicting strategies from other sectors (environment, energy, agriculture...).

12. The cross-sectoral approach (forestry measures under an overarching goal such as the green economy or sustainable development) is a good way to highlight the multifunctionality of forests, although it requires intensive advocacy work in order to compensate for forestry's relatively small contribution to the national economy in monetary and employment terms in most countries. On the other hand, this approach can ensure better visibility for a sector where outputs are often underestimated, even if there is a risk of the message being diluted vis-à-vis stronger sectors (energy, agriculture...). It helps to disseminate the picture of healthy, rich and productive forests that is provided by forest monitoring and to promote the use of wood. It allows reaching out beyond the usual political circles and identifying new funding sources, ensuring results that can be more easily showcased to the public and to decision makers. To achieve this, the forestry community must move beyond clichés and overcome the general public perception of being too conservative and only production oriented.

13. Participants concluded that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be applied separately or jointly, considering national conditions and political trends in a country. However, the cross-sectoral approach might offer higher leverage as the forest sector is placed in a wider perspective and may be able to access additional resources.

III. Conclusion

14. The needs expressed by Team Members for the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan at the national level can be summarized as follows:

(a) Reliable data to prepare their national approaches and conduct benchmarking studies (work area 1 of the ECE/FAO integrated programme of work, IPoW);

(b) Information on potential impacts of the global and regional processes on forest policy in the region (work area 2 of the IPoW);

(c) More opportunities to discuss with other experts on traditional issues, as well as emerging ones (work area 2 of the IPoW);

(d) Tailored tools for communication within and outside the forest sector as well as material to support innovation and capacity-building in their countries (work area 3 and 4 of the IPoW).

15. The newly elected Team Leader, with the assistance of the secretariat, is expected to prepare the work plan and the next meeting of the Team, taking into account the outcome of the Krakow meeting and the Team's Terms of Reference.

16. Beyond its main focus on forest policy for a green economy, the meeting in Krakow was important as it was the first under the new Terms of Reference, covering the whole ECE region. Its aim was also to create an enlarged group of experts on forest policy in the region. For future meetings, the secretariat suggests to raise funds in order to support participants from countries which need financial assistance to send participants to international meetings.