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Item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda

**GUIDANCE OF WORK AREA 2: POLICY DIALOGUE AND ADVICE**

AGENDA ITEM 5 (b)

Note by the Secretariat

*Summary*

According to its mandate, the Working Party is expected to provide guidance to Work Area 2: Policy Dialogue and Advice. This document provides information about activities in this work area since the last session, and plans for the future, drawing attention to any specific issues where guidance is needed.

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## **I. Forest Policy**

### **A. Implementation by the secretariat**

1. At the invitation of the Government of Switzerland, the joint seventy-third session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and thirty-eight session of the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC) – Silva2015 – as well as the third European Forest Week (EFW), were held in Engelberg, Switzerland, from 2 to 6 November 2015. More than 230 participants from 39 member States, academia, business, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations attended.
2. Silva2015 discussed themes related to forests and their values. The main topics covered global and regional policy developments and their impact on the regional forestry agenda, challenges and opportunities for markets, and investments in forest ecosystem services. In addition, the meeting discussed the role of ecosystem services in the reduction of natural hazards, in biodiversity maintenance, and in the mitigation of climate change; and the recent developments in the markets of wood products in the region. The third EFW provided an opportunity for around 30 forest related stakeholders to present their activities and increase the visibility of the economic, social and environmental values of forests.
3. The Section prepared an overview on global and regional forestry policy developments and their possible impacts on the forest sector in the region. The document summarized and analysed the results of the latest developments, with a focus on decisions resulting from international and intergovernmental processes. It examined the possible impacts of these decisions on the forest sector in the region, and the possible role of COFFI and the EFC in the facilitation of their implementation. The draft of the document was discussed by the Team of Specialists (ToS) on Forest Policy at their second meeting, in Prague, Czech Republic, in October 2015. It was also submitted to Silva2015 as a background document.
4. Two further concept papers addressed the issue of forest ecosystem services. They analysed the role of the latter in financing sustainable forest management (SFM), and also within the scope of (i) disaster risk reduction and watershed management; (ii) biodiversity maintenance; and (iii) climate change mitigation, substitution and adaptation. They contained analyses of existing forest ecosystem services and case studies from member States. They were submitted to, and discussed by, Silva2015 as background documents. The work related to ecosystem services continues. The Section, in collaboration with experts from the region, is developing a study on forests and water. This is planned to be finalized before the end of 2016.

#### **Follow-up to the Rovaniemi Action Plan (RAP) for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy**

5. During the reporting period, the Section continued to support and monitor the implementation of the RAP, and prepared a progress report on its implementation. The report was based on the results of a voluntary survey, which provided an overview of contributions from member States, the FAO, and the Section.
6. The draft progress report was presented and discussed during the second meeting of the ToS on Forest Policy. The ToS members highlighted the importance of monitoring the implementation of the RAP. They raised concerns about the better utilization of existing practices in order to promote the exchange of experiences and different approaches for its implementation among member States. The report was presented to Silva2015.
7. The Section is planning to organize a regional workshop in 2016 to discuss the forestry sector's contribution to a green economy in the UNECE region, and how to better use the RAP to this end.

### Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

8. Since the last meeting of the Working Party, the Section has continued to monitor the development of the political agenda on SDGs. In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a universal development agenda “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”<sup>1</sup>. The new SDGs and targets came into effect on 1 January 2016, and are expected to last until 2030. The final text of the Agenda includes 2 SDGs directly relevant to forests<sup>2</sup> and 15 indirectly relevant to them. Besides the goals and targets, the outcome document includes the outline of the monitoring and review system of the SDG’s implementation, designed as the core of the Agenda.
9. The Agenda foresees three levels of follow-up and review system for SDGs: global, regional and national. The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), launched in 2013, will have a central role in overseeing a network of the follow-up and review of the SDG implementation processes at the global level. How the planned review mechanism will look at the regional level is yet to be decided. The Agenda recognizes the importance of building on existing follow-up and review mechanisms at the regional level, for instance those developed by the UN Regional Commissions. The latter could, therefore, potentially play a role in this process, if the member States would like them to play this role.
10. The progress towards the achievement of goals and targets will be reviewed using a set of global indicators. These will be based on data produced by national statistical systems, and information collected at the regional level. UN organizations were invited to contribute to the development of the global indicators framework, coordinated by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs). The Section, through the UNECE Statistical Division, has provided an initial indicator proposal for target 15.2, while the FAO has contributed with indicator proposals for forestry-related targets under SDG 15.
11. The global indicators framework will be agreed by the UN Statistical Commission at its session in March 2016. It will then be presented for consideration to an intergovernmental consultations process, similar to the one undergone by the SDGs and targets in 2015. Lastly, it is expected to be adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly in 2016. The IAEG-SDGs will continue its work in 2016 and will focus on defining global reporting mechanisms, reviewing data availability for indicators, developing procedures or methodological reviews of indicators, and will continue discussion of interlinkages across targets and the use of multi-purpose indicators.
12. The future global indicators (including those related to forests) are expected to rely on existing definitions, and benefit from data which has already been collected. They will be at the core of all other sets of indicators. Member States may consider developing indicators at regional, national and sub-national levels to complement the global ones, taking into account national circumstances. Data for indicators will be produced by national statistical systems; therefore, capacity-building is essential for supporting these systems to meet the requirements of the Agenda implementation reporting.
13. At their joint session in November 2015, COFFI and the EFC asked the UNECE and the FAO to support the country implementation of the Agenda as it relates to forests, and to support work on developing global forest-related SDG indicators.
14. The Section will continue to monitor and update member States on the developments of the political agenda related to SDGs, and to contribute to the development of the system of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of SDGs through the official UN system channels, as relevant.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)

<sup>2</sup> SDG6 - Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;  
SDG15 - Protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manage forests; combat desertification; halt and reverse land degradation; and halt biodiversity loss.

**United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)**

15. The Section participated in UNFF work and provided inputs as relevant. It contributed to “INTERLAKEN+10, Governing forest landscapes: Lessons learnt from ten years of experience and the way forward post-2015”, a country-led initiative – CLI in support of the UNFF.
16. As a contribution to the eleventh session of the UNFF, the Section prepared and published a regional study entitled “Forests in the ECE Region: Trends and Challenges in Achieving the Global Objectives on Forests”, which examines the progress of the forest sector in the region towards the achievement of the four Global Objectives on Forests, and provides policy recommendations for consideration in the discussions by the UNFF.
17. In line with Resolution 2015/33, a UNFF Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group was established to develop proposals on the UNFF Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020. The Group is expected to hold up to two meetings in 2016 to develop proposals of the plan and the programme for consideration by the Forum. The first meeting will be held in New York on 25-27 April 2016. In developing proposals, the Group will take into account views and contributions submitted by member States and regional stakeholders.
18. The Section, in coordination with the FAO, submitted a written contribution to the work on the UNFF Strategic Plan and the quadrennial programme of work. This input can be found at: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/aheg/iaf-strategic-plan-1/index.html>.
19. During Silva2015, COFFI and the EFC recognized the importance of regional contributions, including through the Section, to the ongoing UNFF work, including to the development of the UNFF Strategic Plan and its next programme of work. The Section will monitor this process, and contribute as relevant.

**B. Meetings/events (excluding capacity-building)**

20. In June 2015, the Section presented the RAP, in the context of the provision of forest ecosystem services, at a round table, “The multiple values of European mountain forests: which perspectives in a green economy?”, which was organized by the Presidency of the Alpine Convention at EXPO 2015, “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life”, in Milan, Italy.
21. The Section, together with the secretariat of the UNFF and the Governments of Finland and Switzerland, organized a side event at the World Forestry Congress, in Durban, South Africa, on 7 September 2015, called “Forest Governance – From Global Initiatives to National Experiences”. During the event, the “RAP for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy” and the results of the UNECE/FAO UNDA project on “Sustainable Forest Management for Greener Economies in Central Asia and the Caucasus” were presented. The Government of Finland presented its national bio-economy strategy, and the Government of Switzerland its initiatives to support forest governance in developing countries. The UNFF presented recent global developments in forest governance tools.

**National Forest Policy Dialogues (NFPDs)**

22. The aim of NFPDs is to share the information and knowledge generated under COFFI and the EFC with national experts (policymakers, forest managers, forest based industry representatives, researchers, etc.), and to draw on national experience for international work by exchanging information about the state of forests, forest product markets, wood energy, the Forest Sector Outlook, and other topics as relevant. NFPDs are co-organized with the host country in order to make the best use of experts’ time and to adapt the material to national needs.
23. NFPDs are considered an important tool for capacity-building and implementation of the Integrated Programme of Work. Even though, due to the extremely busy international agenda, there were no NFPDs in 2015, member States are encouraged to benefit from this tool and consider organizing a dialogue in the future.

**C. Team of Specialists on Forest Policy**

24. The second meeting of the ToS on Forest Policy was held, at the invitation of the Government of the Czech Republic, in Prague, on 7-8 October 2015. In order to coordinate the ToS work with the secretariat's activities in Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian (EECCA) countries, nine forest policy experts from the FAO workshop, which was being held at the same time, participated in the ToS meeting as observers.
25. The ToS members were briefed about previous activities of the Team. They were also provided with information about the latest global and regional policy developments related to forests, and were updated on the implementation of the RAP.
26. The ToS members discussed the priority areas of future work. They identified areas of interest, on which the future work could be focused. These were: (i) the post-2015 (2030) development agenda - SDGs and targets; (ii) the contribution to Silva2015; (iii) the post-2015 International Arrangement on Forests (IAF); (iv) the Green Economy and the implementation of the RAP (including collecting reliable data, conducting bench marking studies, and exploring tailored tools for communication within and outside the forest sector); (v) possible cooperation with the ToS on the Forest Sector Outlook Study; and (vi) the possibility and modalities of participation of experts from EECCA countries.
27. Besides establishing these thematic areas, participants also suggested looking at ways to deliver more tangible outcomes to support member States in their efforts to implement the RAP. More interaction among the members of the Team, through new forms of communication, between meetings, is to be considered. It was agreed that the UNECE and the FAO should pay attention to sufficient attendance and contribution from all members of the ToS, including experts from EECCA countries. The ToS re-elected Ms Marta Gaworska as team leader and Ms Leire Salaberria as deputy team leader, and elected Mr Stefan Karlsson (Sweden) and Mr Tomas Krejzar (Czech Republic) as new deputy team leaders.

**D. Key questions for guidance and discussion**

28. The Working Party is invited to:
  - a. *Provide guidance and advice on how the Section could support the country implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the development of forest-related SDG indicators;*
  - b. *Provide guidance and advice on how the Section could support the development of the UNFF Strategic Plan and its next programme of work;*
  - c. *Provide guidance and advice to the ToS on Forest Policy on the priorities of its proposed work.*

## II. Forest Sector Outlook

### A. Implementation by the secretariat

29. At the thirty-seventh Joint Working Party, the secretariat, together with the ToS on Forest Sector Outlook, presented the timeline and the policy issues identified for the next Forest Sector Outlook Study. Since then, the secretariat serviced one meeting of the ToS, and coordinated the communication within the core group and the entire team.
30. One of the main objectives of the secretariat for the coming Study is to better coordinate the three subregional studies: European, North American and Russian Federation. The main objective is to have a demand driven global trade model, which would be harmonized regarding drivers, elasticities and assumptions made, in order to make the results of the subregional modelling more integrated. The assessment of key policy issues in each subregion and the agreement on similar core scenarios are also planned.
31. Aiming at better coordination, the secretariat, in close contact with the Russian Federal Forest Agency, is working on developing a workshop in the Russian Federation on “How to harmonize scenarios of the Forest Sector Outlook in the UNECE region”. This project is currently under development, and will be presented to the UNECE EXCOM for approval. The initial plan is to hold the workshop in November 2016. The exact date will be confirmed later.
32. The secretariat assessed the wood energy scenario of the previous European Forest Sector Outlook Study. The preliminary data were presented at the thirty-sixth session of the Working Party, and final results have now been published in a short paper on the website: <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/timber/publications/DP-65.pdf>. The findings could be useful for the next Study as a measure of our past ability to model wood energy use.

### B. Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook

33. The ToS on Forest Sector Outlook met in September 2015 in Brussels (hosted by the European Confederation of Woodworking Industries and the European Panel Federation). The ToS developed a timeline, identified the policy issues, in communication and coordination with the ToS on Forest Policy, and discussed potential models that could be used for the next Outlook. All these steps were supported by the secretariat and the team members and their parent organizations. The secretariat would like to highlight that substantial funding will be required in order to develop the scenarios and to run the models in the forthcoming phases and that, because of budget constraints, it does not currently have the resources required. More detailed information about the work of the Team can be found in the background document “ECE/FAO Teams of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook”.

### C. Key questions for guidance and discussion

34. The Working Party is invited to:
  - a. *Inform the secretariat about current or planned activities in member States regarding outlook studies;*
  - b. *Consider supporting the next Outlook Study through in-kind and financial resources.*