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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

Seventy-fifth session

Warsaw, Poland 9-13 October 2017

Item 4(k) of the provisional agenda

EFC matters

Frequency of the EFC sessions

Food and Agriculture Organization

European Forestry Commission

Thirty-ninth session

Warsaw, Poland 9-13 October 2017

Note by the Secretariat

Background

1. In accordance with Rule V, 3. of the Rules of Procedure of the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC), the Government of the Netherlands requested the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to include an agenda item on the frequency of EFC sessions for the thirty-ninth session of the EFC.
2. The representative of the Netherlands requested the Secretariat to circulate the information contained in the Annex of the present note. It is being circulated in the form and language in which it was received by the Secretariat.

Annex

Las 2017 – FAO EFC agenda item Frequency of EFC meetings - Information and explanation – October 2, 2017

Introduction

The Netherlands, supported by Switzerland, Ukraine and the Russian Federation, requested the Director-General of the FAO to include in the agenda of the EFC the issue of Frequency of meetings. This request was based on Rule V, 3 of the Rules of Procedures of the FAO European Forestry Commission, which establishes that any Member of the Commission may request the Director-General of the Organization, not less than three months before the opening of the session, to include specific items in the provisional agenda.

This note explains the rationale behind this proposed agenda item.

Background

According to current practice EFC sessions are taking place every second year while meetings of the Committee on Forests and Forest Industry (COFFI) take place annually. During these meetings the progress of the Joint Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) of both bodies is being discussed. In practice this means that the IPoW is discussed every year by COFFI. All EFC member states are invited to join the COFFI meetings. All EFC member states are at the same time also members of the UNECE region. During these discussions some guidance and appreciation is provided on how to further implement specific activities in the IPoW. Since the establishment of Integrated Programmes of Work many years ago this way of discussing has never been a problem for both organizations and respective member states.

Since 2013 some delegations raised that COFFI should not be legally allowed to take any decisions on or to give any guidance to the progress of the Joint IPoW, providing as explanation that the meeting of COFFI was not formally an EFC meeting and decisions should be taken together.

During the preparations of the Joint Sessions for 2015 and 2017 some members of the EFC's Executive Committee expressed also their concerns that during these joint sessions there was too little time to discuss EFC matters.

Given the above, the Netherlands proposed to include the item of Frequency of meetings EFC sessions and to discuss it during Las2017. Any change in frequency in meetings can only being decided by the EFC under its own mandate and not under Joint matters. Therefore it should be included in the EFC agenda.

The Netherlands regards its proposal consistent with the draft provisional agenda as under Joint items under the Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) the modalities of cooperation between COFFI and EFC will be discussed.

Proposal and considerations

The Netherlands like to discuss the frequency of EFC sessions. It should be considered that by meeting every year the EFC has the opportunity to discuss the IPoW with COFFI during a joint session so that any decision or guidance on how to proceed with the IPoW has full support of both bodies. This does not mean that EFC needs to meet every year with COFFI; it is only the case when it is regarded necessary.

Meeting more frequently offers the EFC also the opportunity to give more guidance to the work of the EFC in the region by discussing the forestry programme of the FAO for the EFC region, which has until now not been developed, and other forestry issues where guidance of EFC is required.

This increase in frequency of meetings and more coherent modalities of cooperation between both organizations is a good basis for implementing the UN Strategic Plan on Forests 2017-2030.

If there is no support for increasing the frequency of meetings it would be understood that COFFI will review and decide about the implementation of the IPoW. Again, given the fact that the constituency is the same, this has constituted no problem until the issue was raised by some EFC members in 2013.
