



**Economic and Social
Council**



**Food and Agriculture
Organization**

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR
EUROPE**

TIMBER COMMITTEE

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS**

**EUROPEAN FORESTRY
COMMISSION**

**Meeting of the Bureaux
of the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission
with the Bureau of the Working Party on Mountain Watersheds**

25 February 2010, 9:30 – 16:00
Palais des Nations, Salle XV

Note by the secretariat

Provisional agenda item 13 a

International Year of Biodiversity 2010

1) Background

The United Nations proclaimed 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity, in order to increase understanding of the vital role that biodiversity plays in sustaining life on earth.

This note has been prepared to inform the Bureaux of the international activities in the context of this year, and to present related opportunities for the joint programme of work to communicate its biodiversity-related work, with partners. It also presents some background on international and regional biodiversity and forestry processes and commitments

a) General context - Biodiversity 2010

. The International Year of Biodiversity will be a unique opportunity to highlight several events and actions undertaken in connection with biodiversity in 2010. The International Year of Biodiversity is also supposed to be a platform used for celebrating and communicating the examples of communities, governments and organizations that have been able to achieve the 2010 Biodiversity Target at different levels. Examples of “2010 Success Stories” will be the work of the scientific community and the latest developments in biodiversity science.

• International framework on biodiversity

The 2010 International Year of Biodiversity should be seen in the wider context of the global “2010 Biodiversity target” which is at global level “to achieve a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss”, the one addressed at EU and pan-European level being even more ambitious as to “halt the loss of biodiversity”.

This target to “halt the loss of biodiversity” was first mentioned at the highest level during a Head of States of the European Union meeting in June 2001 in Gothenburg (Sweden). This was then addressed in April 2002 at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference in The Hague (Netherlands). The UN World Summit on sustainable Development in Johannesburg (South Africa) in September 2002 endorsed the CBD target to achieve a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss.”

A “countdown 2010” initiative was then launched by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) at a stakeholder conference “Sustaining Livelihoods and Biodiversity: Attaining the 2010 Target in the European Biodiversity Strategy” in Malahide, (Ireland) in 2004. The secretariat of this initiative is hosted by the IUCN Regional Office for Pan-Europe.

The importance of the “2010 biodiversity target” was confirmed in recent years by the Group of eight leading industrialized countries (G8) initiative, in conjunction with main newly industrializing countries like China, India, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa (G8+5): These countries first agreed at the level of their Environment Ministers in March 2007 in Potsdam (Germany) on the “Potsdam Initiative” on biodiversity that includes concrete activities for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The leaders of the Group agreed to increase their efforts for the protection and sustainable use of biological diversity and to achieve their agreed goal of significantly reducing the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010 on 7 June 2007 in Heiligendamm (Germany).

Another extended G8 (i.e. G8 countries plus key emerging developing countries) Environmental ministers meeting in Kobe (Japan) in May 2008 followed by another meeting in Siracusa (Italy) in April 2009 followed the head of States Summit in L’Aquila (Italy) in July 2009 restated the 2010 biodiversity target and started the reflections about how to build a new ambitious but achievable framework for biodiversity beyond 2010.

- **International framework on Forest biodiversity**

Under the CBD, there is a specific forest biodiversity programme of work which sets out a number of goals and specific objectives, amongst which:

Goal 1.1: Apply the ecosystem approach to the management of all types of forests.

Objectives

1. Develop practical methods, guidelines, indicators and strategies to apply the ecosystem approach to forests.

Goal 1.2: Reduce the threats and mitigate the impacts of threatening processes on forest biological diversity.

Objectives

1. Prevent the introduction of invasive alien species that threaten ecosystems, and mitigate their negative impacts on forest biological diversity.

2. Mitigate the impact of pollution such as acidification and eutrophication on forest biodiversity.

3. Mitigate the negative impacts of climate change on forest biodiversity.

4. Prevent and mitigate the adverse effects of forest fires and fire suppression.

5. Mitigate effects of the loss of natural disturbances necessary to maintain biodiversity in regions where these no longer occur.

6. Prevent and mitigate losses due to fragmentation and conversion to other land uses.

Goal 1.3: Protect, recover and restore forest biological diversity.

Objective

1. Restore forest biological diversity in degraded secondary forests and in forests established on former forestlands and other landscapes, including in plantations.

2. Promote forest management practices that further the conservation of endemic and threatened species.

3. Ensure adequate and effective protected forest area networks.

Goal 1.4: Promote the sustainable use of forest biological diversity.

Objectives

1. Promote sustainable use of forest resources to enhance the conservation of forest biological diversity.

2. Prevent losses caused by unsustainable harvesting of timber and nontimber forest resources.

The CBD and the United Nations Forum for Forests (UNFF) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 15 December 2009 to closely collaborate in 2010 and 2011 at the occasion of the International years of Biodiversity (2010) and Forestry (2011).

This Memorandum of Understanding is based on a request that both secretariats received from their respective governing bodies in May 2009 for UNFF and May 2008 for CBD. The agreement which is set to expire in December 2011, but can be extended if mutually agreed, provides for a joint program of work to address biodiversity in forests. It also foresees the secondment of a temporary staff position, based in New York at the UNFF secretariat, to carry out these joint activities.

Finally, many other organizations, whether intergovernmental such as FAO or UNEP or non governmental such as the WWF, are also active in the fields of biodiversity and forestry.

b) Main processes on forestry and biodiversity in the UNECE region

The three main processes within the UNECE region focusing on biodiversity and forestry are:

1. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe (now called “Forest Europe”):

Forest biodiversity conservation was one of the main issues addressed at the Ministerial Conference in Helsinki in 1993, as a response to the objectives and measures set out in the CBD. Helsinki Resolution 2 provides *General Guidelines for Conservation of the Biodiversity of European Forests*. In 2003, the forest ministers adopted Vienna Resolution 4, *Conserving and Enhancing Forest Biological Diversity in Europe*, as well as the *MCPFE Assessment Guidelines for Protected and Protective Forest and Other Wooded Land in Europe*. Several of the pan-European criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management are relevant to forest biodiversity. Criterion 4, with nine associated indicators, is directed exclusively towards biodiversity in forests. The *Pan-European Guidelines for Afforestation and Reforestation with a special focus on the provisions of the UNFCCC* comprise, among others, a set of ecological guidelines, taking into account effects of afforestation on biological diversity. These guidelines have been jointly developed by Forest Europe and the Environment for Europe (EfE)/Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS).

2. The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS). The PEBLDS is hosted by the UNEP regional Office for Europe ;

The Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity signed at the 5th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in 2003 and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy adopted by the Council of Europe and UNEP with its implementation plan adopted in 2005 and the set out a number of objectives and targets for the pan-European region, notably related to:

- Identification and conservation of the Pan-European Ecological Network (by 2008).
- Definition of a core set of biodiversity indicators (by 2006), put in place a European biodiversity monitoring and indicator framework (by 2008).
- Develop a pan-European strategy on Invasive Alien species (by 2008).

These two processes have been implementing joint activities since 1997. After several years of preparation and intense work, these two processes endorsed in May 2003 at the occasion the Environment Ministers meeting from the UNECE region in Kiev (Ukraine) a Framework for cooperation to carry out several activities as regional contributions to both CBD and the UNFF.

One of the main outcomes of this cooperation was to allow a clarification of the linkages between the “ecosystem approach” and sustainable forest management, building on the work done so far by Forest Europe in this regard. A significant achievement in the increasing of the understanding between those two concepts was the recognition by the CBD that the concept of sustainable forest management as defined and developed by Forest Europe is consistent with the application of the ecosystem approach to forest ecosystems in the pan-European region.

3. The Montreal Process

The Montréal Process is the Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests. It was formed in Geneva, Switzerland, in June 1994 to develop and implement internationally agreed criteria and indicators for the conservation and sustainable management of temperate and boreal forests.

Three important members of the UNECE region (United States of America, Canada and Russia) are members of the Montreal Process, which can be seen as a parallel process to Forest Europe (cf. above) in terms of criteria and indicators, Russia being the only country part of the two processes.

As for Forest Europe, several criteria identified by the Montreal Process are relevant to forest biodiversity, one of them (criterion 1) being specifically dedicated to “conservation of biological diversity”, with three sub criteria including ecosystem diversity, species diversity and genetic diversity.

2) UNECE/FAO activities on forestry and biodiversity

a) Current activities

The activities of the UNECE/FAO Timber Section on forestry and biodiversity can be summarized as follows.

* The more detailed picture of **the current status and trends in forest biodiversity is given in reports on pan-European forests and their management**, produced by Forest Europe (cf. above) with the active support of the UNECE/FAO Timber Section. The next State of Europe’s Forest report (SoEF) will be issued in 2011.

The report’s contents are shaped by the pan-European “Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management”, which have been formally endorsed by Forest Europe for national and regional application. These are the main tools for evaluating sustainable forest management.

Of the 35 quantitative indicators, nine relate directly to monitoring aspects relevant to biodiversity. They are: tree species composition, regeneration, naturalness, introduced tree species, deadwood, genetic resources, landscape pattern, threatened forest species and protected forests. There are several other indicators that may have an impact on biodiversity enhancement and protection e.g. wood utilisation, deposition of air pollutants and forest visitor intensity. Results of reporting are analysed together with information on policies applied for biodiversity protection and are presented in a descriptive form.

Data collection for particular indicators is carried out in close cooperation with specialised organisations such as the European Union Joint Research Centre, ICP Forests, Bioversity International, benefiting from their expertise.

* **Data relevant to biodiversity that were collected for purposes of reporting on sustainable forest management have been used in reports focusing on biodiversity protection.** Examples of such reports are “European forests – ecosystem conditions and sustainable use” (EEA Report No 3/2008) and a report prepared for the 2007 inter-governmental conference, Environment for Europe. Reflecting close cooperation with the European Environment Agency, some pan-indicators of sustainable forest management were incorporated into a set of indicators, Streamlining European Biodiversity Indicators (SEBI) (2010). The source data collection for forest-related indicators was coordinated by UNECE/FAO.

* When reporting on biodiversity, **the UNECE/FAO Timber Section participates in the implementation of tools, for more specific monitoring and assessment.** One such tool is the *MCPFE Assessment Guidelines on Protected and Protective Forest and Other Wooded Land in Europe*. A recent refinement has included reporting on the Natura 2000 protected areas and this will be included in the SoEF 2011.

More recently, the Timber Section, in partnership with Forest Europe, the European Environment Agency (EEA) and a consortium of forest experts from a number of European

countries led by the Italian Academy of Forest Sciences, has worked on refining a classification of European Forest Types. A pilot implementation of this classification will be conducted in parallel with the reporting process for the SoEF 2011.

* The same type of exercise is implemented **together with the FAO Forest Resources Assessment Team, where the UNECE/FAO Timber Section also collects and reviews national information on forest biodiversity** (naturalness, species composition, regeneration, etc.) from countries in Europe. After processing and analysis, the data are published in the cyclic Global Forest Resources Assessment reports. The next Global Forest Resources Assessment will be published for the FAO Committee on Forestry, 4-8 October 2010.

* A last area of cooperation with partners on the biodiversity issue concerns the ongoing **European Forest Sector Outlook Study currently under preparation** and due in 2011. **This study includes a biodiversity scenario** being developed jointly with UNEP. The objective is to forecast how increasing policies to safeguard forest biodiversity could impact the forest sector taking into account other objectives related to sustainable forest management, climate change mitigation and industrial competitiveness, and assess the results from a sustainability perspective.

b) Possible initiatives in support of the 2010 Year of Biodiversity

In addition to the activities described above, which will continue in 2010, two main specific initiatives are planned by UNECE in Geneva in 2010 at the occasion of the International Year of Biodiversity:

- The first one is to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Convention on Biological Diversity. The possibility to include an annex or attached work plan on activities in the field of forestry and biodiversity is currently being examined.

- The second one is to support the launching in Geneva on 10 May 2010 of the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook with a special product for the European region, jointly with UNEP and possibly other partners in the region. Forest biodiversity can be part of this presentation, possibly jointly with the European Environment Agency which is preparing specific messages on forest biodiversity to be launched in spring.

- An additional possibility would be organizing, jointly with the Forest Europe and UNEP, and possibly other partners such as EEA, a “forest biodiversity day” in 2010 or 2011, encouraging countries to organize visits to forests with biodiversity values, with the objective of showing the public the benefits of biodiversity preservation and enhancement. Organized events could be jointly presented at a website, following the model of the European Forest Week, possibly with the support of the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network.

Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity in forest ecosystems stands one of six pan-European criteria of sustainable forest management. Together with other criteria, forest biodiversity was the subject of analysis done for the needs of SoEF 2007 report. The Year of Biodiversity could be a convenient opportunity for further dissemination of the main messages, key findings (Annex 1), and detailed information related to forest biodiversity, collected for the purpose of pan-European reporting.

The Bureaux are invited to describe the initiatives they have taken in the context of the International Year of Biodiversity in relation with forests. The Bureaux are also invited to provide guidance on which possible other initiatives might be undertaken by the secretariat in this regard, taking into account the proposals listed above and the availability of resources.

Annex 1. The main messages and key findings from the pan-European Criterion 4: Maintenance, Conservation and Appropriate Enhancement of Biological Diversity in Forest Ecosystems (SoEF 2007)

Forest management practices increasingly promote biodiversity.

Forest management practices have changed in ways that promote the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity, notably through the increased use of natural regeneration and more mixed species stands. Measures are also being taken to encourage deadwood accumulation.

Less than 1 percent of Europe's forests are dominated by introduced tree species.

In Europe excluding the Russian Federation, the area dominated by introduced tree species is around 4 percent. In many countries, introduced tree species are closely related to the establishment of plantations. Very few introduced tree species are invasive, and while significant in some countries, the total area of introduced tree species is not increasing.

The area of protected forests has expanded by about 2 million ha in the last five years to reach almost 5 percent of Europe's forests.

About 3 percent of Europe's forests are protected with the main objective of conservation of biodiversity and another 1.7 percent with the main objective of conserving landscapes and specific natural elements. For the MCPFE region excluding the Russian Federation, the figures are 8 percent and 10 percent, respectively. In the MCPFE region, these areas have increased by around 455 000 ha annually over the last five years.

Key findings by Indicator

4.1. Tree species composition

About 70 percent of the forests in Europe are dominated by mixed forests consisting of two or several tree species, and the remaining 30 percent are dominated by one tree species alone, mainly by conifers. The area of mixed forests has increased annually during the last 15-year period by over 1.0 percent.

4.2. Regeneration

Nearly 50 percent of the forests in Europe are regenerated by natural means (natural regeneration, natural regeneration enhanced by planting, and coppicing). The share of natural regeneration is increasing while the share of planting and seeding is decreasing. Forests dominated by conifers are mainly regenerated in west and central Europe by planting, whereas mixed forests and predominantly broadleaved forests are regenerated by natural means.

4.3. Naturalness

Over 85 percent of forests in Europe are semi-natural. Plantations cover about 8 percent of the forest area, located mainly in North West Europe, and undisturbed forests cover about 5 percent of the forest area, located mainly in East and Nordic/Baltic Europe.

4.4. Introduced tree species

In total, about 8.1 million ha, or 5.2 percent of the total forest area, is dominated by introduced tree species, of which 10 percent are dominated by invasive species. The area of introduced tree species has remained stable during the 1990–2005 period.

4.5. Deadwood

The average volume of deadwood, both standing and lying, is about 10 m³/ha in the forest area of the MCPFE region. However, the amount of deadwood varies considerably between the forest types, standing volume of the stands, decaying rates and vegetation zones.

4.6. Genetic resources

The area managed for conservation of forest tree genetic resources (*in situ* and *ex situ*) more than doubled from 1990 to 2005. Gene conservation and seed production efforts have been carried out for 135 tree species (including subspecies and hybrids), but the level of genetic conservation can be considered adequate only for a limited number of tree species in Europe.

4.7. Landscape pattern

A case study on the assessment methodology and preliminary results on landscape pattern over Europe has been presented. The study showed that despite stable overall forest coverage over the ten years, forest pattern has changed, and its variety in type, degree and direction over the European territory is striking. This methodology is operational and can be further developed for practical applications at various scales.

4.8. Threatened forest species

The data on threatened species by countries are very heterogeneous and does not yet allow monitoring of trends at the European level. The changes in forests are always very slow, which means that the new biodiversity orientation in forest management will be reflected in future results and trends of threatened species. In some countries the long-term monitoring of threatened forest species indicates that it has been possible to slow down the increasing trend in the numbers of threatened species by adopting new management measures in managed forests.

4.9. Protected forests

About 8 percent of Europe's forests are protected with the main objective of biodiversity and about 10 percent with the main objective of landscape protection, totaling 18 percent, or 34 million ha. The area of protected forests is expanding, especially the area designated for active management of biodiversity and landscape protection.