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Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**Global and regional context***Summary*

This document summarizes the latest global and regional policy developments related to forests. It describes decisions resulting from international and intergovernmental processes and identifies areas where these decisions may have an impact on the forest sector in the COFFI and EFC region. It also notes the possible role of the Committee and the Commission in facilitation of implementation of these policy processes. Furthermore the document includes a brief overview of the global and regional reporting on forests and sustainable forest management in the region, concluded in 2015.

Delegates will be invited to take note of the information provided and to consider it when deciding on the future work of the Committee and the Commission.

**I. Introduction to the global and regional forest-related policy context**

1. A number of global legally binding treaties in force directly and indirectly address forests. The most relevant global legal instruments that have initiated action for forest-related policy-making are: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing serious Drought and /or Desertification, particularly in Africa (UNCCD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), the World Trade Agreement (WTA) with relevant protocols and annexes. They address issues ranging from forest-related trade and protection to biological diversity, climate change and desertification. Among these treaties, CITES and the World Trade Agreement (WTA) provide

instruments to ensure that decisions regarding disputes or compliances are enforced in a strict sense through economic and/or political sanctions.

2. Besides legally binding treaties, a number of non-legally binding agreements exist. As early as in 1992 during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) the Forest Principles and the Agenda 21 (Chapter 11, Combating Deforestation) were concluded. Between 1995 and 2000 two intergovernmental forums (Intergovernmental Panel on Forests - IPF, Intergovernmental Forum on Forests - IFF) decided on nearly 300 proposals for forest-related actions to be implemented at the global, regional and local level. Since 2000 the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) negotiated several resolutions on forests, the most comprehensive of these being the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (NLBI), which includes the four Global Objectives on Forests (GoFs), that was finally adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 by. Other initiatives with global impact include the Bonn Challenges, launched by the Government of Germany and the IUCN, as well as the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration.
3. On the regional level, FOREST EUROPE aims to promote sustainable forest management (SFM) in the pan-European region. Its framework has been defined through declarations and resolutions signed by ministers in charge of forests, in six ministerial conferences during 1990-2011. The definition of SFM and related “General guidelines for SFM” and “General guidelines for conservation of biological diversity of forests in Europe”, the “Pan-European Criteria and Indicators for SFM” as well as the “Pan European Approach to National Forest Programs” (NFP) are among most important tools developed by the process.
4. A number of recent global and regional forest-policy processes have been influenced by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the United Nations in September 2000. The most relevant MDGs directly related to forests are Goals 7A and 7B.
5. Since the deadline for achieving the MDGs has been set for 2015, the discussion on a post-2015 Development Agenda was initiated in 2010. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Summit) in 2012 a process to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, building upon the previous set of MDGs, was launched. The final text of the outcome document for the UN Summit to adopt the post-2015 Development Agenda currently displays 17 goals and 169 related targets.
6. Legal and non-legally binding forest-related instruments and policy fora that are currently in place have created a complex, international forest-related policy landscape. While a number of global and regional organisations and processes make an effort to coordinate their activities, their institutional and process mandates as well as different priorities contribute to a further fragmentation of the policy landscape.

## **II. Recent global and regional forest policy developments**

### **a) Sustainable Development Goals**

7. A universal post-2015 development agenda that integrates SDGs and targets is expected to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during the “UN Summit to adopt the post-2015 Development Agenda” in September 2015. The new goals and targets are then supposed to come into effect on 1 January 2016 and last until 2030. The finalised text of the summit’s outcome document, titled “Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development” includes two SDGs directly relevant to forests. Fifteen other SDGs are relevant

to forests indirectly. Besides the goals and targets, the outcome document includes the outline of the new monitoring and review system of SDGs, designed as core of the post-2015 agenda. The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) launched in 2013 will have a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level. It will work coherently with the General Assembly, UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and other relevant organs and fora, in accordance with existing mandates. It will facilitate sharing of experiences, and provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for the follow-up. It will promote system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.

8. The finalised text of the outcome document of the UN Summit foresees three levels of follow-up and review process for the SDGs: global, regional and national. However, how the planned review mechanism of the HLPF will look like in detail is yet to be decided.
9. It can be predicted that inclusive regional review processes will draw on national reviews and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level under the auspices of the HLPF. The Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 agenda “The Road to Dignity by 2030”, issued in December 2014, states that regional reviews would build on the experiences of the United Nations Regional Commissions in existing review mechanisms. The UN Regional Commissions could therefore potentially play a role in this process; would the members States like to identify their executive bodies as relevant regional fora for coordination.
10. The progress towards achievement of goals and targets will be reviewed using a set of global indicators. The finalised text for adoption states that these will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels, which will be developed by member States. The global indicators framework, to be developed by the Inter Agency Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs), will be agreed by the UN Statistical Commission by March 2016. Thereafter, it will be presented for consideration to an intergovernmental consultations process, similar to the one that the sustainable development goals and targets have undergone in 2015. Finally it is expected to be adopted by ECOSOC and the General Assembly in 2016. The future global indicators (including those related to forests) will likely rely on existing definitions and benefit from already collected data. Beyond the indicators agreed on the global level, countries may wish to consider indicators reflecting the contributions of forests to other SDGs, such as the ones on food security, poverty reduction, etc.

#### **b) 11<sup>th</sup> Session of United Nations Forum on Forests**

11. The UNFF held its eleventh session from 4-15 May 2015 in New York. Its main objective was to assess progress, challenges and the way forward for the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) beyond 2015. In the draft ministerial declaration of the high-level segment “International arrangement on the forests we want: beyond 2015” ministers responsible for forests committed to, *inter alia*, implementing and integrating sustainable forest management (SFM) into poverty reduction strategies and national sustainable development strategies; and strengthening and building a more effective post-2015 arrangement on forests. They also committed themselves to support the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and to improve forest legislation and forest law enforcement as needed. They also invited strengthening coordination and collaboration with relevant forest-related processes.
12. The draft ECOSOC resolution on the “International arrangement on forests beyond 2015” stipulated that the IAF consists of UNFF and its member States, the Forum secretariat, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the Forum Trust Fund. Regional organizations and processes were asked to be involved as partners. Furthermore it was agreed to promote the implementation of SFM, to enhance forests

contribution to the post-2015 development agenda, to enhance cooperation, coordination and coherence at all levels, to foster international cooperation, to strengthen forest governance frameworks, means of implementation and long-term political commitment. The Forum decided to develop “a concise strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 to serve as a strategic framework to enhance the coherence of and guide and focus the work of the international arrangement on forests and its components”<sup>1</sup>.

13. The draft resolution also recommended to rename the NLBI the “United Nations forest instrument” and to extend the Global Objectives on Forests to 2030.

**c) XIV World Forestry Congress**

14. The XIV World Forestry Congress will be held in Durban, South Africa, 7-11 September 2015. The Congress brings together the global forestry community with the aim to help position forestry as an integral part of sustainable development at all levels; identify and review major issues facing forests and forestry, and propose technical, scientific and policy interventions to promote forest sustainability; provide an open forum to share knowledge establish and consolidate partnerships; showcase the latest developments and innovations in global forestry; and provide a platform for all key stakeholders. The Commission and the Committee will be informed about main outcomes and key messages of the Congress during SILVA 2015.

**d) Convention on Biological Diversity**

15. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) directs its current work through a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020). The Plan includes the time-bound and measureable Aichi Biodiversity Targets that were agreed at the 10th CBD meeting held in Nagoya, in 2010. In addition, within the CBD, relevant organizations and processes are invited to collaborate on the implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity. The implementation of the Aichi Targets will lead to achieving the ultimate goal of CBD: to halt the biodiversity loss by 2020. The most important forest-related targets are the following:
  - a) Target 5: “By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced”
  - b) Target 7: “By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity”.
16. Indirectly relevant forest-related targets are: Target 1 on biodiversity values; Target 4 related to the impact on the use of natural resources; Target 6 that relates to protected areas; Target 11 on trends in pressure; Target 14 on ecosystem provisions and the strategic goal E on participation.
17. The CBD decided at its last meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2012 to further collaborate with the forest sector in terms of biodiversity monitoring, and to cooperate with the UNFF. In addition, it initiated advice on the use of relevant safeguards to reduce the risks for biodiversity loss in developing countries. Those safeguards have been already introduced by the UNFCCC to encourage developing countries to contribute to forest-related climate mitigation activities.

**e) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

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<sup>1</sup> Document E/2015/42-E/CN.18/2015/14 Report of the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

18. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21) will convene in December 2015 in Paris with the aim of achieving a legally binding and universal agreement on climate to keep global warming below 2°C. Forests will have a central role in achieving this ambitious goal. The expected outcome of the negotiations – the so-called “Paris Package” – will consist of a legally binding and universal agreement on climate to take effect in 2020 and a decision on arrangements prior to the agreement’s entry into force. The agreement is expected to adopt a comprehensive approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation (i.e. no sectors excluded from implementation) and to put greater emphasis on adaptation than in the Kyoto Protocol so as to achieve a better balance between mitigation and adaptation. At the time of writing, the negotiation text<sup>2</sup> explicitly mentions REDD+<sup>3</sup> and actions in the land use sector, and also highlights links between mitigation and adaptation, which are particularly strong in the land sectors. Whether or not these references are retained in the final text adopted in Paris, widespread recognition of the importance of forests to climate change mitigation and adaptation will ensure that implementation of the new agreement will entail actions in the forest sector.

#### **f) FOREST EUROPE**

19. FOREST EUROPE is preparing its 7<sup>th</sup> and the Extraordinary Ministerial Conferences to be held on 20-21 October 2015 in Madrid, Spain. For the Ministerial Conference, one Ministerial Declaration, two Ministerial Resolutions, and two Ministerial Decisions were prepared:
  - a) The Declaration “25 years together promoting Sustainable Forest Management in Europe” reconfirms the commitment of signatory States towards SFM.
  - b) Madrid Resolution 1 “The Forest Sector in the centre of Green Economy” addresses measures to enhance the role of SFM in a Green economy.
  - c) Madrid Resolution 2 “Protection of forests in a changing environment” highlights the needs for enhancing the protection of forest in particular respect to climate change and natural hazards, and strengthening the cooperation in the pan-European region.
  - d) Madrid Ministerial Decision “The future direction of FOREST EUROPE” decides to set a process to review structure, procedures and working modalities including lessons learned of the FOREST EUROPE process. Related terms of reference and a roadmap will be devised at the first Expert Level Meeting after the Madrid conference.
20. The Madrid Ministerial Decision to be adopted by the FOREST EUROPE Extraordinary Ministerial Conference acknowledges the work and the results of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and confirms commitment towards further exploring possible ways to find common ground on the legally binding agreement at an appropriate time (at the latest by 2020).
21. In the wake of the Ministerial Conference, a revised set of pan-European Criteria and Indicators for SFM will be adopted. The new State of Europe’s Forest Report 2015 will also be presented at the Conference. Further, a mid-term evaluation of the “Goals for European Forests” and the “European 2020 Targets”, adopted in the Oslo Ministerial Decision from 2011, will be made available. By 2016, the chairmanship of FOREST EUROPE will be handed over to the Slovak Republic.

<sup>2</sup> Document FCCC/ADP/2-15/1 <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/adp2/eng/01.pdf>; see also Co-Chairs’ scenario note <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/adp2/eng/4infnot.pdf> (24 July 2015)

<sup>3</sup> Reducing deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries

### **III. Implementation of results of global and regional policy processes by COFFI and EFC – conclusions and points for consideration**

#### **a) Sustainable Development Goals**

22. While the HLPF will have a central role in overseeing a network of monitoring and review processes of the SDGs and targets at the global level, the follow-up and review at the regional level can, as appropriate, provide useful opportunities for peer learning on shared targets among countries from the same region. The finalised text of the outcome document for the post-2015 agenda recognises the importance of building on existing follow-up and review mechanisms at the regional level, for instance those developed by the United Nations Regional Commissions and other organizations. Regional review processes are meant to draw on national-level reviews and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level, including at the HLPF.
23. Follow-up and review at the HLPF will be, based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level. UN system Organizations and United Nations Regional Commissions were invited to contribute to the development of the global indicators framework coordinated by the IAEG-SDGs. UNECE has been contributing to the process with their suggestions of indicators coordinated by the Statistical Division. Through its Statistical Division, UNECE has provided indicator proposals and hosted an online discussion platform to facilitate the IAEG-SDG, whereas FAO has been contributing the main indicator proposals for SDG 2 and for forestry-related targets under SDG 15.
24. COFFI and EFC as well as forest experts in the region, including the UNECE/FAO Teams of Specialists (ToS) have built up a considerable expertise on SFM implementation including the collection of data, and the development of indicators. The information gathered through years of cooperation could contribute to a development of a monitoring and review system in relevance to goals and targets directly related to forests.
25. The joint FAO and UNECE work on collecting statistical information related to forests and sustainable forest management has contributed to the development of an extensive system of monitoring and evaluation of all aspects related to the state of forests, wood resources, forest functions and services, forest products and markets, and sustainable forest management in the region. Currently the reporting covers all pillars of SFM and includes most of SFM indicators.
26. Since September 2014, when the post-2015 process entered in the phase of intergovernmental consultations, the section has continued to monitor the developments of the political agenda on SDGs. It has engaged in showcasing its work on regional monitoring and evaluation related to the state of forests and SFM of relevance to the implementation of the future forest related SDGs and targets proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **b) United Nations Forum on Forests**

27. During the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the UNFF, the regional dimension of the UNFF<sup>4</sup> has experienced a considerable bust and the Forum was asked to strengthen its collaboration with relevant regional institutions, organizations and processes in order to improve the implementation of SFM. The UNFF Secretariat was asked to consult with regional partners on means of improvement of this collaboration including the implementation of the UNFF strategic plan and its quadrennial programmes of work. In addition, regional institutions, organizations and processes were invited to develop or strengthen programmes on SFM and to provide coordinated inputs and recommendations to the Forum's sessions. Finally member States were encouraged to strengthen regional and sub-regional forest policy processes or platforms.
28. UNECE and FAO have contributed in the past with regional perspective and expert assessments to the UNFF sessions. COFFI and EFC have worked in collaboration with other forest related entities in the region and in partnership with other organisations have developed an extensive network of forest experts around the Joint UNECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Products and Economics and the Teams of Specialists. A recent example of this contribution is the UNECE/FAO study on progress towards the achievement of the global objectives on forests and SFM prepared for the 11<sup>th</sup> session of UNFF in May 2015.
29. In the context of developing a new format for the new cycle of national reporting for the IAF, these streamlining and harmonization efforts in the region could constitute a valuable input to the UNFF work. They could include guidance on shared data collection, monitoring and assessment, carrying out technical and scientific studies, as well as coordinated communication, outreach and capacity building activities. The existing UNECE/FAO framework for cooperation on regional reporting, which involves relevant organizations and processes, can be used for facilitation of the regional discussion and input to IAF reporting.

**c) FOREST EUROPE**

30. UNECE and FAO have provided support to the FOREST EUROPE process, in particular through cooperation on the global and pan-European reporting on forests and SFM as well as the review of the pan-European indicators. This cooperation is expected to continue, in particular in the context of the implementation of the next FOREST EUROPE Work Programme as well as involvement in the work on future direction of the FOREST EUROPE process.

**d) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

31. The new climate agreement and associated climate financing can be expected to stimulate investment in forest-based mitigation and adaptation and to support the sector's contributions to the global move toward a green economy. The Paris agreement will trigger results-based REDD+ payments (the foundation for which is largely set by the COP19 decisions comprising the Warsaw Framework on REDD+) and will reinforce developed country efforts in forest-based mitigation. REDD+ and forest-related adaptation actions in developing countries will be facilitated by financing from the Green Climate Fund and other sources, including Global Environment Fund, the Forest Investment Program under the World Bank and important bilateral support.
32. The challenge for developing countries will be to manage the transition from early action in REDD+ (including the strengthening of national forest monitoring systems; enhancing forest

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<sup>4</sup> See document E/CN.18/2015/L.2/Rev.1, chapter VIII Regional/subregional involvement, paragraphs 25-28.

governance, including stakeholder rights and engagement; and establishing systems to ensure social and environmental safeguards are identified and respected) to results-based payments for REDD+. All countries are faced with the need to ensure that their climate change goals and commitments are well articulated with their broader goals for sustainable forest management. REDD+ has so far dominated the dialogue on forests and climate change; it is time to devote greater attention to optimizing forests' contributions to resilience and climate change adaptation.

33. The recent developments in UNFF, the post-2015/SDG process and UNFCCC, makes it imperative and creates unique opportunities for countries to build strong and sustainable forest sectors that meet national objectives and the needs of their diverse stakeholders while contributing to global sustainability goals. This will entail investing in capacity and institutional development, creating an enabling policy environment, and ensuring sustainable forest financing that together will create a robust, self-sustaining forest sector.

**e) Points for consideration**

34. The Commission and the Committee may wish to consider:
- Encouraging countries in the region to actively engage in the implementation of the SDGs as they relate to forests by strengthening the socio-economic contributions of forests and to monitor progress, using the UN Forest Instrument as a framework for implementation;
  - Requesting FAO and UNECE to assist in identifying appropriate indicators for forests' contributions to the SDGs and efficient ways of measuring them, and, jointly with other CPF members, provide support to country implementation of the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda as they relate to forests;
  - Encouraging countries to continue efforts to integrate climate change into their national forest programmes and to reflect forests adequately in their climate change strategies and plans, including their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs);
  - Requesting FAO and UNECE to continue to provide support to countries, through providing tools and technical assistance, to integrate climate change into their forest and related sectors, including through, inter alia, its programmes in forest and landscape restoration, dryland and Mediterranean forest management, mountain development, climate smart agriculture, and policy and institutional support; and to continue to assist in strengthening national forest monitoring systems for climate change mitigation (i.e. REDD+) and adaptation;
  - Possible regional contribution to the UNFF Strategic Plan and its next work programme;
  - Possibilities of contribution to the implementation of the next FOREST EUROPE Work Programme as well as involvement the work on future direction of the FOREST EUROPE process;
  - Involving the joint UNECE/FAO section in monitoring and regularly updating member States and other stakeholders on the forest related global and regional policy developments.

## **IV. Forest Resources Assessment 2015**



35. FAO's global forest resources assessments, undertaken every five to ten years, have evolved over time to respond to changing needs. The 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) requested FAO to "prepare a long-term strategy for the FRA programme consistent with prospects for sustainable funding". In response to this request, FAO developed a document outlining a strategy and that explains objectives, activities and outputs for the period 2012-2030.
36. At its 20<sup>th</sup> session, COFO also recommended that the next Global FRA be prepared by 2015. The overall shape of the 2015 assessment should fit into the framework delineated by the long-term FRA strategy, which includes streamlining and, wherever possible, harmonisation of data collection and reporting.
37. The global reporting on forests resources 2015 consisted of two major components: the first component (as in past cycles) has national correspondents from all countries and territories reporting on their forests through national enquiries; a second component, a remote sensing survey, provides information about forest cover changes over the 1990-2010 period.
38. The data collection system for the 2015 reporting cycle was developed through a collaborative, preparatory process, which included consultations with stakeholders and countries. Advice was received through meetings of the FAO Advisory Group on FRA and consultations with a "consortium of the willing" – a group of organizations that are involved in forest data collection, leading to the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ). In addition to FAO, the "consortium" consists of: the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO); FOREST EUROPE; the Montréal Process; the Observatoire des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale (OFAC) and the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.
39. In the course of the preparatory process, documents were reviewed by national and international experts at the meetings of the Advisory Group, the stakeholders of the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire and through technical consultations.
40. The global reporting 2015 is organised around 21 major questions. The new questionnaire is more focused on several issues that; in addition to the information about the extent, changes to values and trends of forest resources; included questions about gross deforestation and degradation of forests. Other improvements included the introduction of a definition of growing stock. Compared to the previous cycles, the questions are oriented more to assessing the progress towards SFM.
41. The overall process of data collection was completed in June 2014. FRA 2015 contains results for 234 countries and territories, including contributions from 155 countries representing the hard work of national correspondents who prepared country reports that present government forest statistics in a common format.
42. The main outputs from FRA2015 process include:
  - a) The Synthesis report of 48 pages consists in the main report of FRA 2015 conclusions;
  - b) Summary tables for all variables collected in FRA 2015 are presented in the FRA 2015 Desk Reference;
  - c) A more detailed set of analyses are presented in independently 13 peer-reviewed papers in a special issue of the journal Forest Ecology and Management;

- d) Data and country reports can also be accessed through the Forest Land Use Data Explorer (FLUDE) website, which provides integrated access to FRA 2015 and other land use related data.
43. The original data and analytical products will be released during the XIV World Forestry Congress, on 7 September 2015 in Durban, South Africa. The joint session will be provided with detailed information on the main findings.

## **V. Regional reporting on forests and Sustainable Forest Management**

44. The FAO and UNECE have a longstanding cooperation on the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA), which has continued to the 2015 cycle of FRA. The joint section contributed to the overall process of development of the FRA/CFRQ 2015. Furthermore it assisted the FAO FRA Team in the collection of data from countries of the pan-European region, which included organization of the joint FAO/UNECE capacity-building workshop for national correspondents from the region.
45. In parallel with the Global Forest Resources Assessment, the work in two main processes related to reporting on forest resources and sustainable forest management in the region was concluded in 2015:
- a) The Joint FOREST EUROPE/UNECE/FAO reporting on quantitative indicators for Sustainable Forest Management in the pan-European region;
  - b) The production of the UNECE/FAO study “Forests in the ECE Region - Trends and challenges in achieving the Global Objectives on Forests”, prepared for the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.
46. The UNECE, FAO and FOREST EUROPE parent bodies decided that (for the first time ever), data on pan-European quantitative indicators on SFM shall be collected in parallel with the global reporting. The main tool for this process is the “Joint FOREST EUROPE/UNECE/FAO Questionnaire on Pan-European Indicators for SFM”. The questionnaire was developed by the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section supported by the UNECE/FAO ToS on Monitoring SFM and the FAO FRA Team, in communication with the FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit Madrid (LUM).
47. The joint section was responsible for the collection, review and compilation of national data. The process was done with the immense involvement of the national correspondents, supported by numerous national specialists. Countries were assisted by the same reviewers (lead expert on the issue) who were involved in the global process. The support provided by individual experts, organisations and countries of the region, in particular by Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland, has to be recognized and acknowledged.
48. As of the date of release of this document, 36 countries provided their national reports. For those 9 countries that have not provided their reports, the secretariat produced reports based on available data. Due to the joint character of the reporting the collected data was made available for both the joint section and FOREST EUROPE LUM. Similar to previous cycles, all information collected will be made available through the third edition of the interactive FOREST EUROPE/UNECE/FAO database with the UN Statistical Division.

49. At their joint session in Rovaniemi in December 2013, the Committee and the Commission mandated the joint section “to develop the study on progress towards the achievement of the global objectives on forests and SFM, and on challenges for forests and the forest sector in the UNECE region and to submit the draft of the study for comments to member States during 2014, in order to issue the final study in time for it to be presented at the 11th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in mid-2015” (ECE/TIM/2013/2 para. 62).
50. The study, which has been developed as the collaborative effort of lead experts on the issues, from all parts of the region was presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> session held in New York, United States in May 2015. Immense support was provided by countries of the region, in particular by Finland, Germany, the Russian Federation, Switzerland and the United States.
51. Through its involvement in the Global Forest Resources Assessment/Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire, the FOREST EUROPE/UNECE/FAO reporting on Pan-European Indicators for SFM, and the process of the production of the study for UNFF11, the joint section, supported by the ToS on Monitoring SFM, facilitated the three major international data reporting processes in the region. This involvement allowed for:
- a) Providing regional input to the designing the shape of the global reporting;
  - b) Developing the regional reporting in a consistent way with the global system;
  - c) Ensuring circulation of information and facilitating involvement of national correspondents and regional organisations in the region into forest reporting processes;
  - d) Organizing reporting processes in a coordinated way;
  - e) Supporting national correspondents in their work on providing and verifying national data.
52. The approach applied to the global (CFRQ/FRA) and regional (FOREST EUROPE/UNECE/FAO) reporting enabled achieving the main goal – to provide stakeholders and the whole community with the required information. Its application, even if has not entirely eliminated problems related to the fragmentation of forest reporting, resulted in the multiple benefits that include:
- a) Reduction of overlap and duplication of efforts in reporting;
  - b) Limited inconsistencies between different reporting on the same topics;
  - c) Reduction of costs and efforts of data collection;
  - d) Reduction of ambiguity in interpretation of data;
  - e) Provision of consistent figures on forests that would allow elaboration and communication of the common messages/key findings to the “outside world”.
24. The Committee and the Commission are invited to review the results of the 2015 global and regional reporting and provide recommendations for UNECE and FAO related to the organisation of the next reporting cycle, in the context of the plans for the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020.
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