



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
3 August 2016

Original: English

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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

#### Seventy-fourth session

Geneva, 18-20 October 2016

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

#### The global and regional policy context

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### Note by the secretariat

#### *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 ECE region.

Delegates will be invited to take note of the information provided, and to consider it when jointly discussing the future work of the Committee.

## I. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. The recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is, to a large extent, founded on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), established in 2000. Member States initiated a new process aimed at developing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), because the deadline for achieving MDGs was foreseen for 2015. The process was guided by:

- a) The outcome document of the Summit on MDGs (2010)
- b) The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), “The Future We Want” (2012)
- c) The outcome document of the Special Event of the President of the General Assembly (2013)

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2. Based on the mandate of the Summit on MDGs, the Secretary General put in place a multi-layered process of stakeholder consultations. As the result, a synthesis report, including a framework of the new Agenda, an outline of the means of implementation and possible measures of progress, was issued in December 2014.
3. Rio+20 agreed to launch a process to develop a set of SDGs. It mandated member States to form a transparent, and inclusive to stakeholders, Open Working Group (OWG) to work on goals and targets and to submit a proposal for SDGs to the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly in 2014. Forests and their multiple functions were directly addressed in the final draft of the proposal under two goals, namely SDG6 and SDG15.<sup>1</sup>
4. In parallel, during the Special Event of the President of the General Assembly, member States agreed to initiate an intergovernmental process of consultations on the OWG proposal, from September 2014. It led to the adoption of the outcome document “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” at the UN Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, in 2015. The new SDGs and targets came into effect on 1 January 2016, and are expected to last until 2030. Besides the goals and targets, the outcome document included parts dedicated to the “means of implementation” and the “follow-up and review” of the SDGs at the global, regional and national levels.
5. Meanwhile, the modalities for the “monitoring and review” system are still under discussion. The UN Statistical Commission, at its session in March 2016, provided a proposal for an agreement on the global indicators framework. Since then, the proposed set of indicators has been presented for consideration to an intergovernmental consultations process, and is expected to be adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and later by the General Assembly in September 2016.
6. The 2030 Agenda foresees three levels of a “follow-up and review” system for SDGs: global, regional and national. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will have a central role in overseeing a network of the follow-up and review of the SDG implementation processes at the global level. On 11–20 July 2016, the HLPF, the first since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, will include voluntary reviews of 22 countries and thematic reviews of progress on the SDGs, including cross-cutting issues. They will be supported by reviews by the ECOSOC functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums.
7. 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 (RCs). Also, the future global indicators (including those related to forests) are expected to rely on existing

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<sup>1</sup> Goal 15 aims to “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”. It includes targets related to the implementation and the means of implementation for sustainable forest management (SFM), and a target on ensuring the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements. Goal 6, which calls to “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, includes a target to “protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes”.

definitions, and benefit from data produced by national statistical systems. There is, therefore, a broad view that capacity-building will be essential for supporting these systems to meet the requirements of the reporting for 2030 Agenda implementation.

8. The UNECE continues to be involved in the process of developing the monitoring framework for the implementation of SDGs as a member of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG), established by the UN Statistical Commission. The Group has also been collaborating with Eurostat, the OECD and a number of member States to develop a universal measurement framework for sustainable development in the framework of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES).

9. In addition, together with other UN RCs, the UNECE has been involved in articulating new strategies and identifying areas where RCs can help member States translate global commitments into their national strategies and agendas. For the purpose of that process, a Regional Forum on Sustainable Development was held as a special segment of the eighty-fourth meeting of the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) on 10 May 2016. Its conclusions were forwarded to the HLPF.

10. EXCOM agreed to continue, in line with the corresponding outcome of the 2016 HLFP, the process of informal consultations on a future regional review mechanism for the “follow-up and review” of the 2030 Agenda, with a view to taking a decision on the establishment of such a mechanism at the sixty-seventh session of the Commission in April 2017. This would leave enough time for discussions among member States, and would allow for contributions by UNECE sectoral committees on how such a mechanism could look.

11. In May 2016, the co-facilitators of the informal consultations on the “follow-up and review” of the 2030 Agenda issued a zero draft of the General Assembly resolution to be adopted in September 2016. It includes general guidelines for a global review mechanism.

12. In June 2016, RCs prepared a joint report on their possible role in the support of country-level implementation of the 2030 Agenda, for submission to the 2016 annual session of ECOSOC.

13. The report includes reflections on: integrating SDGs into national development planning and fiscal frameworks; the organization of Regional Forums on Sustainable Development; strengthening the data and statistical capacities of UN member States; identifying and promoting innovative sources of financing; leveraging science, technology, and innovation (STI); South-South cooperation and regional partnerships; translating regional models into global public goods; and additional policy issues addressed by the RCs at their ministerial sessions and other high-level meetings which could be used as reference by member States in their work on a future regional review mechanism for the “follow-up and review” of the 2030 Agenda.

14. The COFO/2016/5.2 document informed participants of the twenty-third session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) about the role of forests in the 2030 Agenda. Following the UN Statistical Commission meeting in March 2016, the “FAO has been assigned custodianship of twenty indicators, including the responsibility to monitor three of the forest related indicators (15.11.; 15.2.1.; 15.4.2) and to provide relevant data for the others, including on wood energy and harvested wood products”<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> COFO/2016/5.2, para 9.

15. The document underlined that forests are relevant to most of the SDGs. However, quantification of these contributions had not always been possible at the global level, due to data gaps and challenges in the collection of globally comparable information. Challenges related to obtaining quality data for SDG indicators from countries and to ensuring that time series are consistent, will impact the current FAO reporting. For instance the Forest Resources Assessment (FRA), the main reporting instrument on forests, collects data every five years. Therefore, aligning the FRA with the SDG reporting will require not only enhancing data collection, but also the frequency of reporting.

16. Data collection processes such as the FRA will give information about the global indicator framework for SDGs, key for ensuring the quantification and comparability of country results. On the other hand, in terms of concepts, existing Criteria and Indicators (C&Is) for SFM can be instrumental in the production of forest-related SDG indicators. The FAO project on strengthening C&I for SFM in policy and practice has provided valuable analysis and input to the monitoring of forest-related SDGs. The collaboration with key partners working on C&I, initiated while defining proposals for SDG indicators, will continue. The FAO will work with the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UNFCCC, the UNFF and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) to reflect forests in the SDG global indicator framework.

## **II. The UNFF**

17. Through ECOSOC Resolution 2015/33, initially agreed upon during the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF11) in May 2015, member States decided to develop a concise strategic plan for the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) for the period of 2017-2030. It will serve as a strategic framework to enhance the coherence of a future guide, and will focus the work of the IAF and its components.

18. The strategic plan should be aligned with the objectives of the Arrangement, and should incorporate a mission and vision, the Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs), and forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda. It should also take into account significant forest-related developments in other forums, as well as identify the roles of different actors and the framework for reviewing implementation. It will outline a communication strategy to raise awareness about the work of the Arrangement. The plan should be operationalized through quadrennial programmes of work that set out priority actions and resource needs, beginning with the period 2017-2020.

19. Accordingly, ECOSOC established a working group and an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group (AHEG) under the Forum. The mandate of the AHEG is to develop and submit proposals to the working group on matters referred to in paragraph 44 of the Resolution, namely: (a) the replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in paragraph 1(b) of the United Nations Forest Instrument with an appropriate reference to the SDGs and targets; and (b) the Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work (4POW) for the period 2017-2020, consistent with Section XI of the Resolution. The AHEG should perform its tasks in up to two meetings in 2016.

20. The first meeting (AHEG1) was held in New York on 25-27 April 2016. At it, experts considered elements of the Strategic Plan, including: title; mission and vision; communication strategy; goals and targets; 4POW for the period 2017-2020; actions; framework for reviewing implementation; contribution to the follow-up, review and implementation of forest-related SDGs and targets of the 2030 Agenda

under the HLPF; priorities for the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network; resource needs; roles of the IAF components and stakeholders; table of contents of the Strategic Plan; and follow-up activities.

21. The AHEG co-chairs will provide their initial proposed options and building blocks for the Strategic Plan and the 4POW on the basis of the input provided through the AHEG, the outcome of the expert panel held in Tokyo, and the consultants' paper. Views and input from member States and stakeholders will be solicited. According to the feedback received, the co-chairs will provide a revised proposal in advance of the second meeting (AHEG2) scheduled to be convened on 24-28 October 2016 at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand.

22. The outcome of the work of the AHEG will be submitted for consideration to the Forum's working group, scheduled to be convened on 16-20 January 2017 at the UNHQ in New York. After that, it will be considered by a special session of the Forum, which will be convened immediately following the adjournment of the final meeting of the Forum's working group.

23. In order to support the AHEG process, an expert meeting on the involvement of regional and subregional entities in the IAF will be held on 26-28 September 2016 at the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) headquarters in Tehran, Iran. There will be no official outcome of the meeting. However, a summary of the key proposed actions and ideas will inform the deliberations at AHEG2 in Bangkok.

### **III. Forest Europe**

24. The Forest Europe Work Programme for the period 2016-2020 was adopted at the Forest Europe Expert Level Meeting on 11-12 May 2016 in Bratislava. Slovakia currently acts as co-chair of the process, together with Spain. The General Coordinating Committee, which consists of the two co-chairs, Germany, Sweden and Turkey, provides overall guidance to Forest Europe.

25. The main objective of the Work Programme is to continue Forest Europe's efforts to promote SFM in signatory countries, reflecting latest developments, knowledge, and innovations on emerging issues, and to develop common strategies to this end.

26. The Work Programme aims to implement, at pan-European level, regional commitments made at the 7th Forest Europe Ministerial Conference and the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference held in October 2015. In addition, some of the planned actions (broader thematic areas) and activities (such as expert groups, analyses and workshops) also refer to the commitments adopted at previous Forest Europe Ministerial Conferences.

27. The activities of the Work Programme will be carried out in cooperation with Forest Europe signatories and observers, the Liaison Unit, and other relevant regional actors. Cooperation with regional bodies and processes within Europe and, where relevant, in a broader geographical context (e.g. the UNECE, the FAO, UNEP, the European Forest Institute (EFI), the UNFF, the CBD, the UNFCCC, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO)) will be strengthened, and synergies in the implementation of the Work Programme will be sought, following dialogue with the entities listed, specifically with the UNECE/FAO IPoW. Further efforts to reach out to other sectors will also be made.

28. The Work Programme is fully aligned with the latest relevant global initiatives, such as the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, the UNFF11 Resolution, and the

Paris Agreement, and, where relevant, will seek to contribute to their implementation.

29. Implementation of the Forest Europe Work Programme will address the following main topics:

- a) Further development and updating of policies and tools for SFM. This action will contribute to better coordination of policy tools on forests and forest management at global, regional, subregional and national levels, e.g. the 2030 Agenda including its SDGs, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, GOFs, regional C&I processes and their subsets for the assessment of SFM, and global FRAs, and to communication between them and other sectors. Forest Europe will also seek possible ways of cooperation with UNFF in the development of a set of indicators for forest-related targets of SDGs.
- b) Forest monitoring and reporting. Monitoring and reporting on forests and SFM, including the preparation and production of the State of Europe's Forests Report, belong to regular Forest Europe activities. Within this action, pilot studies to assess the availability, feasibility and reliability of data of the new SFM indicators will be carried out. Pan-European forest monitoring and reporting should also facilitate the evaluation of achievements on Goals and 2020 Targets for European Forests.
- c) Enhancing the role of SFM in a green economy. Forest Europe will search for possible ways of raising awareness and recognizing the contribution of the forest sector and its related value chain to local, national and regional economies, and simultaneously promoting its long-term competitiveness, and highlighting the role of wood, including innovative materials. Other actions will be focused on the enhancement of education and training systems, and defining requirements for green jobs in the forest sector.
- d) Incorporating the value of forest ecosystem services in a green economy. Forest Europe will analyse and promote the exchange of information on different approaches to the valuation of, and payments for, forest ecosystem services existing within the pan-European region, thus seeking to develop a draft of common methodologies for the valuation of the Forest Ecosystem Services (FES).
- e) Protection of forests in a changing environment, including their adaptation to climate change. Within this action, work on developing and promoting climate change adaptation measures as an integral part of SFM, including their resilience to natural hazards and protection against human-induced threats, will be increased. It will thereby further strengthen the role of SFM.
- f) Enhancing the social dimension of SFM in the context of the benefits of forests to human health and well-being. Forest Europe will seek ways to strengthen the social aspect of sustainability, with an emphasis on raising awareness of the benefits of forests on human health and well-being, and of forest-related education.
- g) Review of the Forest Europe process. The objective of this activity will be to further develop the Forest Europe process with a view to adapting it to current and future challenges, and to enhance its contribution to the promotion of SFM in Europe. The subject of the Review will be the Forest Europe process, its structure, procedures and work modalities, in order to make it more effective and inclusive.
- h) Discussion on the follow-up to the Madrid Extraordinary Ministerial Conference. Building upon the efforts made in previous years, Forest Europe

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will explore possible ways to find common ground for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe<sup>3</sup>.

## IV. Other relevant developments

30. The secretariat has also been keeping track of other intergovernmental agreements that may potentially impact forests and the forest sector in the ECE region.

### A. Climate change

31. After the conclusion of the Paris summit in December 2015, the 2016 climate change policymaking process has been focused on promoting the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The latest developments include the Seventh Petersberg Climate Dialogue which took place in Germany in July. The event, co-chaired by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and the president of the upcoming COP, Morocco, brought together representatives from all regions for informal discussions to explore synergies in support of the UNFCCC negotiating process.

32. In line with the Paris Agreement, many countries are drawing up strategies for climate action up to 2050. Also, the UNFCCC parties are working on submissions, called for during the May 2016 Bonn talks, on the development of modalities for the accounting of financial resources provided and mobilized through public interventions in accordance with Article 9, paragraph 7, of the Paris Agreement<sup>4</sup>. Submissions from parties and observer organizations will be accepted until 29 August 2016.

33. Article 5 of the Paris Agreement specifically integrates forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the operational scheme of the Agreement. Paragraph 1 states that parties should take action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases, including forests. Parties are also encouraged, in paragraph 2, to implement and support, among others, REDD+, and alternative policy approaches such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests.

34. The Paris Agreement will formally enter into force when at least 55 parties of the Framework Convention, accounting for at least 55 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, ratify the Agreement. As of July 2016, 19 parties ratified it, accounting for 0.18% of global emissions.<sup>5</sup>

### B. 23rd session of the FAO Committee on Forestry

35. The FAO governing body, COFO, convened on 18-22 July 2016. The agenda featured topics related to monitoring forest issues and their linkages with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda. The agenda for the 23rd

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<sup>3</sup> The Work Programme activities can be found in the Annex, and the entire Programme can be downloaded from [www.foresteuropa.org](http://www.foresteuropa.org).

<sup>4</sup> Paris Agreement, Art.9, Paragraph 7, at [http://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> [http://unfccc.int/paris\\_agreement/items/9444.php](http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9444.php).

session of COFO also included the discussion of a three-year collaborative programme with Google on making geospatial and mapping products more accessible for fighting climate change and for development planning. The “State of the World’s Forests (SOFO) 2016” and the FAO “Voluntary Guidelines on National Forest Monitoring” were released during the session.

36. The Committee is invited to advise the secretariat on future work.

## **Annex**

### **The implementation of the Work Programme will focus on the following actions and activities in 2016—2020:**

- a) Further development and updating of policies and tools for SFM
  - Expert group exploring considerations on tools to promote and assess SFM in the activities
  - Analysis of the possible uses of the pan-European C&I subsets
- b) Forest monitoring and reporting
  - Collaborative data collection, and production of the next State of Europe’s Forests Report
  - Elaboration of pilot studies on the new indicators
  - Reporting on Goals and 2020 Targets
- c) Enhancing the role of SFM in a green economy
  - Expert group identifying and specifying new skills required in a green economy and green jobs in the forest sector
  - Expert group preparing guidelines on the promotion of green jobs in the forest sector
  - Workshop on enhancing the long-term competitiveness of the whole forest sector in a green economy
- d) Incorporating the value of forests’ ecosystem services in a green economy
  - Analysis of different approaches, methodologies and best practices on the valuation of, and payment for, forest ecosystem services, and draft of common methodologies for the valuation of FES
  - Establishment of a web-based portal for knowledge and information exchange on the valuation of, and payment for, forest ecosystem services
  - Protection of forests in a changing environment, including their adaptation to climate change
  - Questionnaire survey exploring the current state of the implementation of adaptation measures to climate change at national level, and the publication “Integration of adaptation measures into SFM in Europe”
  - Workshop on the protection of forests against current and future natural hazards and human induced threats in the region
  - Workshop on combating desertification, land degradation and drought, through forestry and agroforestry

- e) Enhancing the social dimension of SFM in the context of the benefits of forests to human health and well-being
- Review of knowledge and expertise on the social aspects of SFM in the context of human well-being
  - Workshop on the social aspects of SFM, with special attention to human well-being, health, education and personal development, highlighting the health benefits of forests
  - Review of the Forest Europe process
  - Further discussion on the Legally Binding Agreement (round-table meeting).
-