

# State of Forests of the Caucasus and Central Asia

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FORESTS



**Third (28<sup>th</sup>) meeting of the  
UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on monitoring  
sustainable forest management**

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# Objectives of the first regional overview

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- Describe resources, sector, trends and pressures
- Describe policies and institutions
- Identify major challenges and policy responses

### Also

- Improve visibility and understanding of policy makers and international community
- Encourage regional dialogue and cooperation
- Improve the situation as regards data availability and quality



# Process of the study

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- Consultant prepared country overviews using available data
- National correspondents reviewed and revised country overviews
- Study drafted based on overviews.
- Workshop (Tbilisi, December 2018) reviewed draft, asked to agree on conclusions of study
- Revised and published April 2019 (includes all country overviews)

### Features of process:

- Use best available data
- Focus on policies and institutions
- Work closely with national experts



# Data sources and quality

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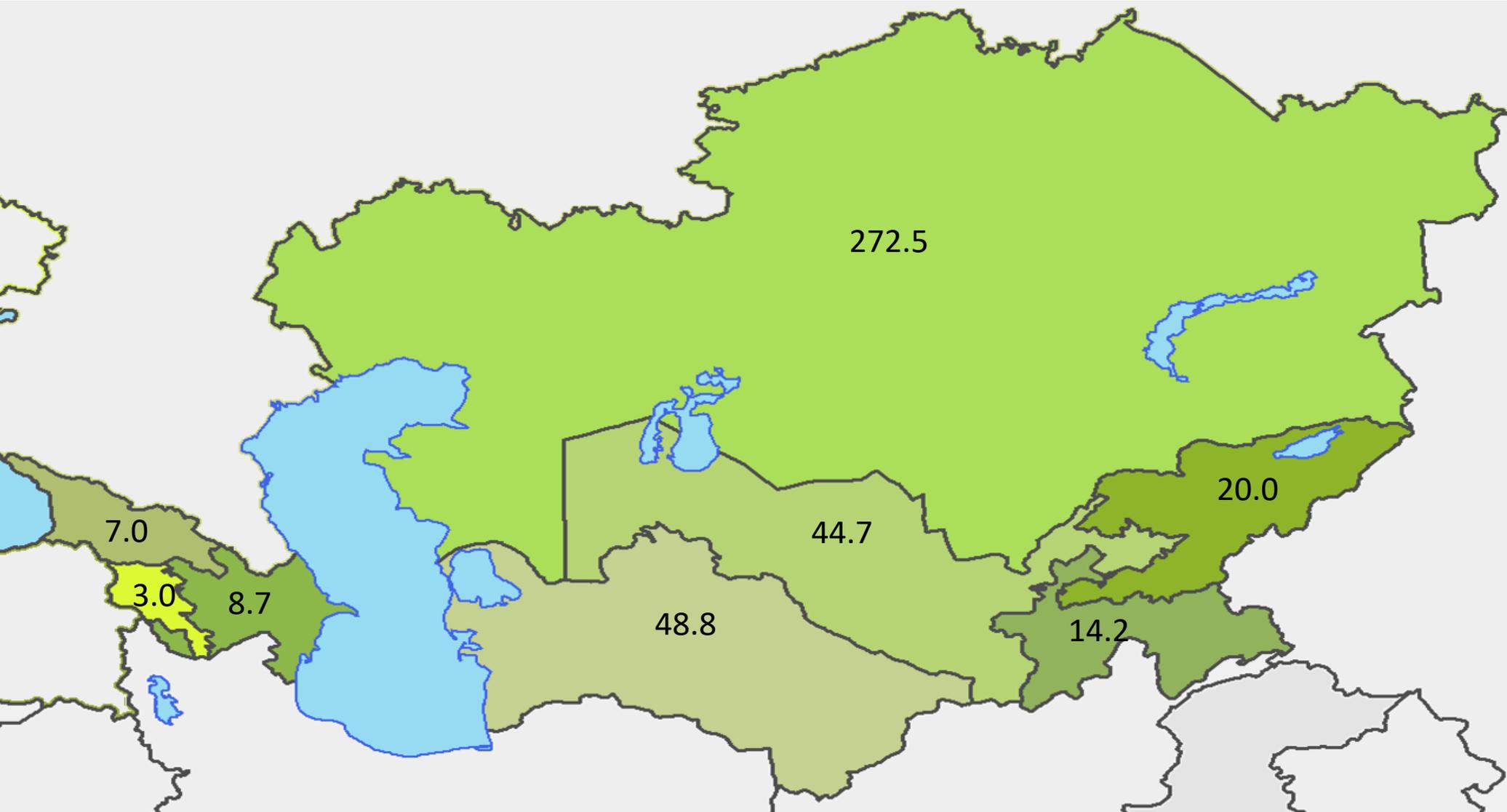


- Main sources: FRA, national data, **all reviewed by national experts**
- Few recent sample-based inventories
- Discrepancy between sample-based inventory and forest accounts
- Many differences in definitions and concepts
- Comparability over time is weak
- Many gaps/weaknesses:
  - Removals (including unrecorded)
  - Sustainable harvest levels
  - Forest health and vitality
  - Livelihoods and employment
  - Biodiversity
- **Nevertheless, it is possible to see the big picture!**

# Caucasus and Central Asia

Area – 419 million ha

Population – 88 million inhabitants



# Background of the region

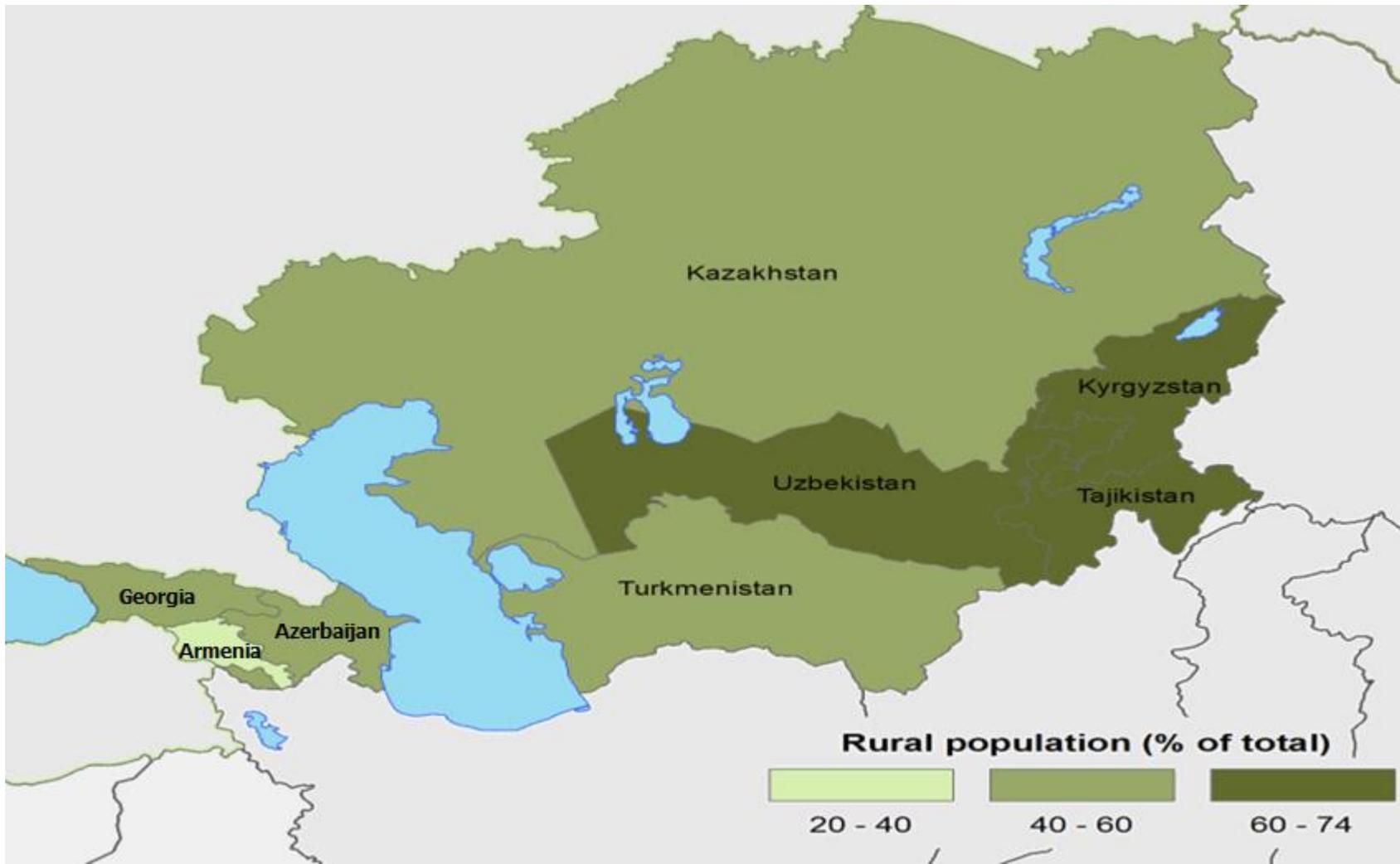
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- Harsh climate (deserts, mountains), ecological damage
- Transition from USSR
- Landlocked (except Georgia)
- “Middle income” (oil/gas revenue for some countries)
- Low forest cover (except Georgia)
- Historical pressures on the forest (tsarist time, wars, reconstruction) led to classification of all forest as Group 1, acknowledged everywhere as priority
- Transition was difficult with collapse of trade system and central funding for forests, establishment of new institutions
- Rural population



# Share of rural population



# The region's forests in figures

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- 27 million ha of forest and other wooded land, most in Central Asia
- 0.3 ha for each inhabitant
- Average forest cover 6.5% (Georgia is an exception, at 41%)
- All forest publicly owned
- 89% designated for protective functions (“Group 1”)
- 11% conserved for biodiversity
- 2 people employed per 1000 ha of forest and other wooded land
- Wood supply estimated at 4.1 million m<sup>3</sup> (certainly an underestimate)

# Forest and other wooded land share

Global average – 31%



Forest and other wooded land area in the region total – **27 million ha** – **6.5% of land**

Armenia – 13.2 %

Azerbaijan – 13.2 %

Georgia – 40.6 %

Kazakhstan – 4.7 %

Kyrgyzstan – 8.3 %

Tajikistan – 4.0 %

Turkmenistan - 8.7 %

Uzbekistan -7.5 %

# Services and goods provided by the forests

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- Protection (priority)
- Conservation of biodiversity
- Wood (mostly fuelwood, dependence on imports of products)
- Pasture
- Non-wood products (nuts, fruits, locally very important)
- Rural livelihoods and employment
- A few services: hunting, tourism
- Climate change mitigation (estimated)



# Pressures on the forests

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- Fuelwood demand leads often to overcutting/illegal logging. Need for affordable rural energy sources
- Overgrazing degrades forests but is often an essential source of livelihood for forest managers.
- Rural poverty: forests one of few suppliers of livelihoods
- Economic sustainability of local forest management units is weak: inadequate support from central budget + lack of opportunity for revenue generation



# Legal framework and policies

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- All countries in the region have recent forest laws
- Most countries have a national forest programme or concept, although monitoring may not be in place
- Incorporation of forest issues in national development plan (four countries), rural development plan (one country) and biodiversity (one country). Important for international funding!
- Further detailed information in the study (country overviews).



# Forest sector institutions

## FORESTS



- Responsibility for forest policy making: ministry for environment (five countries), agriculture (one), direct to Government (two)
- Often policy formulation and monitoring/implementation in same body
- State forest services and local management units play key role
- Often, but by no means always, centrally run
- Financed almost exclusively from central budget



# Forest degradation and forest landscape restoration

## FORESTS



- Worldwide Bonn Challenge to restore 350 million ha worldwide by 2030
- Astana Ministerial Roundtable in June 2018: commitments (6 countries) to restore 2.6 million ha in Caucasus and Central Asia (3.5 million ha if external support).
- We asked national correspondents to describe processes of degradation and possible directions of forest landscape restoration.



# Main conclusions (1)

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- Forests play an essential role in protecting against erosion and desertification, conserving biodiversity, supplying livelihoods and energy.
- Forests are under severe pressure, from demand for fuelwood and grazing, leading to informal/illegal harvesting and forest degradation.
- A formal legal framework is in place, and policy goals articulated.

# Main conclusions (2)

## FORESTS



- Information is not adequate, so policy making is not evidence based and there is little monitoring of progress
- State forest organisations and their decentralised agencies play a key role.
- Forest management is mostly financed from the central budget.
- Inadequacy of resources: finance, human, skills.

# Main challenges (1)

## FORESTS



- Maintain and restore existing forests.
- Increase benefits provided by forest to society.
- Improve information base: regular comprehensive inventories.
- Ensure information collected is taken into account in policy making process, and for monitoring.
- Develop strategies for progress towards SFM and implement them fully.
- Decentralise decision making to the extent possible.



# Main challenges (2)

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- Provide adequate education and training.
- Provide decent working and financial conditions for forest workers - improve attractiveness and prestige of forest professions.
- Strengthen forest sector institutions.
- Integrate SFM into national development strategies.
- Improve communication on forest issues, with policy makers and the public.
- Improve organisation and coordination of international aid projects, avoiding duplication and fragmentation.



# Acknowledgements



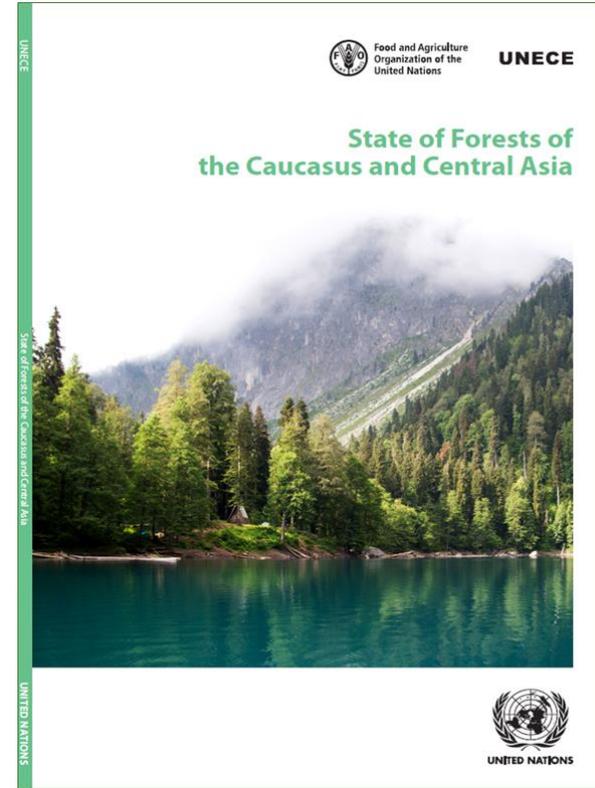
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