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Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

Report by the Chair

Report by the Chair of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI)

1. The Chair of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI), Ms. Marta Gaworska (Poland), is pleased to submit her report to the ninety-fifth meeting of EXCOM on 11 December 2017.

I. Introduction

2. The activities of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) cover 43% of the world forest and over 60% of global wood production. Its work is therefore crucial to address the sustainable management of forests as well as to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Foremost among them are SDG 15, to ‘protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss’, and SDG 13, as the programme “promotes action to combat climate change and its impacts” and addresses both mitigation and adaptation of forests to climate change. Given its focus on the forest industry, the work of COFFI also makes an important contribution to the achievement of SDG 12 to ‘ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns’, as it supports the sustainable use of products and services based on wood products and services as a sound alternative to other materials and products that have a large ecological footprint. It also contributes to SDG 7, as it addresses wood energy (the primary renewable energy in the region) to ‘ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all’.

3. This report outlines the main achievements of COFFI in implementing its Programme of Work in the period between October 2016 and the present time. More information is contained in the report of the seventy-fifth session of COFFI, which was held on 9-13 October 2017 in Warsaw, Poland. (For further details see ECE/TIM/2017/2).

II. Achievements over the past twelve months

4. During the reporting period, the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section¹, (hereafter the Section) continued to work in cooperation with the members of the eight Teams of Specialists on addressing key issues for forests in the region in line with the Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW). Teams of Specialists (ToS) gather hundreds of experts from countries and organizations in specific thematic areas. Work includes development of thematic reports and studies, specific guidance and policy advice, capacity building activities, and engagement in ongoing relevant discussions and debates. Below is a list of the Teams of Specialists 2013-2017:

- (a) ToS on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management
- (b) ToS on Forest Products Statistics
- (c) ToS on Sustainable Forest Products
- (d) ToS on Wood Energy

¹ The ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section is hosted, staffed and supported by ECE and benefits from the secondments of 3 posts (1 P4, 1 P2 and 1 G5) from FAO.

- (e) ToS on Forest Policy
- (f) ILO/ECE/FAO ToS on Green Jobs in the Forest Sector
- (g) ToS on Forest Communication (Forest Communicators' Network)
- (h) ToS on Forest Sector Outlook.

5. The Forestry and Timber Section in cooperation with the ToS, worked specifically in the following Work Areas:

a) Work Area 1: Data, monitoring and assessment:

This area of work includes activities related to the collection of data and statistics, reporting and monitoring on the state of forests, forest resources and sustainable forest management in the region and on forest products. Specific outputs of the current period included:

- Contribution to the development of a global core set of forest-related indicators for sustainable forest management, the forest related SDGs, targets and other internationally agreed goals on forests, and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests;
- Starting the 2020 cycle of the Forest Europe/ECE/FAO reporting on forests and sustainable forest management in the region, as well as the regional contribution to the 2020 global reporting cycle;
- Preparing and issuing the Forest Products Annual Market Review 2016-2017, a thorough report of markets in the region, the impact of specific policies on production and consumption, and possible future directions of forest product markets;
- Publication on wood energy in the ECE region reviewing trends and possible future developments, and the development of the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry, which collected data on production and consumption of wood energy for the reference year 2015;
- Starting a key report (to be finalized in early 2018) on forest ownership in the region, analysing how different ownership regimes influence the management of forests and their productivity.

b) Work Area 2: Policy advice and dialogue:

This area of work involves the preparation of specific policy studies on different aspects of forests management and forest markets, including analyses, guidelines and recommendations to support member States in implementing the relevant key international commitments as well as the organization of regional policy dialogues. Specific output of the current period included:

- Organization of workshops and regional policy dialogues on “Measuring the Value of the Forest Sector in a Green Economy” and on “Forest certification in the ECE region – are there any limits?”, the former analysing the role and challenges related to the valuing of forest products and services in support of a green economy, and the latter exploring current challenges related to wood certification systems;

- Preparation of the study on “Forests and Water: Valuation and Payments for Forest Ecosystem Services” to be published in early 2018;
- Preparation of the study “Green Jobs in the Forest Sector” (publication expected in early 2018), analysing the current situation as well as potentials for future markets and job development;
- Starting the next round of Forest Sector Outlook studies for the ECE region, which will identify the main trends and challenges in forest management in a long term scenario;
- Review of the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy;
- Active participation in relevant international and regional processes (e.g. United Nations Forum on Forests, Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe, etc.).

c) Work Area 3: Communications and outreach:

This area of work focuses on raising awareness on the contribution of the forest sector to the sustainable development of the region as well as on increasing the dissemination of the information and tools produced through the work of the Section and relevant Teams of Specialists to support the global and regional forest agenda. Specific outputs of 2017 include:

- Organization of events during the International Day of Forests 2017 under the theme “Forests and Energy” on 21 March 2017 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland;
- Organization of the 4th European Forest Week, under the theme: “Forests, our common good”. Multiple events and activities took place all over Europe; and an art contest motivated more than 300 young people (5-19) to express their vision of European Forests; additionally an exhibition at the Pregny Gate at the Palais des Nations was set up focusing on key messages on forests in Europe;
- Regular publishing of the Forest Information Billboard including information on key activities, meetings, initiatives and events from all forest stakeholders at the national and regional levels;
- Preparation and publication of a booklet on 70 years of cooperation between ECE and FAO on forests in the region.

d) Work Area 4: Capacity-building:

This area of work focuses on providing technical assistance to countries in Eastern Europe and South Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, through the development of ad hoc capacity building activities and related studies. Over the past year the following activities took place:

- The United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project on “Accountability Systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia” (2016-2019), was launched in November 2016. In 2017,

training material for the development of national criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management was released in English and Russian. The training material was the basis for national coaching workshops which took place in all five target countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan);

- Organization of a joint workshop on Promoting Green Jobs in the Forest Sector (27—28 June 2017 in Bratislava, Slovakia). The workshop covered issues related to occupational health and safety of forest workers; Education and training for new skills development in the forest sector; Social equity and gender issues; Creating green job opportunities in the forest sector;
- Drafting of studies on the Forest Sector Workforce in Eastern Europe and the Forest Sector Workforce in the Balkan Region (to be issued shortly);
- Organization of a workshop on “Bioenergy from the Forest Sector - Capacity Building for Information” to improve reporting on wood energy in Budapest, December 2016.

III. The Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work 2018-2021 and main expected outputs

6. At the joint session held in Warsaw, Poland from 9 to 13 October 2017, the ECE COFFI and the FAO European Forestry Commission adopted the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work on forests for the region. The Warsaw Programme (contained in document ECE/TIM/2017/2) is based on the previous four areas of work (see above), however activities and outputs were realigned to provide a direct support to the implementation of:

- The 2030 Agenda and the relevant SDGs;
- The United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030;
- The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Quadrennial Programme of Work 2017-2020;
- The Aichi Biodiversity targets;
- The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);
- The Bonn Challenge for forest landscape restoration; and
- The Roveniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy.

7. The Programme encompasses the following main topics related to forests, sustainable forest management and the forest sector:

- a) The state of forests and the state of sustainable forest management;
- b) The implementation and promotion of sustainable forest management, according to the seven thematic elements of the United Nations Forest Instrument;

- c) Forest related industries, the use of forest products, as raw material, construction, and energy; and related innovation perspectives;
 - d) Forest and forest sector policies, institutions and instruments, including the linkages between forest and timber policies and other sectoral policies;
 - e) The contribution of the forest sector in the transition towards a green economy, forest products and ecosystem services, employment and other socio-economic aspects; including economic viability of the sector; and
 - f) The contribution to the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the forest-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030, within the existing mandates of ECE and FAO.
8. Below is a list of specific activities expected to be developed for each Work Area for the period 2018-2021:
- a) **Work Area 1: Data, monitoring, reporting and assessment:**
 - Collection, validation and dissemination of statistics and other information on forest resources, forest products (wood and non-wood), forest functions and services, progress toward sustainable forest management, forest policies, institutions and instruments, and the contribution of the forest sector to a green economy;
 - Analysis and assessment of the state of forests, sustainability of forest management and forest products markets; and monitoring the role of the forest sector in a green economy; and
 - Cooperation and contribution to international processes on sustainable forest management, including on the development and use of regional Criteria and Indicators and collaboration with Forest Europe in the preparation of the report on the State of Europe's Forests.
 - b) **Work Area 2: Policy advice and dialogue**
 - Development of analyses, guidelines and recommendations to support member countries and regional economic integration organizations in implementing the above mentioned initiatives and plans;
 - Contributions to the Forest Europe Work Programme;
 - Organization of policy dialogues and workshops for the region;
 - Preparation of Forest Sector Outlook Studies; and
 - Development and review of policy-related parts of relevant ECE and FAO joint work/studies, such as relevant reviews and reports on the status and trends in forests and sustainable forest management.
 - c) **Work Area 3: Communications and outreach:**
 - Organization of events and campaigns in support of sustainable forest management and forest products and services (e.g. the

International Day of Forests, the European and Global Forest Weeks);

- Dissemination of information produced under the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work via policy briefs, press releases, the Forest Information Billboard, social media/networks, videos and ad hoc studies, whenever results are available and new information released;
- Maintenance and improvement of the ECE/FAO website especially regarding user-friendliness and design;
- Contribution to the organization of relevant events in member countries and regional economic integration organizations and the dissemination of their forest-related announcements (e.g. capacity building workshops, special public relations events) in cooperation with member countries, and regional economic integration organizations, and other stakeholders;
- Carrying out outreach activities beyond the forest sector for disseminating information that highlights the relevance of forests and forest products and services to other sectors (e.g. energy events, biodiversity and environment meetings, sustainable construction and buildings); and
- Communicating effectively the news and updates from the work at other forest-related international fora.

d) **Work Area 4: Capacity-building:**

- National systems for forest monitoring and statistical reporting;
- Forest communication strategies;
- Mitigation of and adaptation to climate change;
- Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) and the Bonn Challenge;
- The implementation of the UN strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 and countries' Voluntary National Contributions; and
- The contribution of the forest sector to:
 - i. a green economy;
 - ii. the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of forest-related SDGs; and
 - iii. the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

A detailed list of activities for 2018 is contained in ECE/TIM/2017/4.

IV. Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the Committee

9. According to the Warsaw Programme, the subsidiary structure of COFFI remains unchanged. The Terms of Reference of the Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management and of the Teams of Specialists were updated to reflect new needs and challenges and are contained in document ECE/TIM/2017/2.

V. Partnerships and cooperation

10. COFFI and its secretariat make it a critical feature of the implementation of its activities to work in partnership with all relevant forest stakeholders in the region and beyond. This has included:

- Cooperation with FAO (through the joint section in Geneva and beyond) on all relevant matters (e.g. data gathering for global resource assessments; organization of workshops; preparation of joint documents);
- Cooperation with other international regional forest organizations and processes (e.g. United Nations Forum on Forests; Forest Europe and its programme of work);
- Cooperation with other ECE divisions and within the division (e.g. work on wood energy; capacity building on forest restoration in Central Asia; green building, statistics); Cooperation and increased partnerships with the private sector (e.g. through dedicated private sector dialogues in meetings; implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan, etc.).

It is expected that those partnerships will be strengthened given the scope of the Warsaw Programme and relevance to different SDGs.
