

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

106th meeting
Geneva, 8 July 2019

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Informal document No. **2019/29**

Update:
Possible Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe

Note by the Secretariat

Background

1. At the 103rd meeting of the Executive Committee, held on 1 February 2019, the Chair of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) provided a report on the Committee's activities, as contained in informal document 2019/2. It will be recalled that with regard to the possible legally binding agreement on forests in Europe, the Chair reported that "on 5–6 December 2018 the FOREST EUROPE Expert Level Meeting (ELM) took place in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, to discuss further procedural steps on a possible legally binding agreement on forests in Europe. The ELM agreed on a draft decision to be forwarded to ministers for their approval" (see para 14).
2. The secretariat is pleased to provide an update with recent developments on this issue.

Recent developments

3. Following its adoption, on behalf of the participating Forest Europe members, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic and co-chair of the Forest Europe process, Her Excellency Ms. Gabriela Matečná, transmitted the Ministerial Decision to the UNECE Executive Secretary on 10 June 2019. The letter is attached in the annex.
4. In particular, the Ministerial Decision, para 9, invites "UNECE, with the support of FAO, to convene and service jointly further negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe by setting up a negotiating process in an appropriate format based on the parameters contained in the decision."
5. To facilitate the EXCOM's deliberations and decision-making, it is proposed to hold informal consultations to consider the matter further.

Draft decision:

EXCOM takes note of the information provided on a possible legally binding agreement on forests in Europe and requests the secretariat to organize informal consultations to consider the matter further.

6. Subject to EXCOM's approval of the above draft decision, under agenda item 6, the extrabudgetary project "Support for the preparation of a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests hosted by UNECE", as contained in informal document 2019/34, is presented to EXCOM for approval.

Annex



MINISTRY
OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister
of Agriculture and Rural Development
of the Slovak Republic
Gabriela Matečná

Bratislava, 10 June 2019

Ref.: 5438/2019-700

26324/2019

Dear Executive Secretary,

As a representative of the lead country of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (the process known as FOREST EUROPE), the voluntary high level political process for forests in Europe, I have the honour to transmit to you the text of the Ministerial Decision on Resuming the Negotiations on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe.

In accordance with its paragraph 10, I transmit the Ministerial Decision on behalf of FOREST EUROPE signatories to you for your consideration and further action.

I look forward to future cooperation with you and thank you for your support to the process.

Sincerely yours,

Attachment:
Ministerial Decision on Resuming the Negotiations
on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe

Oľga Algayerová
Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Geneva

Copy:
Miroslav Lajčák
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs
of the Slovak Republic
Bratislava

Ministerial Decision on Resuming the Negotiations on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe

Adopted by the FOREST EUROPE Expert Level Meeting in Bratislava on 6 December 2018 for consideration by the ministers responsible for forests of FOREST EUROPE signatories through a written procedure in 2019.

RECALLING the Oslo Ministerial Mandate for Negotiating a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe, June 2011, establishing the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe (INC),

ACKNOWLEDGING the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in 2012 and 2013 and taking note of the outcome as contained in the report of the fourth resumed and final session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee as presented at the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference in Madrid in 2015,

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Madrid Ministerial Decision from 21 October 2015 to explore possible ways to find common ground on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe at the latest by 2020,

NOTING the results of the Round Table Meeting on a legally binding agreement on forest in Europe in Bratislava on 19-20 September 2018.

As representatives of the signatories of FOREST EUROPE, we:

1. ARE READY to resume the negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.
2. AGREE that further negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe take place and be finalized under the auspices of the UN system.
3. RECOGNIZE that the Draft Negotiating Text for a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe (DNT) shall serve as the basis for further negotiations, and UNDERSCORE that the aim of the negotiations should be to reach agreement on paragraphs of the DNT not agreed *ad ref* while considering that DNT paragraphs agreed *ad ref* shall not be re-opened, unless needed to reflect recent policy developments, such as the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests, and their corresponding terminology.
4. DECIDE that all countries and the European Union listed in the Annex 1 of this decision, based on the Annex 2 of the Oslo mandate are entitled to participate as full parties in the negotiating process and the ultimate legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.
5. NOTE that observers of the FOREST EUROPE process should be invited to participate as observers in the negotiations.
6. EMPHASIZE that the negotiations are to be conducted with due urgency and in a time and cost-efficient manner with a view to their successful conclusion as early as possible.
7. ACKNOWLEDGE that the funding of the negotiation process will have to be provided from extra-budgetary resources.
8. CALL UPON negotiating partners to provide voluntary financial contributions for enabling a successful negotiating process.
9. INVITE the UNECE, with the support of FAO, to convene and service jointly further negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe by setting up a negotiating process in an appropriate format based on the parameters contained in this decision.
10. INVITE the Minister of the Slovak Republic to send this decision on behalf of FOREST EUROPE signatories to UNECE and FAO to facilitate further negotiations of a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.
11. INVITE the UNECE and FAO to act on this decision with due urgency.

ANNEX 1 of the Ministerial Decision on Resuming the Negotiations on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe

1. Albania
2. Andorra
3. Armenia
4. Austria
5. Azerbaijan
6. Belarus
7. Belgium
8. Bosnia and Herzegovina
9. Bulgaria
10. Croatia
11. Cyprus
12. Czech Republic
13. Denmark
14. Estonia
15. European Union
16. Finland
17. France
18. Georgia
19. Germany
20. Greece
21. Holy See
22. Hungary
23. Iceland
24. Ireland
25. Italy
26. Kazakhstan
27. Kyrgyzstan
28. Latvia
29. Liechtenstein
30. Lithuania
31. Luxembourg
32. Malta
33. Monaco
34. Montenegro
35. Netherlands
36. Norway
37. Poland
38. Portugal
39. Republic of Moldova
40. Romania
41. Russian Federation
42. Serbia
43. Slovak Republic
44. Slovenia
45. Spain
46. Sweden
47. Switzerland
48. Tajikistan
49. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
50. Turkey
51. Turkmenistan
52. Ukraine
53. United Kingdom
54. Uzbekistan