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Thirtieth session

JOINT SESSION

FAO Headquarters, Rome
9-13 October 2000

In session seminar: international dialogue on forests, support to the global and regional processes

(Item 6 of the Provisional Agenda)

Secretariat Note

The objectives of the present document are:

- To present recent developments in the dialogue about sustainable forest management at the global and regional level;
- To describe how the Committee and the Commission through their integrated programme are contributing to this work;
- To invite the joint session to reaffirm its commitment to the goal of contributing to sustainable forest management in the region;
- To invite the joint session to review the strategic direction of the work programme (item 10 of the provisional agenda) and consider whether it is proceeding along the right lines.

Introduction

1. At their last joint session in Rome, in 1993, the ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission agreed to give overwhelming priority to the support of sustainable forest management in the region. They decided that the core part of their integrated programme should focus on “monitoring and analysis of sustainable forest management in the region.” This strategic direction has been reaffirmed regularly since then by both the Committee and the Commission, and is in line with the strategic vision of ECE and FAO. Since then at each of their sessions, they have reviewed the contribution they are making to achieving these goals and adjusted their work programme as necessary.

2. The objectives of the present paper are as follows:

- To present recent developments in the dialogue about sustainable forest management at the global and regional level;
- To describe how the Committee and the Commission through their integrated programme (hereinafter abbreviated to “ECE/FAO”) are contributing to this work;
- To invite the joint session to reaffirm its commitment to the goal of contributing to sustainable forest management in the region;
- To invite the joint session to review the strategic direction of the work programme and consider whether it is proceeding along the right lines (detailed consideration of the contents of the programme should be under agenda item 10)

The global level dialogue

Recent developments

3. In spring 2000, the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests completed its work and reported to the Commission on Sustainable Development. Its report, taken with that of its predecessor IPF, may be assumed to express a consensus view of the present situation with regard to the forest and timber sector and what needs to be done at the international level. As regards modalities, the IFF praised the work of the informal Interagency Task Force on Forests, led by FAO, and agreed to recommend the establishment of a UN Forum on Forests (UNFF). The modalities of UNFF are at present under discussion.

Contribution by ECE/FAO

4. Although the IFF is global in its scope, the bureaux of the Committee and the Commission, and the Timber Committee at its 1999 session have considered how the regional programme and activities of ECE/FAO could contribute to furthering the actions recommended by IFF.

5. The main present contributions of ECE/FAO to achieving the goals identified by IPF and IFF are as follows:

- Improvement of knowledge of the forest resource, its extent, condition, changes etc. *Forest resources of Europe, CIS, North America, Australia, Japan and New Zealand* (also called TBFRA2000) is a major contribution in this respect to the global Forest Resource Assessment, endorsed by IFF;
- Development of outlook studies (EFSOS), whose importance is recognised by IFF (programme element II.d. (vii) Future supply of and demand for wood and non-wood forest products and services). EFSOS takes into account the IFF recommendations in this area;
- Help provided to FAO in monitoring progress in national forest programmes in Europe (see also discussion of national reports under agenda item 3);

- Contribution to the global effort to “make national data timely, accurate and internationally comparable” and “to avoid duplication by utilising, where appropriate, existing reporting systems of international organisations and instruments and by harmonising, where appropriate, existing monitoring and reporting systems”. The main instruments for this continuing priority work are the Intersecretariat Working Group on forest sector statistics and the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics. The results of the work are published in the *Timber Bulletin* and on the ECE/FAO and FAO websites (as well as those of partner organisations). (IFF programme element I.b Making progress in implementation);
- Under “trade and environment” (programme element II.b), ECE/FAO monitors markets for certified forest products e.g. in the *Annual Review* and the annual market discussion. A special topic discussion on trade and the environment was held at the 1999 Timber Committee session (see ECE/TIM/DP/18). Proposals are being prepared for further work on trade and environment for the joint session’s consideration;
- IFF urges countries and organisations to “promote effective participation of all interested parties in decision making about forest management (programme element II.d.(i)) A team under the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee has prepared a report on the topic, for use in the MCPFE process (see below);
- Likewise, IFF makes reference in several places to encouraging the role of women in the forest sector. A seminar on this topic will be held in 2001 in Portugal;
- The IFF noted the need to “develop common understanding of the key concepts, definitions and terminology concerning management regimes consistent with forest conservation, both inside and outside protected areas.” The supplementary enquiry to TBFRA2000 being carried out with MCPFE on protected areas is a contribution to this objective: indeed the methods being used are almost identical to those suggested by IFF;
- The IFF calls on governments, international organisations and NGOs to “implement activities to increase public awareness of the direct and indirect benefits derived from forests.” The ECE/FAO team of specialists on public relations is one of the few international actions in the field of PR and is producing much valuable work;
- IFF has also called on countries and organisations to stimulate the sound use of wood as an environmentally friendly and renewable raw material. It was agreed at the Committee’s 1999 session to hold a meeting on this topic, for which the Secretariat is trying to identify a host country.

Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE)

6. In Lisbon in 1998, the Ministers approved a general declaration and two resolutions, one on socio-economic aspects and one on the guidelines for sustainable forest management at the management unit level.

7. The major contributions of ECE/FAO to the Lisbon Conference were the interim TBFRA2000 results as quantitative indicators of sustainable forest management in the region; a report on the implementation of resolution H3 on forestry assistance to countries in transition; and the work of the Joint Committee team on socio-economic aspects of forestry which laid the foundations for drafting of resolution L1.

8. Since the Lisbon Conference, MCPFE work has concentrated on the implementation of the two Lisbon resolutions as well as the resolutions from earlier conferences. A work programme has been developed which presents the follow-up activities to the Lisbon and the other Conferences in an integrated framework. The elements of the work programme are not only those to be implemented directly by MCPFE, through meetings or the actions of the Liaison Unit, but also activities undertaken by other organisations, including notably ECE/FAO to achieve the objectives set in the work programme.

9. ECE/FAO activities included in the MCPFE work programme are as follows (in the order of the programme):

Programme area	Action	Actors	Notes
Public relations	International Forest Communicators Forum	FAO/ECE Team of PR specialists	September 2000
Public relations	European Forum on Forests and Society	FAO/ECE Team of PR specialists	Postponed
Public participation	Clarification of concept of "participation" and development of a conceptual framework	FAO/ECE/ILO Team of specialists on Participation and Partnerships in Forestry	Report in summer 2000
Education	Seminar on "Forestry meets the public"	Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee	September 2001, Switzerland
Wood and substitutes in relation to other sectors	Publication "The competitive climate for wood products and paper packaging"	FAO/ECE Team of PR specialists	Issued 1999
Training, education and gender aspects	Workshop on reducing the impact of forest operations on ecosystems	Team under Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee	Workshop held 1999. Final report on work 2000.
Training, education and gender aspects	Workshop on new trends in wood harvesting with cable cranes	Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee	Austria, June 2001
Training, education and gender aspects	Workshop on forestry information systems	Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee	Held in Finland, June 2000
Training, education and gender aspects	Seminar on Women in Forestry	Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee	Portugal, April 2001
Countries in transition	Continuation of activities of forestry assistance to CITs, notably further development of H3 Access database on assistance projects	Team on forestry assistance to countries in Transition	Database being updated in summer 2000.
Countries in transition	Workshop to facilitate an exchange of information, experiences and major concerns among countries in transition to market economies	Poland in cooperation with UN-ECE/FAO and Liaison Unit Vienna	Planned for 2001
Biological and Landscape diversity	Enquiry on protected forest areas (questionnaire, analysis, meeting)	ECE/FAO in cooperation with COST E4 and Liaison Unit Vienna	Replies received, analytical meeting scheduled for September 2000
Improvement of pan-European indicators for SFM	Evaluation of existing indicators under all pan-European criteria	Liaison Unit Vienna in cooperation with scientific and technical bodies, notably UN-ECE/FAO	

10. Thus about a third (14 of the 41 elements in the MCPFE programme) are implemented, alone or with partners, by ECE/FAO.

11. The scope and complexity of the cooperation between ECE/FAO and MCPFE necessitates good communication and joint planning between the two. Therefore the Chief of the Timber Section is invited to attend meetings of the General Coordinating Committee of MCPFE and the Head of the Liaison Unit participates in meetings of the bureaux of the Committee and the Commission. In view of the increasing role of the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee in implementing the MCPFE work programme, the Liaison Unit has been invited to participate also in future meetings of the Joint Committee and its Steering Committee. The Liaison Unit also participated in the recent meeting of the team on forest resource assessment, notably in the discussion about future information needs.

The Montreal Process

12. It has been suggested that there is scope for intensified cooperation between ECE/FAO and the Montreal Process. Three of the largest Montreal Process countries – Canada, Russia and USA – are members of ECE and three others – Australia, Japan and New Zealand – have participated in TBFRA2000. The secretariat considers that the data supplied to TBFRA2000 for these countries by their national correspondents, which are internationally comparable and well defined, could contribute to the Montreal process work on indicators of sustainable forest management. There have been informal contacts on this subject with participants in the Montreal process as well as talks between the MCPFE and the Montreal process. To date however, despite good will by all parties, there have been few concrete results partly because of the need to complete TBFRA2000 and the Montreal “first approximation” reports, as well as lack of resources in the various secretariats to carry out coordination functions, schedule joint meetings etc.

13. The joint session, notably representatives of the Montreal countries, is invited to indicate the importance it attaches to intensifying cooperation with the Montreal process and the possible main directions of this cooperation.

Conclusions

14. The situation may be summarised as follows:

- Many of ECE/FAO’s activities are in full accordance with the broad directions laid down by IPF/IFF, and are inspired by the same broad concepts of what are the essential elements of sustainable forest management at the international level;
- A very close and mutually beneficial cooperation has been established at the regional level with MCPFE;
- There is scope for improved cooperation with the Montreal process.

15. The joint session is invited to review ECE/FAO’s contribution to achieving sustainable forest management at the global and regional level, and indicate any necessary modifications. Any decision under this item of the agenda will be taken into account under the programme of work (agenda item 10).

16. To stimulate the discussion, the secretariat puts forward the following comments and questions:

- Is there sufficient communication between the global and regional levels of the forestry dialogue? It is not fully clear how the valuable work done at the regional level, by ECE/FAO and others, is taken into account at the global level – unless transmitted by the main actors, national governments. Could a regional level, or a process for communicating between the regional and global level, be built into UNFF?

- At the global level, there is very successful informal co-ordination of activities between international agencies through the Interagency Task Force on Forests, led by FAO. Could such a model also be applied at the regional level, for instance by convening all international organisations active on forest questions at the European level for an exchange of information about plans, and to seek synergies between the activities?
- Increasingly, now that a broad global consensus on the nature of sustainable forest management exists, and is expressed in the IPF/IFF documentation, the emphasis is on implementing, rather than defining, the concepts of sustainable forest management. The Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee work included in the MCPFE programme is an example of this type of activity. Should ECE/FAO work move more in the direction of exchange of information and experience on implementing the concepts of sustainable forest management at a national or local level (e.g. through seminars, workshops and studies)?
- With regard to forestry assistance to countries in transition, the emphasis in ECE is increasingly on countries in Southeast Europe and central Asia. Many of these countries have weak forest and timber sector institutions and insufficient resources to participate properly in international work without assistance. In particular they lack funds to attend meetings, and ECE/FAO has no funds to support them. Can ECE/FAO strengthen its contribution to achieving sustainable forest management in these countries, for example through the promotion of technical cooperation between countries with economies in transition?

17. Closely linked to the last two questions above is the question of resources. The secretariat considers that ECE/FAO has comparative advantage in access to data, skills (in its core area), and networks, as well as a flexible and streamlined method of work. The major constraint to making the best of these advantages is the lack of resources. Extra-budgetary resources and partnerships have made a major contribution to improving the depth and quality of the forest resource assessment, and the secretariat is seeking similar support for the work on market analysis and outlook studies. However the resources at present available to ECE/FAO are clearly insufficient to support any significant expansion of activities to support countries in the implementation of sustainable forest management or offer assistance to countries in transition in southeast Europe and central Asia. The joint session is invited to consider whether efforts should be made to find extra resources for these two areas, or whether they should be left to other organisations.

18. In this context, some extra remarks may be relevant:

- Supplementary resources may take many different forms, including contribution to a trust fund, seconding of staff to the secretariat team, hosting/leading particular activities (e.g. meetings, studies) or paying travel costs for participation in meeting by experts from countries in transition;
- In many cases, resources committed to ECE/FAO work have a strong “multiplier effect” in that they make it possible to mobilise expertise from other sources, notably the expertise of meeting participants or team members, which are financed from other sources. For instance, for the relatively minor cost of hosting a workshop, it may be possible to bring together and make widely available the knowledge and experience of the world’s leading experts in a particular field;
- ECE/FAO does not appear to have a comparative advantage in direct assistance addressed to particular countries. This work is best entrusted to more specialised agencies, notably FAO itself. The advantages of ECE/FAO’s regional activities are more in international cooperation and, increasingly in helping the most disadvantaged countries in the region participate more intensely in international work for the mutual benefit of all.