

**Economic and Social  
Council**Distr.  
GeneralTIM/2001/7/Add.2  
24 July 2001English  
Original: English**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

TIMBER COMMITTEE

Fifty-ninth session

2-5 October 2001

**REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES SINCE THE FIFTY-EIGHT SESSION  
AND PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2002 TO 2006****UN-ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Resources Assessment**

(Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda)

The present document contains the report of the meeting of the UN-ECE/FAO Team of Specialists (ToS) on Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) held on 4-6 June 2001 in Victoria (British Columbia), Canada. The report presents an overview of results and accomplishments of the TBFRA-2000, and the team's views on the current and future forest resources assessment activities. The report analyses the follow-up work done to the Main TBFRA-2000 Report "*Forest Resources of Europe, CIS, North America, Australia, Japan and New Zealand*" (published in the year 2000). The follow-up activities concentrated on the supply of data and information to the global FRA, co-operation with the pan-European process on SFM (MCPFE), carrying out the "*TBFRA-2000 Use and Policy Implications Survey*" (document TIM/2001/7/Add.3), preparation of TBFRA accompanying papers, elaboration of the electronic database (published on CD-Rom together with the main TBFRA report), public relations work, and the dissemination of the TBFRA information. The future activities of the UN-ECE/FAO ToS on FRA, which are defined by the new Terms of Reference and Mandate (approved by the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party with the prolongation of the ToS duration until the year 2004), have also been addressed by the last meeting of the team.

The Timber Committee is invited to take note of the information and conclusions of the ToS in the framework of the discussion under item 7 of the agenda of the session.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The UN-ECE/FAO Team of Specialists (ToS) on Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) met in Victoria (British Columbia), Canada, from 4 to 6 June 2001. The meeting was held at the invitation of the Canadian forest authorities, which was announced at the joint session of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission (October 2000), and supported financially and logistically by the Canadian Forest Service (Natural Resources Canada). The ToS meeting was organized in conjunction with the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Canadian Forest Inventory Committee (CFIC) held from 07 to 09 June 2001.

2. The meeting was attended by some 35 participants (members of the team, national correspondents, FRA experts, Canadian Forest Service and provincial forest inventory representatives) from Austria, Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Japan, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland, USA and United Kingdom. The six Montreal process TBFRA countries (Australia, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, Russia, USA) were well represented at the meeting, as well as the European countries, some international organisations and processes (FAO, Pan-European Ministerial Conference (MCPFE-Liaison Unit Vienna) and European Forest Institute (EFI).

3. The opening remarks and welcoming addresses were delivered by Professor Michael Köhl (Dresden University of Technology, Germany), Mr. Brian Haddon (Canadian Forest Service), Mr. Robert Davis (FAO Global FRA Programme) and Mr. Alexander V. Korotkov (UNECE Timber Section). Professor Michael Köhl (Germany), the leader of the TEAM, chaired the meeting. The proposed provisional agenda and the timetable of the meeting were adopted by the participants.

## **TBFRA-2000 FOLLOW-UP WORK**

4. The TBFRA-2000 follow-up work was reviewed and discussed by the participants with the specific analysis of the following activities, events and outcomes:

- Dissemination of the TBFRA results, public relations work, and feedback on the products;
- The CD-ROM publication (including the electronic database and the main TBFRA Report);
- "Structural, compositional and functional aspects of forest biodiversity in Europe" (TBFRA accompanying paper by Dr. Janna Puumalainen, EU JRC);
- The country profile on the forestry sector of the Russian Federation (TBFRA accompanying paper by Dr. Andrei N. Filipchuk, Russia);
- The guidance and recommendations from Joint Session UN/ECE Timber Committee & FAO EFC and the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics.

5. The TBFRA-2000 outcome has attracted considerable attention through articles in the specialized press, radio reports and presentations at international meetings. The secretariat's

attention has been drawn to many cases where TBFRA has been used or referred to as reference source: such prominent mass-media tools and forums as “Financial Times”, “Holz-Zentralblatt”, “TTJ Timber & Wood Products”, “UN-Wire”, UN Regional Commissions, EUROSTAT, IUFRO, WWF and EFI publications, national professional magazines like “AFZ-DerWald” (Germany) or “Prace Instytutu Technologii Drewna” (Poland), requests from many individual researchers, and other TBFRA information users. Among international meetings at which the TBFRA findings were presented and discussed have been the XXI IUFRO World Forestry Congress, the joint UNECE Timber Committee/FAO European Forestry Commission session, the MCPFE Workshop on the *“Improvement of Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management”*. The TBFRA information figured prominently in the top-level climate change negotiations at The Hague (November 2000), other forums, events, and workshops. The TBFRA publication is in heavy demand, and its stock of hard copies is running out despite the quite high price of the publication. There have been a number of requests for clarification or amplification of certain data or details of sources for information not covered by TBFRA, for example data on tropical countries, or by individual main tree species.

6. The presentation of the recently published CD-ROM by Dr. Peter Csoka was warmly welcomed and highly appreciated by participants of the meeting, as it has already been on a number of previous occasions. After the CD-ROM containing the TBFRA-2000 electronic database and the Main Report was launched, the positive responses confirmed that this product had been another important source of the comprehensive temperate /boreal forest resource information, and a useful tool for the wide range of current and potential users: forest policy makers, scientists, researchers, all those interested in the TBFRA data. The team noted that the CD-ROM and the database had been delivered in good time.

7. The TBFRA database has been basically elaborated and published in the *Access97* format, but for convenience of users, the database was also published on this CD-ROM in *Access2000*. Just before the meeting it was discovered that due to some unexpected compilation errors the *Access2000* version might not function properly on some computers (configurations). This obstacle is now being “repaired” and users will be in a position to get a new *Access2000* version of the TBFRA database on Internet (or a file which eliminates this problem might be downloaded from the UNECE Timber Committee website << <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/fra/welcome> >>. In the meantime all the database users were advised to work with the *Access97* version from the above mentioned CD-ROM.

8. Professor Michael Köhl presented the TBFRA accompanying paper on *“Structural, compositional and functional aspects of forest biodiversity in Europe”* prepared by Dr. Janna Puumalainen (EU/JRC, Ispra, Italy). This document is being published, and it will be available for users as the UN-ECE/FAO Discussion Paper (DP/22). The paper was well received, and the presentation opened discussion on the monitoring and assessment /evaluation of “new” parameters, including biodiversity, and other non-wood good and services of forests. The paper prepared by Dr. Linda Langner (USDA Forest Service), which summarized the experience in assessing NWGS

gained in the TBFRA-2000 process, was distributed at the ToS meeting and contributed to the discussion on future work in this area.

9. The team took note of another TBFRA accompanying paper by Dr. Andrey Filipchuk, which was recently published as a forestry country profile of the Russian Federation (UNECE/FAO Study Paper (SP/18). This study paper included the up-dated TBFRA information and complete list of the forest protected areas in the country. This publication was considered as an important contribution to the Global FRA 2000, and to the work on the classification of protected forest areas, which is being done within the pan-European process.

10. The team was informed about the recommendations of the joint session of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission, and guidance from the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics, concerning the FRA process. The participants took note that the Working Party “highly appreciated the work done by the TBFRA national correspondents, team of specialists and the secretariat, and congratulated all those involved in the implementation of this challenging project, taking into account its magnitude and challenging nature.” The ToS confirmed that the current meeting was an important step in the analysis of the TBFRA outcome. The new mandate and terms of reference of the ToS proposed by the parent bodies were discussed in detail.

### **Special Topics**

11. The ToS was informed about the most recent information on forest resources and on the forest inventory/ assessment systems in three large TBFRA countries (Australia, Canada, Russia) provided in excellent presentations: “*Forest Resources and Forest Inventory in Canada*” (Mr. Mark Gillis), “*Forest Resources and their Assessment in the Russian Federation*” (Dr. Andrey Filipchuk) and “*National inventory issues for Australia's forest ecosystems*” (Ms. Claire Howell).

12. The current state of the Canadian forest resources, and the national forest inventory, including the classification schemes and the new forest inventory design (sampling locations, estimation of some attributes from remote sensing sources, photo plots, estimation of change, reporting data, etc) were presented during the meeting, and discussed in more detail during the Canadian Forest Inventory Committee session at the end of the week.

13. The forest resources and their assessment in Russia raised a lot of questions from participants, also with regard to the current forest management scheme in the country, contents and amount of the forest account work. It had appeared necessary to allocate additional time beyond the formal timetable of the meeting to discuss all these issues, which were extremely important for planning the future FRA.

14. Australia presented the specific features of its national forest inventory, which appeared to be very “sensitive” and responsive to international requirements, including the TBFRA project,

Montreal process, etc, and confirmed commitments to international reporting of forest resources data. All the above- mentioned presentations are available from the secretariat.

15. The current research work on monitoring non-wood goods and services (funded by the EU 4<sup>th</sup> framework programme) was presented by Dr. Matthias Scheuber and Professor Michael Köhl (*Germany*). The work had been conducted in the partnership between Dresden University of Technology and scientists from Finland, Italy, Switzerland and Sweden. This work was discussed also with reference to the above-mentioned presentation on biodiversity and NWGS, and considered as a potential contribution to the future FRA work. The brief “conference room questionnaire” on the dissemination of biodiversity and other NWGS parameters, which is being run within the EU EFIS project, was distributed among the meeting participants, and gave additional in-sight on the issue. The questionnaire has showed that there is a large interest in downloadable files containing key results, and that there is request for (interactive) data analysis via the web. These findings have to be considered for planning the dissemination of future FRA results.

#### **TBFRA-2000 use and policy implication(s) survey**

16. The report on the preliminary results of the “*TBFRA-2000 Use and Policy Implications*” Survey was presented by Mr. Tim Peck (EFI). The presentation was well received and followed by interesting and useful discussions. The findings of this provisional report were found by the participants to be very helpful for the future planning of the Forest Resources Assessments.

17. At the same time, a number of members of the ToS felt that the survey (and the related questionnaire) may have been launched “prematurely”, bearing in mind the magnitude of the TBFRA information, and the time needed to assimilate it (especially the electronic TBFRA database published on CD-ROM and distributed recently, i.e. made available for potential users only just before the ToS meeting). Moreover, some participants considered that the survey might bring a “misleading response” from potential users (those, who may have not yet used the TBFRA data, but are supposed to work with them intensively in the future), and that this might “distort” the findings. It was suggested that the UN-ECE/FAO parent bodies consider the possibility of accepting this preliminary report (as it stands with some possible updates), and to decide to “re-launch” the whole exercise in a couple of years, or so.

#### **Forest resources information needs**

18. The ToS discussed the current and future forest resources information needs from different perspectives and points of view of major users, and first of all from the Global FRA (World Forest Survey) perspective, pan-European, Montreal and other international initiatives and forest policy dialogues (criteria & indicators for sustainable forest management) needs for the information. A number of already formulated requirements from the parent bodies, and the joint UN-ECE/FAO

Working Party, especially the needs of the European forest sector outlook studies (EFSOS), were taken into full consideration.

19. After the presentation of the current status, technical components and plans for finalising the Global FRA2000 (*Mr. Robert Davis, FAO*), the ToS expressed its full readiness to co-operate with the Global FRA in the future (and to provide necessary support), but it was noted that a better co-ordination of this work would be necessary, and the guidance from the very beginning of the new round of the global assessment should be clear. The most sensitive points to be discussed in this respect in the future are a common set of terms and definitions, common approach to the reference year/period, comparable outcome (the same data sets), and assessment of “new” parameters. It was suggested that a study on reliability of the Global FRA 2000 information would be interesting and helpful (as has been done in TBFRA-2000).

20. The Global Level FRA Expert Consultation would be an important opportunity for initiating preparations for the future assessment, and to establish a “predictable global environment”, so that the ToS’s work can be planned to make the best possible contribution to the global FRA. The ToS was willing to actively contribute to the preparation of the Consultation (and actively participate in its discussions). The period June-July 2002 was indicated (tentatively) by Mr. Davis as a possible date for the Experts Consultation on Global FRA.

21. The presentation by Dr. Ewald Rametsteiner (*MCPFE- Liaison Unit Vienna*) covered all major aspects of the current and future co-operation between the TBFRA process and the Pan-European Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests (including the evaluation of C&I for SFM, and reporting of data). He expressed high appreciation of the ToS’s contribution to the MCPFE. The interest of the Montreal process countries in co-operation within ECE/FAO FRA, and possible modalities were discussed with the participants from the Montreal process countries: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Canada, Russia, USA. These countries consider their work being done within the ToS as a current and potential contribution to the Montreal process.

22. Very intensive discussion at the ToS meeting followed the presentation of work that should be done within the EFSOS baseline study, in particular on the long-term projections of European forest resources. The ToS unanimously confirmed its readiness (and willingness) to contribute to outlook studies’ activities, but there were no “ready-made” and “easy-to-fix” recommendations. It was not possible for participants to choose between the two suggested methodological options (breaking down the TBFRA data, or build on the EFISCEN data set). Some doubts were expressed on the feasibility of breaking down the TBFRA data, and on comparability, accuracy (and timeliness) of the EFISCEN data set. It was stated that UNECE should be careful not to overload the country correspondents with a complicated enquiry, and ask as little as possible (it still would be very challenging work for correspondents).

23. The third option of direct use the available national data was also suggested, considering that it would allow providing the latest possible information (and facilitate the work of

correspondents). In general the ToS was positive concerning the proposed meeting of representatives of two teams (TBFRA and EFSOS), but it was strongly felt that such a meeting should be well justified and prepared (more information is needed from the EFSOS team on the substance of the proposed meeting). Some participants suggested the use of available national forecasts, instead of running the EFISCEN model, as they might be more accurate. The doubts were also expressed about the reliability of such a long-term forecasts (50-year). In the lack of certain (definite) final conclusions of the ToS on the matter, it is clear that it will be responsibility of the secretariat itself to make the decisions on how to go ahead with the project.

### **Preparation for future UN-ECE/FAO FRA work**

24. The preparation for future work on the forest resources assessment was discussed with regard to possible methodological approaches, periodicity, geographic coverage, classification scheme(s), timetable, parameters to cover, terms and definitions and resources needed. The forthcoming Experts Consultation on Global FRA (the year 2002) will be an important event to start practical preparation for the new round of the assessment.

25. When discussing the terms and definitions to be applied in the future assessment, quite a number of positions in the current set of the TBFRA T&D drew the attention of member of the team, confirming that this set of T&D should be “carefully re-visited”, with the intention of maintaining it to the largest extent possible, but also to improve (refine) it as far as acceptable.

26. The Canadian Forest Inventory Committee (in the Terminology Sub-Committee report) noted, in particular, that “The international Temperate and Boreal Forest Group have apparently been using a definition of “*forest*” that is somewhat restrictive. It has reduced the Canadian forest so much so that it no longer represents 10% of the world’s forests! This is politically and technically most undesirable and has made some high-ranking Canadians most unhappy”.

27. The ToS took note of the Working Party’s proposal that a 10-year periodicity for a comprehensive assessment of the temperate and boreal forest resources would be the most appropriate. The mechanism, modalities and periodicity of updating the existing top (“policy important”) forest resources parameters on a more frequent basis, in order to respond to demands of the major TBFRA users like the MCPFE, SOFO or other international forest policy processes, will be considered by the TEAM in due course.

28. The ToS confirmed the necessity of stability in the process, especially as far as terms and definitions are concerned. The participants agreed that there should be UNECE and FAO commitment to maintain these internationally used terms and definitions substantially unchanged (with any really unavoidable changes to be made as soon as possible). Efforts should be made to preserve the current structure of the assessment of the traditional forest inventory parameters, and concentrate (when necessary) on improvements in the “new” areas, like biodiversity, forest condition, carbon accounting and non-wood goods and services.

### **Future activities of the FRA Team of Specialists**

29. The ToS discussed its new terms of reference (ToR) and mandate, which were proposed by the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party after the accomplishment of the TBFRA-2000 process (May 2001). It noted that the initial duration of activities of the newly re-established team was prolonged until the year 2004. Taking into account the experience, "historic memory", and lessons learned by the existing ToS, the contribution of the ToS will definitely be helpful in the future UN-ECE/FAO FRA. The participants agreed on the feasibility of new ToS activities formulated within these documents, and confirmed their readiness to make the best possible efforts for their successful implementation.

30. The ToS considered the up-dating (re-establishing) of the network of the UN-ECE/FAO FRA National Correspondents as an important action, which should be implemented without undue delay, possibly starting at the end of this year.

31. The ToS agreed that its next meeting should be organized before the Experts Consultation on Global FRA, i.e. tentatively in May 2002. The exact date and place of the next meeting will be agreed in consultation between the secretariat and the Leader of the Team.

32. Taking into account the expected growing workload in the forest resources assessment area during the forthcoming years, the ToS found it necessary to re-establish the position of the Deputy Leader of the ToS, and Dr. Roman Michalak (Poland) was unanimously elected to hold this potentially busy position.

### **Other relevant matters**

33. The study tour organised by CFIC (Canadian Forest Inventory Committee) for the TBFRA ToS members was very informative, interesting and sometimes "eye-opening". The possibility was given to participants to see natural and managed forest stands, clear cutting areas, thinning operations, regeneration, lower-yard operations, etc, which helped considerably to understand the true "spirit" of the Canadian (British Columbia) forests and forestry.

34. Many participants noted that the meeting was a timely forum for learning lessons from the process of planning and implementing the project. It was also an excellent opportunity to further develop working contacts between colleagues from many countries, which are the key to good partnership, especially in this working area. The meeting confirmed the usefulness and efficiency of working through such teams of specialists, especially if it is possible to maintain the relationship over time.

35. The members of the ToS expressed heartfelt thanks to Canada, Canadian and British Columbia Forest Authorities, and especially to Messrs. Brian Haddon and Mark Gillis, and to all their colleagues, for the excellent work done for the preparation and running the UN-ECE/FAO



FRA ToS meeting, and (as a whole) for their invaluable contribution to the international co-operation in the temperate/ boreal and global Forest Resources Assessment.

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