
UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests

Third meeting (online), 23 June 2021, 15:00-17:00 CET

MEETING REPORT

OFFICIAL OPENING

The meeting took place on 23 June 2021 at 15:00 CET (online) with Russian and English interpretation. The Secretariat took notes of the main points and decisions taken. The list of participants is attached in Annex II. 24 experts from 7 countries took part in the meeting. Countries represented included: Austria, Canada, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Russian Federation, and the United States of America. Organizations that attended include: International Boreal Forest Research Association (IBFRA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (for a comprehensive list of all organizations, please see Annex II).

The meeting was opened by the Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin. He noted that the Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests was well positioned to strengthen the ties between science and policy and affirmed UNECE's commitment to support this collaborative work. He also stressed that boreal forests needed to continue to provide the many ecosystem services that were vital to our health and wellbeing and that it was time for the global community to acknowledge this important role if we were to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The leader of the Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests (ToS), Mr. Darren Sleep (Canada), chaired the meeting and tabled the proposed agenda. The Team adopted the agenda. The final version of the agenda of the meeting is included in Annex I.

UPDATE ON BY THE SECRETARIAT (ITEM 2)

Ms. Leonie Meier, Secretary to the ToS, gave a short update on the side event application that had been submitted to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum of July 2021, noting that, ultimately, it had not been selected. She proposed an alternative side event at the upcoming IBFRA Conference on "Changing Boreal Biome". She also presented the status of the work plan and progress achieved so far, including the development of several communication products on the role of boreal forests in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Ms. Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, the new Chief of the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, proposed elevating the work of the ToS and giving more prominence to boreal forests in the international arena by for example organizing a ministerial meeting in 2022.

Several ToS members supported the idea to hold a ministerial meeting in 2022. Some delegations requested further clarification on a possible ministerial declaration and how it would relate to the Happaranda Declaration.

ToS members supported the proposal to hold a side event at the upcoming IBFRA conference in August 2021, noting that the event should not repeat other sessions held at IBFRA. The team decided to go forward with an event at the IBFRA conference, and asked the Secretariat to compile a concept note.

CLIMATE AND FOREST INITIATIVES (ITEM 3)

The chair presented climate change and forest initiatives, with a focus on relevant activities carried out by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. His main conclusions were:

- Climate-related concerns are driving both market and regulatory trends;
- More research is needed to a) Effectively quantify the carbon dynamics of the boreal biome b) Understand the effects of forestry practices on carbon, particularly in soils;
- Market-based initiatives (e.g., forest certification) can help, e.g. the new climate-smart forestry objective implemented by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, which aims to identify climate change risks and identify opportunities to mitigate climate-related impacts.

The deputy leader of the ToS, Mr. Vladimir Dmitriev (Russian Federation) presented Russia's experience with climate and forest initiatives, concluding the following:

- Forests in Russia are global sinks for GHG, and of great importance for national climate policy;
- Several national laws exist to regulate climate-related national policy and relevant goals on GHG emissions,
- Science-to-practice research projects aim at better understanding the carbon flows in forest ecosystems.
- Climate and forest initiatives of private-public nature are under development. They focus on two priority areas:
 - 1) Reducing GHG emissions (i.e. by improving forest use practices, protecting forests against fires, pests and diseases, as well as countering illegal logging).
 - 2) Projects to increase carbon absorption (i.e. using forestry activities for absorption of carbon, including tending, combating deforestation through reforestation and afforestation).

He also touched upon an increasingly relevant topic for the ToS: forest fires in high latitudes.

ToS members suggested to include this topic in the proposed IBFRA side event and to table it as an item for discussion at the next meeting of the ToS.

COMMUNICATION NOTES (ITEM 4)

The representative of the Saint Petersburg Forestry Research Institute presented the outline of the communications note on boreal forest definitions (3.1. of the Workplan for the ToS) and interlinkages between boreal forests and climate change (3.2. of the Workplan for the ToS), which were prepared by a team of experts from the Russian Federation.

The ToS members welcomed these efforts and noted that the communication notes should be concise documents of not more than three pages, in order to target policy-makers and the general public.

Specific comments on the text were noted by the Secretariat and will be compiled in a revised version of the outline.

The ToS members are requested to provide their comments on the draft by 29 June, The Secretariat will compile them and send them back to the Russian Federation by 1 July. The final version of the text will be submitted to the ToS in early September.

SUPPORT AND COORDINATION WITH IBFRA (ITEM 5)

The President of IBFRA, updated the ToS about the ongoing process of finalizing the current report of the IBFRA Insight Process funded by Sweden on the topic "*Sustainable boreal forest management: challenges*

and opportunities for climate change mitigation". He noted that the peer-review process by outside experts had been completed, and ToS members would be given the opportunity to provide their feedback on policy issues discussed in the report by the end of August. He clarified that there were three events that are of direct relevance for the ToS: 1) Keynote speech by the lead author, Mr. Peter Högberg, on behalf of all authors to present the IBFRA Insight study; 2) Session 13: *Public policy and boreal science-why do we need to work together?* organized by the chair of this ToS session, including a panel of international experts; 3) Side event organized by the UNECE Secretariat in collaboration with ToS members to further strengthen collaboration with IBFRA.

NEXT STEPS

- Secretariat to organize a follow-up meeting to discuss the programme and outline of the IBFRA side event;
- ToS members to provide feedback on the outlines of the communications notes presented by Russian Federation by 29 June 2021; Secretariat to send a compiled version back to the Russian Federation by 1 July 2021;
- ToS members to review the communications note on boreal forests and the SDGs by 1 July 2021, which will then be disseminated during the High-Level Political Forum (6-15 July 2021).

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The ToS indicated that the next meeting could be held at the end of September/early October. The Secretariat took note of this proposal and will develop the agenda together with the co-chairs.

ANNEX I

Meeting agenda:

<i>15:00 – 15:05</i>	Welcome by Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
<i>15:05 – 15:10</i>	Item 1: Adoption of the agenda
<i>15:10 – 15:20</i>	Item 2: Update by the Secretariat <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) High-Level Political Forum side event in July 2021(b) Work plan and main events to be organized in 2021-2022
<i>15:20 – 15:45</i>	Item 3: Climate and Forest Initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Discussion about stakeholders and outputs(b) Discussion about forest fires in high latitudes
<i>15:45 – 16:15</i>	Item 4: Communications note on the definition of boreal forests (3.1. of Workplan) and interlinkages of boreal forests and climate change (3.2. of Workplan) <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Review of draft outline (distributed ahead of the meeting)(b) Discussion of timeline
<i>16:15-16:45</i>	Item 5: Support and coordination with IBFRA <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Update on the IBFRA Insight Process, Mr. Florian Kraxner(b) Update on the panel session 13 “Public policy and boreal science-why do we need to work together?”, which will take place during the IBFRA conference on 18 August 2021 , Mr. Darren Sleep
<i>16:45 – 16:55</i>	Item 6: Date and place of the next meeting
<i>16:55 – 17:00</i>	Item 7: AOB
<i>17:00</i>	Closure

ANNEX II

List of Participants

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Liliana	Annovazzi-Jakab	UNECE/FAO Secretariat
Milica	Apostolovic	UNECE/FAO Secretariat
Peter	Blombäck	Swedish Forest Agency
James	Brandt	Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service
Vladimir	Dmitriev	Federal Forestry Agency of Russia
Margot	Downey	Natural Resources Canada
Fyodor	Druzhinin	Northern Research Institute of Forestry
Aleksey	Ilintsev	Northern Research Institute of Forestry
Polina	Kinigopulo	All-Russian Research Institute of Silviculture and Mechanization of Forestry (ARRISMF)
Florian	Kraxner	IIASA
Aleksandr	Kryshen	Forest Research Institute of the Karelian Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences
Elizaveta	Kushnir	Saint Petersburg Forestry Research Institute
Dmitry	Mariyasin	UNECE
Leonie	Meier	UNECE/FAO Secretariat
Ivan	Nedbaev	Saint Petersburg Forestry Research Institute
Knut	Oistad	Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research NIBIO
Guy	Robertson	US Forest Service
Talha	Sadiq	Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)
Kenichi	Shono	FAO
Anatoly	Shvidenko	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
Andrey	Shirin	Russian Academy of Sciences
Darren	Sleep	The Sustainable Forestry Initiative
Maria	Sokolenko	Federal Forestry Agency of Russia
Johan	Svensson	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Tatu	Torniainen	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Maureen	Whelan	Canadian Forest Service
Christopher	Woodall	US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service