



Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

Eightieth session

Geneva, 2-4 November 2022

Item 12 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the report

Report of the eightieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

I. Introduction

1. The eightieth session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 2 to 4 November 2022.
2. The web page of this meeting¹ includes the post-session documents, additional information, parliamentary documents as well as presentations (whose content and conclusions are not part of this report).

II. Attendance

3. Delegations from the following thirty-five member States participated in the session: Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.
4. Representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the World Bank attended.
5. A representative of the European Union attended.
6. Representatives of the European Forest Institute (EFI), Forest Europe and World Bank attended.
7. The following non-governmental organizations attended: Building and Wood Workers International, Dovetail Partners, European Organization of the Sawmill Industry, European Panel Federation, Probos Foundation, Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), Québec Arbres, Quebec Wood Export Bureau, Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

¹ <https://unece.org/info/Forests/events/365296>.



8. A number of representatives from the private sector and academia attended: Bern University of Applied Sciences, Boeri Architetti, FOREsight Capital & Advisory, Łukasiewicz Research Network - Wood Technology Institute, Nature Based Solutions Institute, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich (ETH Zurich), Thünen Institute, University of Belgrade, University of British Columbia, University of Michigan, Valois Vision Marketing.

III. Opening of the meeting

9. Ms. Maria Sokolenko (Russian Federation) chaired the session and welcomed participants.

10. The Deputy Executive Secretary of the ECE, Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, welcomed delegates. He highlighted the role of forests as key solutions in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Urban forestry, which depends upon planting the right tree in the right place for the right reason, and ensuring the longevity of trees, together with restoring forest landscapes and managing them sustainably, trees are unique ways to unlock the benefits of forests for climate action. The expertise of this Committee, he stressed, was critical to linking forest matters to environmental and financial sustainability issues, data collection and analysis of forests and their products. Forests provide livelihoods and income to millions of people worldwide and it was therefore imperative to thoroughly understand the forest products markets as well as the ecosystems. The forest sector, he emphasized, was also remarkably well placed to embrace circular, bio-based economic models through coordinated circularity at all stages of the value chain. He congratulated the Committee on being at the forefront of circular economy work which would be reported to the 2023 session of the Economic Commission for Europe. He also expressed his gratitude to the Republic of San Marino for planting a “tiny forest” for its urban population and to commemorate 75 years of ECE.

IV. Adoption of the agenda

11. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda with a consensus agreed change of advancing agenda item 9 (election of officers) before agenda item 2.

V. Election of officers

12. The following individuals were elected to hold office after the closing of the eightieth session until the end of the eighty-first session: Mr. Peter Blombäck (Sweden) as Chair; and Ms. Maureen Whelan (Canada), Mr. Tomas Krejzar (Czech Republic), and Ms. Anita Dedic (San Marino) as Vice-Chairs.

13. Thanks was expressed to outgoing Chair, Ms. Maria Sokolenko (Russian Federation), and outgoing Vice-Chair, Ms. Marta Gaworska (Poland), for their excellent service over many years and their valuable contribution to the Committee and its Bureau.

14. The delegation of the European Union, on behalf of its member States, made a statement condemning the invasion of the sovereign territory of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and its effect on forests and greening of Ukraine.

15. He congratulated the newly elected Bureau of the eighty-first session, noting that for the Committee’s business continuity, the European Union and its member States would participate in the eightieth session. The delegate of Ukraine expressed support.

16. In its statement, the delegation of the Russian Federation rejected the accusation made by the European Union.

17. He also pointed to the lack of geographical balance of the newly elected Bureau.

VI. Thematic focus: “Urban forests in context”

18. Ms. Paola Deda, Director of the ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division, opened the thematic session on urban forests. She thanked the Swiss delegation for its support and stressed the high relevance of urban forests as a nature-based solution and essential infrastructure. These were needed to deliver on local, national and international agendas, including for sustainable development, climate action, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, forest landscape restoration and sustainable cities, among others.

19. The session moderator, Mr. Keith Anderson (Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland) welcomed panellists, noting that cities were potentially decisive and swift agents of change for climate action, and that in this context, sustainable urban and peri-urban forestry can improve standards of living, reduce risks and support adaptation.

20. Mr. Stefano Boeri (Stefano Boeri Architetti) in his video keynote address, noted that urban forestation was the most democratic, most efficient and least expensive way to reduce the effects of global warming in cities. He proposed a system of middle-sized green, sustainable urban environments surrounded by agriculture as an alternative to further expanding urban peripheries.

21. Mr. Cecil Konijnendijk (Nature-based Solutions Institute), defined sustainable urban and peri-urban forestry and outlined regional urban forestry opportunities for national governments and at the ECE regional level, as outlined in document ECE/TIM/2022/3. He noted that urban and peri-urban forestry was often not clearly mandated and lacked substantial or sufficient funding for proper implementation. Therefore, he emphasized, urban and peri-urban forests needed to be managed more sustainably over time, guided by national, subnational, and city authority policies, regulations, strategies and plans put into practice with adequate knowledge and resources.

22. Ms. Sharon Gil (United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP) highlighted the triple crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution, and noted that cities were at the nexus of all three. In that context, she presented the business case for public investment in urban forests as a nature-based solution. She noted that the relationship between cities and forests was imbalanced and highlighted the frequent failure to consider costs that are avoided (e.g. reduced cost by reducing flood damage) when budgeting and investing in urban forests and other nature-based solutions.

23. Mr. Yves Kazemi (General Direction for the Environment, Canton of Vaud, Switzerland), presented the urban forestry planning in the Canton of Vaud as well as lessons for national policy. He highlighted the importance of strong interdisciplinary engagement across city departments to identify synergies and a shared vision for urban forestry and other dimensions of city planning.

24. Ms. Kathy Abusow (Sustainable Forestry Initiative, SFI) outlined SFI’s Urban and Community Forest Sustainability Standard and its ability to address key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The standard includes many objectives and requirements, including community engagement, human health, biodiversity, climate resiliency, good planning and other items related to the sustainable management of urban forests. She emphasized that the ability to quantify the benefits of urban forestry was an effective way to mobilize a diversity of funds to support the greening of communities.

25. Mr. Alfonso Gomez (Department of Finance, Environment and Housing, City of Geneva) presented a vision of Geneva becoming a garden city for the 21st century, including integrating urban forests and food production in the city. He highlighted climate change and effects Geneva is already experiencing, such as heat waves in the summer of 2022, and noted that the city sought to increase canopy cover from 21 to 30% of the city’s area by 2030 as part of efforts to address climate change and extreme heat.

26. Ms. Clémence Dirac, (Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland) presented how Swiss forest policy integrated urban trees, highlighting the many interlinkages between urban and rural forests, and the corresponding synergies between the Swiss forest policy and urban forests. She noted that federal measures that support urban forestry included

elaboration of planning documents, valuation of benefits, as well as technical and financial support for organizations working in urban and peri-urban forestry.

27. Presentations, including recording on “Forestry and urban financing mechanisms – the old and the new” and “Locking carbon in cities instead of releasing it to the atmosphere – how low carbon construction will tighten the bonds between cities and forests”, are available on the meeting website.

28. The Committee:

(a) Welcomed the organization of the panel on urban and peri-urban forests and thanked the participating experts for their insights and their support to this work;

(b) Asked the secretariat to organize follow-up activities as discussed under agenda item 6 (g) on sustainable urban and peri-urban forestry and encouraged the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section to continue its work in that area.

VII. Matters arising since the last session

A. United Nations, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and subsidiary bodies

29. Ms. Paola Deda, Director of the ECE Division on Forests, Land and Housing Division, informed delegates of recent developments at the United Nations and ECE having an impact on the work of the Committee. She noted that the seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe will take place in April 2023 with a focus on digitalization and green transformation towards sustainable development in the ECE region.

30. She also stressed that the Joint Section had successfully contributed to fostering work on circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources as requested by the 2021 session of the ECE, had produced two publications and was actively involved in consultative processes. She also highlighted that the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development of March 2022 had included a dedicated session on urban forestry (under SDG 15) jointly organized by ECE and FAO. She noted that the conclusions of the well attended session were reported to the High-Level Political Forum in New York in July 2022.

31. The Committee took note of the secretariat’s report.

B. Recent developments in other organizations

32. The following organizations and processes – United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), World Bank and Forest Europe provided information about their activities and developments with an impact on the Committee’s work.

33. The representative from the UNFF reported on the main outcomes of the May 2022 UNFF policy session, projected follow-up and the adopted omnibus resolution. She also mentioned the preparations for the 2024 mid-term review. She noted that the next UNFF session, scheduled to take place from 8 to 12 May 2023, was a technical session and invited active participation.

34. Delegations welcomed the inclusion of new stakeholders in high-level segments beyond the United Nations system and stressed the importance of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 and its Global Forest Goals.

35. The representative from the World Bank provided an update on the World Bank’s analytical and field work as well as investments/loans in the Central Asian sub-region, highlighting the activities implemented. She also outlined the World Bank’s current project on forest economy development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

36. The representative from Forest Europe provided an overview of its current work and priorities, highlighting the importance of sustainable forest management in the pan-European region as one of the core topics of Forest Europe. He also drew attention to the newly established Rapid Response Mechanism. He expressed his gratitude to ECE and FAO for the formally established collaboration on data collection and also highlighted the work on disturbances and damage. He updated the Committee on Forest Europe's work in the area of green jobs and forest education as an example of a successful continuation of the work of the Committee. He also mentioned the endorsement of a Ministerial Decision to work on building back better the Ukrainian forest sector and invited participation.

37. Some delegations expressed their support for the work of Forest Europe.

38. The Committee took note of the information provided by other international organizations on developments impacting its work.

VIII. The global and regional policy context

A. United Nations Forum on Forests 2022

39. The representative of UNFF provided an overview of the May 2022 session of the United Nations Forum on Forests and items of relevance to the Committee (see previous section).

40. The delegation from Switzerland expressed support for the contribution of the ECE/FAO Joint Section secretariat to the Midterm Review of the International Arrangement on Forests and their engagement in other UNFF processes. He also expressed appreciation for the ECE side event on "Every tree counts" at the May 2022 UNFF which outlined the importance of forest data to improve forest governance.

41. The Committee took note of the information provided and discussed the possible contributions of the work of the Committee to UNFF processes.

B. Twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Forestry and 2022 World Forestry Congress

42. The representative of FAO presented main outcomes and key messages of the twenty-sixth session of the FAO Committee on Forestry and the 2022 World Forestry Congress.

43. Delegates welcomed the updates presented and emphasized the importance of continuing work related to definition of key terms, including primary forests and forest degradation.

44. The Committee took note of the information and decisions presented and discussed the decisions and synergies that are relevant to the work of the Committee.

C. Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2022

45. The secretariat presented the event organized by the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and the FAO secretariat on "Urban Forests for Future-Proof Cities" at the March 2022 ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. The secretariat highlighted it as an example of a concrete action that can accelerate progress on the SDGs.

46. The Committee took note of the information provided and commended the secretariat on the successful event organized.

D. Fostering exchanges and cooperation among regional and international organizations on forest-related work relevant to the work of the Joint Forestry and Timber Section

47. The delegation from Switzerland briefly reported on informal discussions on strengthening the synergies and collaboration between some of the forest-related organizations in Europe among several organizations (ECE, FAO, Forest Europe, European Environment Agency (EEA), European Forest Institute Integrate Network). He also presented several informal suggestions for further steps, including the establishment of an informal cooperation facilitation network of the involved secretariats, and highlighted areas for possible cooperation.

48. The Committee thanked the delegation from Switzerland for its initiative and discussed the proposals. Delegates noted their appreciation for current bilateral and multilateral cooperation among organizations and recognized the potential for further expansion, which the proposed initiative can leverage.

49. The Committee welcomed the proposal as a new informal way of strengthening cooperation among the secretariats of organizations on their forest-related work, organizing at least 2 online meetings per year to exchange information, avoid possible duplication, and increase the scope for synergies. Delegates took note of the informal and open nature of this initiative among the 5 secretariats, which will be implemented within existing mandates and resources. The secretariat will update the Committee at its 2023 session accordingly.

50. The Committee:

(a) Discussed the means of fostering exchanges and cooperation among regional and international organizations on forest-related work relevant to the Joint Forestry and Timber Section;

(b) Took note of the information provided by UNFF, FAO, Forest Europe and the secretariat and discussed the possible contributions of the work of the Committee to their work;

(c) Requested the secretariat and member States to work towards further strengthening cooperation among regional and international organizations active in forest-related matters and welcomed the secretariats' initiative to hold informal regular meetings of currently five secretariats (ECE, FAO, EFI Integrate Network, EEA, Forest Europe);

(d) Requested the secretariat to put this item on the agenda of the 2023 Joint COFFI/EFC² Session;

(e) Requested ECE to continue supporting member States in the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as they relate to forests, and the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030; and update member States and stakeholders on forest-related global and regional policy developments.

IX. Forest economics and markets

51. The Market Discussion focused on trends and drivers of forest products markets in the ECE region in 2021 and 2022. Mr. Christopher Gaston (University of British Columbia) moderated the session.

52. Ms. Silvia Melegari (European Sawmill Organization, EOS) and Mr. Russ Taylor (Russ Taylor Global), presented the main trends of sawnwood markets in the ECE region and highlighted the extreme volatility of sawnwood prices in the ECE region in 2021 and the first half of 2022. Sawmill capacities seemed to be sufficiently available in the ECE region; however, it was difficult for sawmills, in particular in North America, to obtain sufficient raw material at affordable prices. European sawn softwood and hardwood mills achieved a record

² FAO European Forestry Commission.

production in 2021. In addition, they benefitted from high prices and positive market developments for by-products, namely for wood energy.

53. Mr. Ivan Eastin (University of Michigan) and Mr. Orifjon Abidov (European Panel Federation) presented the trends and the drivers behind the wood-based panel markets in the ECE region. They highlighted how well the markets for wood-based panels evolved in all ECE sub-regions in 2021 and early 2022 before they started to fold. High interest rates, increased inflation and higher cost for mortgages had a significant impact on the affordability of housing. The economic uncertainty that developed in mid-2022 and higher volatility of energy prices, notably record prices for natural gas caused prices for resin – a key ingredient for the production of many panels, to increase significantly.

54. Delegations stated that they expected a hard landing in the housing market and that a decline in new housing starts could already be observed. Moreover, panel plants started adjusting to higher prices. Prices for wood based panels were reported to have already slightly increased and are expected to increase further in the coming months.

55. Mr. Michel Valois (Valois Vision), presented the trends in pulp, paper and paperboard markets in the ECE region. He highlighted that global pulp, paper and paperboard saw a mixed recovery in 2021, with developments in Europe being more positive than in North America. He also noted that commodity prices were rising, fuelling inflation in the ECE region. Currency devaluations were a big challenge for traders depending on the relationship of the currency to the United States dollar. Price increases for pulp, paper, and paperboard might induce consumers to consider substitutes such as electronic means, and even plastics. For 2023, the speaker anticipated the pulp, paper, and paperboard sector reduce production, including closures and graphic paper may lose more ground to electronic formats.

56. Sweden confirmed a strong development of the Swedish pulp and paper industry that was partly driven by the low exchange rate especially to the American dollar.

57. Mr. Branko Glavonjic (Belgrade University) and Mr. Jean-Marc Jossart (Bioenergy Europe) updated the Committee on current trends and developments in wood energy policies and market trends for 2021 and 2022. They described the currently very strong markets for traditional and modern wood fuels mainly driven by record prices for natural gas. Wood energy, particularly the use of virgin wood fibres for energy generation, was facing political headwind but at the same time served as an abundant emergency fuel. Wood fuel use and prices increased substantially with dramatic increases in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were reported to have taken temporary measures to keep wood energy affordable; those measures are expected to be active until January 2023.

58. Slovenia confirmed that they felt the effect of the export restrictions of wood fuels from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Slovenian wood energy market had changed rapidly as well. Between September 2021 and September 2022 fuelwood prices increased by 41% and prices for wood pellets by 111% in the same period. Countries stated that technological advances in the field of wood gasification for integrated heat, power and biochar production might achieve much higher value added than wood pellets and traditional fuelwood and might put even more pressure on forests and lower quality wood processing industries.

59. Mr. Matthias Dieter (German Federal Thünen Institute of International Forestry and Forest Economics) presented the main findings of the Assessment of Possible Production Leakage from Implementing the Biodiversity Strategy of the European Union on Forest Product Markets. The study indicates that this regional policy measure could have a significant impact on global forest products markets in the medium to long term. Other regions might not be able to fully substitute for the missing volumes.

60. Mr. Thorsten Arndt (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, PEFC) gave a global and regional overview on forest certification under the PEFC scheme. He highlighted that the demand determined the availability of certified wood and that there was major potential for additional certified areas in Europe. He also underlined that PEFC intended to activate supply of certified wood from new geographic areas such as the Congo Basin and southern Africa.

61. The Committee:

- (a) Took note of forest products trends in the region, and the sector's contribution towards sustainable development;
- (b) Agreed to not issue a market statement this year. Information on markets is available in the ECE/FAO Forest Products Annual Market Review 2022, the country market statements (<https://unece.org/forests/market-analyses>), and forecast data;
- (c) Thanked delegates for their written market statements and invited delegates to update their statements by the end of November 2022;
- (d) Thanked the secretariat, national correspondents and the Teams of Specialists for the essential data and information collected (which will be published on the ECE website);
- (e) Invited member States to continue reporting in 2023.

X. Report on and implementation of the 2022-2025 integrated programme of work and related decisions

A. Report of the Joint Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management

62. The Chair of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economic and Management (Joint Working Party), Ms. Magdalena Wolicka-Posiadała (Poland), presented the report of the forty-third session, which was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1-3 June 2022 in hybrid format. The next session (in-person only) is scheduled to be held from 31 May until 2 June 2023.

63. The Committee:

- (a) Congratulated the Joint Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management for its results;
- (b) Endorsed its report contained in document ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2022/2;
- (c) Requested the secretariat to submit to the Executive Committee of ECE a request to extend the mandate of the Joint Working Party;
- (d) Thanked the Joint Working Party for its work and invited it to continue its activities under the integrated programme of work.

B. Review of 2022 activities and planned activities for 2023

64. The secretariat drew delegates' attention to the report on the activities implemented in 2022 under the integrated programme of work and the provisional list of outputs and publications 2023. Delegates requested the addition of the 2023 dates of the Joint Working Party; the Montreal Process as well as the informal meetings of the secretariats of ECE, FAO, EFI Integrate Network, EEA and Forest Europe. The secretariat also explained that starting in 2023, all meetings would be organized as in-person only.

65. The Committee:

- (a) Endorsed the Report on the activities implemented in 2022 under the integrated programme of work and the provisional list of outputs and publications for 2023 as contained in the amended document ECE/TIM/2022/5 (post-session document);
- (b) Congratulated delegations for the results achieved and requested the secretariat to report again at its 2023 session.

C. Programme of work for 2023 and recommendations on key components of the Programme of work 2024

66. The secretariat presented the draft programme of work of the Forests and the Forest Industry subprogramme for 2023 and the recommendations on key component of the programme of work 2024. She explained that the allocation of budget resources is based on this programmatic document.

67. The secretariat also explained that the integrated programme of work provided a framework for the development of the Committee's official programme of work. The Committee decides how ECE implements the official programme of work and allocates related resources for all activities COFFI agrees on.

68. The Committee:

(a) Adopted the subprogramme's draft programme of work for 2023 and recommended it to the Executive Committee for approval;

(b) Requested the inclusion of the words "wood energy" under item 5 (b) and 5 (d) of the 2024 draft programme of work;

(c) Amended and endorsed the outline of key components of its programme of work for 2024 and requested to include the outline and agreed recommendations in the proposed programme plan of the Forests and Forest Industry subprogramme for 2024 (Annex III);

(d) Requested the ECE secretariat to prepare the programme of work for 2024, together with an outline for 2025, for review and endorsement at the 2023 session.

D. Report on forest landscape restoration in the region

69. The secretariat presented the National Policy Guiding Principles on Forest Landscape Restoration and updated delegates on forest landscape restoration activities during the past year and activities planned for 2023.

70. Delegates welcomed the work done by the secretariat and the Guiding Principles. With consideration for diverse national situations, systems and plans, as well as the absence of clear terminology related to the degradation and restoration of forest landscapes, these principles should be considered as a supportive tool to guide countries in their forest landscape restoration planning, governance and management. Delegations emphasized the need for flexibility in contributing to forest landscape restoration and the application of the Guiding Principles.

71. In the follow-up discussion, delegates requested highlighting in the Guiding Principles the importance of climate change for forest landscape restoration, recognizing the long-term nature of forest landscape restoration. The Guiding Principles could also include cross-cutting issues such as the rights of indigenous peoples and the importance of species selection according to current and future climatic conditions. The Committee noted also the importance of cooperation and monitoring in forest landscape restoration, and noted related challenges.

72. The delegate from Ukraine, supported by the European Union, drew attention to the damages to forest ecosystems caused by the impacts of the conflict in Ukraine. The delegate from Ukraine asked for support for landscape restoration in his country.

73. The delegation from the Russian Federation rejected any accusations made.

74. The Committee:

(a) Discussed the recent progress;

(b) Provided guidance on future work on forest landscape restoration in the region;

(c) Took note of the results, notably the National Policy Guiding Principles, and work done on forest landscape restoration in the region.

E. Preparation for the 2025 cycle of the Global Forest Resources Assessment and Joint pan-European data collection on forests and sustainable forest management

75. The secretariat updated the Committee on recent progress and plans on monitoring forests and sustainable forest management in the region. The 2025 cycle of the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and the pan-European data collection on forests and sustainable forest management are carried out jointly in a coordinated way by ECE, FAO and Forest Europe. Both processes will be implemented with the involvement of the same network of national correspondents as well as the participation and support of other forest-related organizations and processes. Global and regional (pan-European) data is expected to be collected through coordinated interfaces, and, as in the previous cycle, presented on the coordinated data platforms.

76. The Committee:

- (a) Expressed gratitude for the work done;
- (b) Took note of the preparatory work for the 2025 cycle of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment and the Joint ECE/FAO/Forest Europe data collection on forests and sustainable forest management.

F. Progress report on forest damage and disturbance work

77. The secretariat reported on the progress made under the ongoing project “Improve capacities of the UNECE member States on assessing forest damage/disturbance in the UNECE region” and highlighted key findings from the scientific-technical symposium on forest damage and disturbance hosted by the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna and co-organized by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, and ECE and FAO in Vienna, Austria, on 29-30 September 2022.

78. Delegates highlighted the relevance of increasing knowledge on forest damage and disturbance and its importance for adapting to current and future effects of climate change. Delegates informed the Committee about ongoing damaging events affecting forests in the countries of the ECE region. They emphasized the need to continue efforts to coordinate and harmonize monitoring, assessing and reporting of forest damage and disturbance in the ECE region and highlighted the importance of cooperative work among the countries and related processes led by international organizations. Delegates recognized benefits provided by new technologies, and their potential for addressing the urgent needs in monitoring, assessing and reporting on forest damage and disturbance while noting their limitations.

79. The Committee:

- (a) Took note of the work done and the preliminary results of the project “Improve capacities of the UNECE member States on assessing forest damage/disturbance in the UNECE region”;
- (b) Discussed the key findings from the project;
- (c) Provided feedback on future work on international forest damage/disturbance reporting and assessment;
- (d) Thanked the organizers of the Vienna symposium for hosting the event and the secretariat and contributors for the work done in this area.

G. Urban forestry matters

80. The secretariat reviewed activities in sustainable urban and peri-urban forestry during the past year and provide a summary of the findings. The secretariat also informed delegates about the Sustainable Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry Policy Brief

(ECE/TIM/2022/8) and the Draft Regional Urban Forestry Opportunity Plan (ECE/TIM/2022/3). Both were developed under a project funded by Switzerland.

81. The Committee:

(a) Discussed the urban and peri-urban forestry work and noted the continuum between urban and peri-urban forests and people and those in rural areas, and the potential for urban and peri-urban forests to raise awareness of and support for the forest-based sector as a whole throughout society;

(b) Noted that urban and peri-urban forests can provide health benefits and thus reduced health care expenditures; this relation should be stressed, given that awareness of cost savings can help build support for sustainable urban and peri-urban forests among policymakers and the population;

(c) Welcomed the Draft Regional Urban Forestry Opportunity Plan and the efforts of the secretariat to advance sustainable urban and peri-urban forestry in the ECE region;

(d) Recommended that the Draft Regional Urban Forestry Opportunity Plan be presented for consideration at the next Joint Session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the European Forestry Commission, planned for 2023;

(e) Thanked the secretariat and the contributors for their work.

H. Update on boreal forest work

82. The secretariat updated the Committee on the boreal forest work and plans for work in the coming months.

83. Attention was drawn to the draft policy brief delegates were invited to provide guidance for further work, including the possible development of an overview study on the state of boreal forests.

84. The Committee:

(a) Took note of the policy brief on boreal forests;

(b) Provided guidance for further work, including the development of an overview study on the state of boreal forests;

(c) Expressed gratitude to the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section and the Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests on the preparation of the policy brief and the work done.

XI. The contribution of forests and forest products to a circular bioeconomy

85. The secretariat informed the Committee about the work on forests and the circular economy, and the discussions held during the June 2022 Joint Working Party session. The secretariat and the authors also presented the first sectoral study “Circularity concepts in wood construction”.

86. The Committee:

(a) Thanked the secretariat and the contributing authors for the work accomplished and for inclusion of a carbon cycles aspect in the study;

(b) Thanked the secretariat for giving member States the opportunity to showcase good practice in implementation of circular economy at the national level in the study;

(c) Noted the opportunity of linking the findings of the study with other urban forestry work in a more holistic way;

(d) Noted the need for relevant promotion of the study;

(e) Requested the Joint Section to finalize the study as a United Nations official publication by the end of 2022.

XII. Capacity-building and technical assistance

87. The secretariat informed the Committee about ongoing capacity-building and technical assistance projects and work planned for 2023.

88. The Committee:

- (a) Took note of the information provided and thanked donors for their support;
- (b) Asked the secretariat to continue work in this area;
- (c) Encouraged countries to assist the secretariat in raising funds.

XIII. Date and place of next meeting

89. The Republic of San Marino announced their offer to host the next joint session in San Marino. The offer will also be extended to the EFC and FAO. The representative of San Marino also invited all ECE member States to take part in the challenge to plant “tiny urban forests”.

90. The Committee:

(a) Decided to hold the eighty-first session of the ECE Committee on Forests and Forest Industry jointly with FAO European Forestry Commission in San Marino. The exact dates will be decided and communicated to member States in due course;

- (b) Thanked the Republic of San Marino.

XIV. Adoption of the report and closure of the session

91. The Committee adopted the report of its eightieth session.

92. The meeting closed at 5:05 p.m.
