

The Second Expert Meeting on Harmonizing Forest-related Definitions for Use by Various Stakeholders, Rome, September 2002

The meeting had the following recommendations for countries, conventions, bodies, processes and other stakeholders:

Countries Reporting to International Processes

1. Parties to the UNFCCC might consider adopting, as far as feasible, the same threshold parameters for the definition of "forest" as the ones used for adjusting their figures to the commonly agreed FRA definition.
2. Parties to the international processes, through their own appropriate communication channels, should ensure good coordination between stakeholders of all the international processes at the national level.
3. Countries should be encouraged to report to the international processes at more disaggregated levels than may be required by international definitions or classifications, using their national classification systems, while ensuring compatibility and consistency with the international requirements. Original country data sources and definitions should be made available to illustrate where the processed data originate and to facilitate their interpretation.

International Processes and Organizations

4. CBD, FAO, UNCCD, UNFCCC, UNFF and others (e.g. the Teheran process) could jointly explore the possibility of adopting one common first order forest classification system as the basis for reporting, by considering contributions from other international/regional organizations and/or bodies such as IPCC, IUFRO, etc.
5. All processes and organizations might consider using the term "forest" instead of "forest land" or "forested land".
6. CBD, FRA, and ITTO could consider adopting the proposed core definition of "forest degradation" and the proposed definition for the supporting term "forest improvement".
7. CBD, FRA, and ITTO might consider the inclusion of planted forest as a separate category of forest so that changes in biodiversity associated with the transformation of other forests to plantations can be duly monitored.
8. Biomass- and carbon-related definitions need harmonization and could be developed under a focused process involving the relevant international processes and organizations, together with other stakeholders.
9. CPF could consider reviewing the reporting requirements by countries under various international processes and make recommendations for further useful streamlining and harmonization.
10. The international processes should use original country data as the basis for analyses, adjustments as required, and reporting.

CBD might consider

11. discarding the attribute "secondary" in their definition of plantation forest in order to avoid possible confusion with spontaneous regeneration after disturbance;
12. including, in their definition of primary forest, disturbance by non-native animals and adopting ITTO's definition of primary forest;
13. including the attribute "temporarily unstocked" in their definition of forest.

FAO should

14. together with the other organizers and participants of the Meeting, communicate the outcome of the harmonization process of forest-related definitions to the various international processes, also by organizing side events in connection with negotiation sessions and other official meetings;
15. as secretariat of the harmonization process, consult regularly with the various processes, and report back to the Meeting participants on follow-up action to the recommendations made in this document.

FAO/FRA might consider

16. expanding the definition of afforestation to include assisted regeneration not involving direct seeding or planting;
17. reporting separately areas that are "temporarily unstocked" which are now included in the area statistics for different land categories, as such areas can be significant;
18. developing a typology for management objectives as a basis for reporting on the status of areas under different intensities or levels of forest management;
19. adopting a definition of forest management slightly modified with respect to that of UNFCCC/KP/MA (2001); this would provide for inclusion of a wide range of forest uses and management objectives, e.g. the provision of wood and non-wood forest products, biodiversity conservation, soil conservation or watershed protection;
20. referring, in its definition of natural forests, to their natural regeneration, removing the wording "not planted";
21. investigating, through collaboration with relevant bodies, the possibility of dividing non-forest land into subclasses, which would address the various purposes for which trees and woody vegetation on these lands need to be assessed;
22. taking the leadership, jointly with other organizations, in compiling the various definitions into a compendium where the forest-related terms and definitions used by the various international conventions and processes would be clearly referenced, explained and described, and making this information available in the official languages of the Organization;
23. clarifying the term "predominantly forestry".

ITTO might consider

24. including in its future definitions a reference to an established definition of "forest", making minor adjustments to increase compatibility with the FRA and UNFCCC definitions;

25. adding a definition of natural expansion of forest in its set of definitions and making the necessary adjustments to increase compatibility with the FRA, UNFCCC/KP and CBD definitions;
26. modifying their definition of secondary forest as "woody vegetation regenerated naturally on land that was totally cleared of its previous forest vegetation", as the appropriateness of the concepts of woody vegetation and total clearance merit further consideration; the first concept could also mean shrubs below the forest threshold, and the latter is difficult to measure; none of the proposed ITTO definitions include the notion of forest condition resulting from suppression of natural fire regime, which merits further consideration;
27. adjusting their definition of planted forest to "forest that has been established by planting or seeding"; whether the qualification "artificial" should be added or not merits further consideration;
28. deleting in its definition of degraded primary forest references to primary, old-growth.

Tehran Process

29. The Tehran Process, supported by UNEP as Lead Agency within the CPF, might consider continuing its work on forest definitions in relation to LFC countries and conditions, clarifying possible implications for countries in using such definitions in the international contexts.

UNFCCC/IPCC might consider

30. removing the requirement of a 50-year non-forest condition for afforestation in the UNFCCC definition to be applied from the second and subsequent commitment periods. In many countries records are insufficient to document long-term prior use of lands subject to afforestation. Furthermore, afforestation and reforestation could be treated equivalently within the UNFCCC/KP; a separate term "reforestation" would no longer be required and could be discarded;
31. distinguishing the term/concept "stock reduction", as short-term reduction in carbon stock, from "forest degradation";
32. supporting participation of a wider range of forest experts in the combined governments/experts review of the drafts of the Good Practice Guidance and Inventory Guidelines to ensure that their final output would contribute to the harmonization of forest-related definitions.