BRIEF REPORT OF THE FISNA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING PIETERMARITZBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, 16-17 MAY 2007

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(for the FISNA Secretariat)

Introduction

The FISNA Secretariat organised the first Executive Committee Meeting of FISNA, between the 16th and 17th of May 2007 in the boardroom at the Institute for Commercial Forestry Research (ICFR) in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. This was the first Executive Committee meeting since FISNA was inaugurated in 2004. The meeting was held back-to-back with a *Sirex noctilio* (wood wasp) symposium which took place from the 9-16 May 2007. Six members of FISNA participated full time in the *Sirex* symposium. The other FISNA members participated only in the field day (15 May 2007) and wrap-up meeting of the Symposium (morning of 16 May 2007). Annex 1 presents a list of all the FISNA members that participated in the FISNA EC Meeting.

This brief "back to office" report has been prepared by the Secretariat to highlight what the Secretariat believes are the main issues and observations from the two meetings. Detailed proceedings will be produced and circulated by the organising committees.

The *Sirex noctilio* Symposium

The *Sirex noctilio* symposium was attended by researchers, academics and forest practitioners from all over the world, working on or interested in the *S. noctilio* wood wasp. During the first days, participants presented papers and shared their knowledge and diverse experiences during plenary sessions. Later, there was an opportunity for all participants to visit sites of *S. noctilio* infestation in South Africa where it was possible to get a first hand impression of and further discuss the enormity and complexity of the problem. A wrap up meeting took place in Pietermaritzburg on 16 August 2007 where a summary of the workshop was presented and participants discussed the "way forward".

It was clear throughout the symposium that substantial attention has been given to several control options, including the deployment of various biological control agents such as the wasp parasitoid, *Ibalia leucospoides*, and the parasitic nematode, *Beddingia* (=*Deladenus*) *siricidicola*. These control agents, together with silvicultural practices to reduce stress in plantations and to stop the spread of the wasp, have yielded impressive control of *S. noctilio*, particularly in Argentina, Chile and Brazil where the pest first appeared. However, it was noted that control of the pest in areas that it has more recently invaded is yielding variable and mostly disappointing results. It was suggested that one possible reason for this is the current poor understanding of many aspects of the biology of *Sirex* and the ecological interactions among the pest, its host trees and biological control agents. Some suggestions were made on research studies and management strategies that could be implemented to improve the situation.

Participants acknowledged that *Sirex noctilio* is slowly but surely spreading from South Africa to new areas of infestation. This poses an immediate serious threat to neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe and beyond, where there are substantial quantities of suitable host trees and where the capacity to quickly deal with a serious pest like *Sirex* does not exist. Participants noted this threat with great concern and made an urgent call for increased vigilance which should include improved pest monitoring and reporting at a regional scale. It was noted that in general, most African countries have such poor pest and disease monitoring schemes that they can easily miss *Sirex* infestations until it is too late to economically control the situation. It was proposed that global networking and communication among people working with *Sirex* should be encouraged and as such, a *Sirex* e-mail list server was proposed and has subsequently been established (sirex@kendy.up.ac.za).

The FISNA Executive Committee Meeting

The FISNA Executive Committee (EC) meeting was attended by all the EC members that were nominated at the first FISNA Inauguration meeting in 2004, with the exception of Mr John Richard Mbwambo from Tanzania, who had sent apologies. Mr Member Mushongahande from Zimbabwe participated as an invited member. The complete participation list is presented in Annex 1.

During the first day, members presented country reports to update each other of the invasive species situation and related issues in the various countries that were represented. There were also institutional presentations from the African Forestry Research Network (AFORNET) and CABI-Africa to update members of the forestry invasive species activities by the two institutions and emphasise the strong links with FISNA. Copies of all the presentations will be posted on the FISNA website. On the second day, members made a thorough review of progress that has been made by FISNA so far. It was noted that a lot has already been achieved but that there are still a couple of outstanding matters that need attention.

Later in the day, members reviewed the FISNA mandate and objectives and agreed that there was no need to make any changes to these at the moment. It was suggested however, that FISNA should have clear vision and mission statements. The following versions were proposed and it was recommended that the Secretariat should seek assistance from professionals in Malawi to develop properly worded versions, based on these proposals.

Vision

Version 1: Minimised negative impacts of forest invasive species throughout Africa for improved forest health, economies and livelihoods.

Version 2: Improved forest health, livelihoods and economies through coordination, free flow of information and resource sharing on forest invasive species throughout Africa.

Version 3: Improved livelihoods and national economies through protection of Africa's forests.

Mission

Version 1: Collate and coordinate free flow of information and resource sharing on forest invasive species throughout Africa for improved livelihoods, forest health and economies.

Version 2: Collate and coordinate free flow of information and resource sharing on forest invasive species throughout Africa.

Version 3: Collate and coordinate free flow of information and resource sharing on forest invasive species throughout Africa for sustainable forest management.

Version 4: Collate and coordinate free flow of information and resource sharing on forest invasive species throughout Africa for sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation.

Members suggested that FISNA should also develop a charter as this can assist in selling itself to donors and well-wishers. Members recognised that developing a charter is not easy and could not be achieved during this meeting. It was therefore suggested that the Secretariat should collect and circulate existing charters, such as that for AFORNET to all FISNA EC members. These should be modified to suit FISNA at a later date.

Finally, members proposed that FISNA should be registered as a legal network, and that this should be done in Malawi where the Secretariat is currently based.

Acknowledgements

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ANNEX 1. PARTICIPANTS TO THE FIRST FISNA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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