

Summary Report
**Second Meeting of the Task Force of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests
(CPF) on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting**
24-26 February 2003, Cambridge, United Kingdom
Hosted by UNEP-WCMC

Participants:

DESA (UNFF Secretariat): Susan Braatz

ITTO: Steve Johnson

Secretariat of CBD: Manuel Guariguata

Secretariat of UNCCD: Ndegwa Ndiang'ui

Secretariat of UNFCCC: Heikki Granholm

UNEP-WCMC: Stefan Hain

FAO: Michael Martin (Chair), Peter Holmgren, Tiina Vähänen (Secretary)

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by the Chair, Mr Michael Martin, FAO. Mr Mark Collins, Director, welcomed members, on behalf of UNEP-WCMC as the host. The agenda was adopted.

2. Analyses of forest-related reporting formats and questionnaires

As agreed at the previous meeting, members had undertaken individual analyses by comparing each others questionnaires and reporting formats and presented the results of their analyses. Most of these are available on the Portal <http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar>.

2.1 Summary of major findings

Major findings of the analyses and recommendations by the members are summarised below:

CBD Secretariat pointed out the difference in frequency and timing of information requests as constraints for harmonization among all reports analyzed, but also highlighted the potential for harmonization/streamlining in terms of the nature of the information asked and types of questions which was particularly high with UNFF and ITTO questionnaires. For example, some questions of the UNFF questionnaire (progress in implementation of IPF/IFF proposals) could be used for answering CBD's questionnaire (progress in implementation of Expanded Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity).

ITTO highlighted several areas with potential for harmonization or data sharing between organizations. He referred also to the successful example of the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JFSQ), where countries provide the information only once but the organizations involved use this information in various ways for reporting to their own constituencies. The key to the harmonized approach was to separate the process of requiring information from countries from the reporting by the organization back to its constituency.

UNCCD Secretariat introduced its national reporting process, whereby each Party is required to communicate to the COP the measures undertaken to implement the UNCCD. The content of the reports differs in that parties affected by desertification and drought report on their strategies to combat desertification and their implementation. Those countries that have

National Action Programmes (NAPs) describe these and their implementation. Developed country Parties report on measures to support the preparation and implementation of NAPs.

UNEP-WCMC suggested applying a modular approach to further analyse the opportunities for streamlining forest-related reporting and proposed a preparation of a leaflet to widespread the Task Force’s activities. He also stressed the importance of harmonizing definitions and cross-referencing the definitions used in various forest reporting questionnaires and formats. UNEP and UNEP-WCMC is contributing to the activities of streamlining forest reporting with their experience and expertise in harmonization and streamlining of national reporting and information management in support of biodiversity-related agreements.

UNFCCC Secretariat identified possible synergies between CBD and UNFF, and underlined synergies between FRA and UNFCCC in collecting data on land area’s classification; estimation of changes in carbon stocks related to land use changes. Another common area was identified between UNFCCC and ITTO’s indicator on “Total amount of carbon stored in forest stands”, which he recommended to be reviewed in the future to reflect IPCC guidelines.

UNFF Secretariat noted the potential for streamlining of reporting to UNFF on progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action with reporting to CBD and ITTO’s criteria and indicators, in particular criterion 1 “enabling conditions for sustainable forest management”), and any future reporting on forests to CSD. Data collected on forests for the purpose of national greenhouse inventories and national communications to UNFCCC, and much of the FRA data and information reported on ITTO’s national-level criteria and indicators are relevant to UNFF’s MAR function related to progress toward SFM. She suggested further analysis in these two areas for potential streamlining in small groups.

FAO explained that given its wide scope on the work on forests, it requests information from its member countries in many different ways and the information is used to produce a variety of outputs such as databases, overviews, reports, case-studies and other analyses. FAO also introduced the planned work on the next global FRA in 2005 which is planned to be structured according to the common thematic elements for sustainable forest management (criteria), and pointed out two new features in the proposed global variable list indicating historical compatibility and relevance of data to other processes.

2.2 Options and activities agreed for streamlining

Based on the analyses and discussion at the meeting, members identified a number of options, activities and recommendations for streamlining reporting and reducing reporting burden. Table 1 (below) summarizes different types of information requests; main bodies involved in requesting information and the major opportunities for streamlining over time.

Table 1. Streamlining potentials by type of information requested and partners involved.

TYPE* OF INFORMATION REQUESTED	MAIN BODIES/PROCESSES INVOLVED	STREAMLINING POTENTIALS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL
Forest resources, products and services, policy and institutional frameworks (situation and trends)	FRA, joint forest sector questionnaire, reporting to C&I processes, UNFCCC (LULUCF,	<u>Short term:</u> some common variables <u>Longer term:</u> Potential for joint requests for forest-related information drawing from the criteria and indicators

	carbon stocks), UNEP (protected areas), ITTO	processes <u>Vision</u> : joint information management/portal
Policy and processes/compliance: reporting on actions taken against commitments	UNFCCC, UNFF, CBD, CCD, CSD, ITTO (target 2000)	<u>Short term</u> : Little scope for streamlining reporting on actions taken <u>Short/Medium term</u> : joint thematic components in information requests, including e.g. through modular approach <u>Vision</u> : Joint (thematic) information requests on forests

*) Both types can include quantitative and qualitative questions.

Highlight = focus of the next meeting

As presented in Table 1 above, there is a great potential to identify common variables and work collaboratively towards joint requests for information on forest resources, products and services, and policy and institutional frameworks, in particular by building upon the common thematic elements (criteria) as well as indicators identified in the nine on-going processes on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, involving 150 countries around the world. On a long run, members envisaged potential for coordinated information management and a depository(ies) that could be accessible on the website in a form of a portal.

Streamlining is more challenging, at least on a short term, on the compliance type of reporting to the forest-related conventions and other instruments on actions taken against commitments. However, members agreed to: work collaboratively to identify all the reporting variables shared in common by these instruments; include in reporting guidelines a reference to existing information that would help reduce the reporting burden on countries; and use already collected information to the extent possible. The long term vision was set for joint thematic information requests, possibly even a joint questionnaire between certain processes.

Collaborative activities agreed

The Task Force concurred that collaboration in the information collection phase among the reporting processes is an option and desired goal. In this context, members agreed to start, without delay, to work in pairs or small groups to identify and proceed with ways to collect information in a unified way (table 2).

Table 2. Collaborative activities agreed.

Thematic area of collaboration	Partners
Information on carbon stocks:	FAO/FRA and UNFCCC Secretariat
Baseline data on forest biological diversity:	FAO/FRA and CBD Secretariat
Information on actions taken for the conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of the benefits of forest biological diversity	UNFF and CBD Secretariats
Criteria and indicators for SFM:	FAO/FRA, ITTO, Secretariats of UNFF and CBD and relevant C&I processes
Environmental changes: forest biological	Secretariats of CBD, UNFCCC,

diversity/climate change/desertification	UNCCD and UNFF;
Assistance to countries' capacity building for information collection, analysis and dissemination, in areas of national forest assessments and forest-related carbon inventories.	FAO/FRA and UNFCCC Secretariat to identify possibilities for joint action.
Members were encouraged to inform UNEP-WCMC about their collaborative work to help ensure co-ordination with UNEP's activities as regards MEA co-ordination and synergies.	

Supporting activities:

- **Collaboration / streamlining possibilities for administrative information such as lists of focal points.** Members agreed to put links on the Portal to lists of focal points on members' respective websites.
- **Definitions.** Members agreed that there are opportunities to continue harmonization of forest-related definitions, in particular as related to forest resources, products and services, and policy and institutional frameworks. As a step forward, the Task Force recommended that their information requests should include a list of definitions as well as cross-references indicating those definitions that are used in other processes/organizations. Members also agreed to take stock of the past meetings on harmonizing forest-related definitions for use by various stakeholders (reports available at <http://www.fao.org/forestry/fop/fopw/Climate/climate-e.asp>) and on-going work on definitions, and investigate the possibility to produce a compilation of terms and definitions used in their questionnaires. UNEP-WCMC expressed its readiness to take the lead on the compilation.
- **Information management.** Members agreed to work towards a better system for sharing data and information among the organizations and processes involved in data collection and reporting, in order to improve **availability and accessibility** of information, including the original unprocessed country data.
- **Improvements of information requests, including formats and questionnaires.** It was concluded that the following issues will improve questionnaires and formats and help reduce reporting burden:
 - shortening questionnaires and rephrasing questions (knowing the real information needs);
 - using existing, including base line information where possible;
 - including in the reporting guidelines references to sources of related information provided through reporting to other instruments/organizations;
 - continuing to ensure professional designing and processing of the questionnaires.

Possibilities for streamlining at different phases of reporting

Table 3. Potential for streamlining by steps in information requests and processing of information

Steps	Potential for streamlining	Activity
(i) joint reviews and rounds of comments of the questionnaires; cross-referencing questions and	+++	On going

definitions		
(ii) questionnaires sent to countries	++	Subsets of information requests (parts of questionnaires) can be shared to reduce the reporting burden.
(iii) processing the information and reporting by the organization/ secretariat back to their constituencies (information dissemination)	Streamlining is very limited but there are possibilities for joint information management.	Responses from countries could be shared by the organizations/secretariat involved in needing the same information. However, each organization does its own analysis and reports differently to its constituency.

2.3 Major obstacles for streamlining

Members identified some obstacles for streamlining that would need to be brought to the attention of their governing bodies to be solved, including:

- Clarification is needed of the necessity for each secretariat/organization to individually collect data to be valid and useful for the processes, in particular related to the reporting within conventions (chain-of-custody);
- Difficulties for the convention secretariats to streamline on a short-term as decisions regarding reporting (content, periodicity and timing) for the next few years have already been taken by the governing bodies;
- Possibility to streamline only if reporting is periodic (some reporting activities are currently seen as one time requests .e.g. the reporting on the CBD's Expanded Programme of Work on Forests);
- Poor country coordination among national agencies that provide pieces of information.

3. Streamlining Portal

Members discussed the content and future work needed regarding the Task Force's first output, the on-line "portal" on forest-related reporting, developed by FAO in close collaboration and with inputs from all members. They agreed, with some minor amendments, to its structure and content. They decided to continue its development and to promote its use. They agreed to inform their own organizations and constituencies (member countries) and to put links on their own websites to the Portal.

Maintenance and update of the portal

It was agreed that that each Task Force member is responsible for supplying FAO updated information concerning their reporting processes, including their respective pages, texts, links, country reports and other content. FAO will continue the technical maintenance of the Portal and will notify members periodically (every three months) of the requested update. Members agreed to recheck their own pages immediately and provide any amendments to FAO, including the introductory texts on the country report pages. It was also agreed that FAO, in collaboration with other members, would look into possibility for dynamic links (automatic updates).

The following improvements were proposed:

- add tool (search engine) to obtain information by thematic areas;
- add links to the lists of focal points posted on the respective members' websites;
- include a schedule of upcoming reporting requirements;

- check acronyms;
- add a calculator of visitors on the portal;
- add the date on each page indicating the last update;
- provide the user with a way to enter feedback on the Portal;
- translation into French and Spanish (see below).

It was also agreed that only reports that are already available on the members' websites will be included in the Portal (i.e., no additional country reports/information will be accepted).

Launching and demonstrations of the Portal

Members agreed that the Portal be presented to the CPF members at the next CPF meeting (9 March 2003, Rome) and that endorsement be sought from the CPF for its dissemination, including through demonstrations in forthcoming events, including: technical and subsidiary bodies of the three conventions, UNFF country led initiative on MAR (March 2003, Viterbo), UNFF-3 (May 2003, Geneva) and the World Forestry Congress (September 2003, Quebec) and other relevant meetings. The Coordinator, Ms Tiina Vahanen, will notify the CPF.

Leaflet

With a view to help countries to provide information and prepare their national reports, members proposed to prepare a one-page leaflet that describes the activities and outputs of the Task Force, the Portal in particular. Members would distribute such a leaflet to their respective national focal points, in conjunction with the information and reporting requests, and through other relevant networks.

The proposal on the leaflet would be presented to the CPF, including a preliminary mock of the leaflet and a cost estimate. UNEP-WCMC agreed to take the lead on preparing the mock and share it for comments with all members.

Financing of the Portal and leaflet

As both the Portal and the proposed leaflet would need to be translated (English, French and Spanish), members agreed to investigate the possibilities of sharing the costs of the production and translations of the Portal and seek CPF's guidance to proceed. In this context, UNEP-WCMC expressed its readiness to take the lead on the design of the leaflet; UNFF Secretariat to seek possibility to arrange translations of the Portal and the leaflet; the CBD Secretariat to arrange the Spanish translation of the leaflet; ITTO to investigate the possibilities to finance the printing of the leaflet. FAO will continue to maintain the Portal.

4. Future work of the Task Force and presentation of results

Each member agreed to take the opportunity to disseminate information about CPF Task Force's outputs, including the Portal, in ways and at times they consider appropriate, and to share with other members the feedback received.

Work and results obtained so far would be summarised in the CPF Framework (CPF's annual progress report to UNFF). In addition, the Task Force agreed to produce an **information document** to help members to inform their governing bodies and relevant networks of the results of the Task Force's Work. FAO agreed to draft the document.

5. Preparation for CPF's contribution to the UNFF country-led initiative on Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting (MAR)

FAO and UNFF Secretariat briefed participants of the forth coming UNFF country led-initiative on monitoring, assessment and reporting (Viterbo, Italy 17-20 March 2003). All CPF members had been invited to attend the meeting.

Members agreed that those participating in the MAR meeting would also attend the CPF Panel, organized upon the request of the co-sponsoring countries. FAO will present the work and results of the Task Force, including the Portal, accompanied by other members, as a background for informal discussion among the panellists and the audience. The Coordinator will inform the other members of the outcome of the meeting.

6. Next meeting

Members agreed to propose to the CPF that the next meeting would be organized as a **small expert consultation**, by invitation of the CPF.

Scope:

1. Analyse feedback received from countries on the work and results of the Task Force;
2. Seek possibilities for joint requests for forest-related information drawing from the criteria and indicators processes.

Participants: CPF Task Force members (9), policy and technical experts from selected countries and conventions/instruments (6-8), representatives of C&I processes (3-5). Total: about 20 participants.

Length: 2-3 days.

Dates and venue: Preferably immediately prior to the World Forestry Congress (Quebec, September 2003). CBD Secretariat agreed to investigate the possibility of organizing the meeting in Montreal. In addition, members agreed to investigate also the options for holding the meeting in conjunction with other related meetings (such as the GFRA Advisory Group, or the proposed FAO/ITTO expert consultation on criteria and indicators).

The Chair was tasked to prepare a proposal for time, venue and participation for the expert consultation, and to prepare a brief concept note outlining the scope, objectives, background material needed and expected outcomes, and share these with other members for comments.

7. Other issues

Budget. Members agreed to bear the costs of the Task Force's activities. Individual members could also seek donor support for their specific contributions. Financing of the Task Force's activities will also be brought to the attention of the CPF.

8. Closure of the meeting

On behalf of the members, Mr. Michael Martin, Chair thanked UNEP-WCMC for the provision of venue and hospitality for the meeting, and he closed the meeting at 12:30.