

Summary Report
Fourth Meeting of the Task Force of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) on Streamlining Forest-Related Reporting

29-30 March 2004, Montreal, Canada

Hosted by the CBD Secretariat

Participants:

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

ITTO: Steve Johnson

Secretariat of CBD: Manuel Guariguata, Gijs van Tol

Secretariat of UNFF: Susan Braatz

UNEP-WCMC: Peter Herkenrath

Secretariat of UNFCCC had communicated their views on the proposed information service prior to the meeting.

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by the Chair, Mr Michael Martin, FAO, on 29 March at 9:30. Mr Jo Mulongoy, Principal Officer, welcomed the participants on behalf of Mr Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary, CBD Secretariat. He reiterated CBD Secretariat's commitment to the work of the task force and looked forward for the development of joint CPF information service for the benefit of CPF members and countries. He particularly noted the relevant link for the CBD's Clearing House Mechanism.

Participants agreed that the main objective of the meeting was to develop a project proposal for a joint CPF information service on national forest-related reporting, to be submitted for CPF's consideration at its next meeting in 2 May 2004. The agenda was adopted.

2. Presentations of other forest information systems

2.1 CBD's Clearing-House Mechanism, Olivier de Munck, CBD Secretariat

CBD Secretariat gave an overview of its Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) including its background (rationale, mandate, COP guidance); the information services it provides, most of which are web-based (search engines, on-line databases, restricted sites, discussion fora) but contain also e-mail and fax distribution lists; and lessons learned that could be helpful in development of any new information system. The National Report Analyzer service was particularly mentioned as relevant to the CPF's streamlining work.

2.2 Developments of potential UNFF information system, Susan Braatz, UNFF Secretariat

A presentation was made by the UNFF Secretariat on its plan to establish an information sharing network on sustainable forest management through further development of the UNFF website. This information sharing mechanism would provide access on the UNFF website and on a CD-ROM to official documents of IPF, IFF and UNFF; information on key issues in UNFF (e.g. financing for sustainable forest management, and transfer of environmentally sound technologies); and information related to the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action (based on the national reports to UNFF), indexed and easily searchable by topic.

2.3 Update on UNEP-WCMC's work on harmonization of information management and reporting for biodiversity-related conventions, Peter Herkenrath, UNEP-WCMC

The UNEP pilot projects on harmonizing information management and reporting to the five biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar, World Heritage Convention), conducted in Ghana, Indonesia, Panama and the Seychelles, had finished and the report would be available soon. A number of recommendations to the conventions and to governments had come out of the pilot projects, proposing, for example, to look into options to harmonize the reporting formats and cycles of the conventions, to develop a reporting manual, to review the institutional arrangements at the national level, and to develop national biodiversity clearing-houses. A follow-up workshop is planned later in 2004, with support from the Belgian government.

3. Review of task force's work, including the CPF portal, and feedback from governments

FAO, ITTO and UNFF Secretariat briefed members of the positive feedback received to the task force's presentation on the common information framework at the UNFF *ad hoc* expert group on monitoring, assessment and reporting (MAR) (Geneva, Switzerland, December 2003). The group had encouraged the CPF members to continue to make information from national reports to international instruments and organizations readily accessible, including through the development of a common information framework for forest-related reporting to international instruments. Also the FAO/ITTO Expert Consultation on Criteria and Indicators (Cebu City, Philippines, March 2004) had made a similar type of recommendation.

4. Forest reporting information service¹

Encouraged by the UNFF *ad hoc* expert group on MAR and continuing from the previous meeting, members developed a project outline for a CPF initiative on forest reporting information service. FAO had developed a prototype for demonstration.

Members agreed that if commonly developed and used by CPF members, such an information service could provide benefits both to member countries and the member organizations, in view of reduced reporting burden. In such an information service, information reported by countries both on "actions" and "trends and situation" would be organized according to the thematic areas of sustainable forest management. The information service would be built upon the CPF web portal (www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar).

The task force members felt that the information service could provide a great opportunity for CPF member organizations to further collaborate on forest-related information. In this context, the task force decided to invite CPF members to consider engaging themselves to work closer on forest-related information, including using the portal, building it further to a joint information service and, most importantly, then using such service in their own work.

¹ Based on: "Towards a Common Information Framework for Forest-Related National Reporting to International Processes" CPF Task Force on Streamlining Forest-Related Reporting, Interim report, 6 December 2003. <http://www.fao.org/forestry/foris/webview/cpf/index.jsp?siteId=2823&sitetreeId=7692&langId=1&geoId=0>

Members agreed to present the project outline to the CPF at its next meeting on 2 May. Manuel Guariguata, CBD Secretariat and Tiina Vahanen, FAO would make the introduction. If CPF agrees, the idea of the joint forest reporting information service would also be presented to UNFF 4 in a CPF side event, by Susan Braatz, UNFF Secretariat and Manuel Guariguata, CBD Secretariat.

It was also suggested that if countries provide positive feedback, the next step would be for the interested CPF members to seek external resources to start carrying out the project.

5. Promotion of the use of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management

CBD Secretariat briefed members of the paper they had submitted to the above mentioned FAO/ITTO expert consultation, entitled A Possible Synergy between International Criteria and Indicators Processes and the CBD Expanded Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity².

Members noted the usefulness of promoting the use of criteria and indicators on reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management, and using the common thematic areas (criteria) of sustainable forest management as the organizing principle in the proposed forest reporting information system.

6. Other issues

Members also agreed to finalize the task force working paper, entitled International Forest-related Reporting: a Review and Comparative Analysis. They agreed to provide the final comments to FAO, for finalization and posting the paper on the task force's website by 8 April. It was also agreed that the paper would be forwarded to the CPF members, together with the project outline on the forest reporting information service.

7. Closure of the meeting

Chair closed the meeting at 18:00 on 30 March.

² Available at <http://www.fao.org/forestry/foris/webview/common/media.jsp?mediaId=6493&langId=1>