

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

16 January 2005, Rome, Italy

Hosted by FAO

Participants:

FAO: Michael Martin (Chair), Peter Holmgren, Federica Urbani, Tiina Vähänen (Rapporteur)
Secretariat of CBD: Manuel Guariguata
Secretariat of UNFCCC: Jenny Wong
Secretariat of UNFF: Peter Csoka
UNEP-WCMC: Peter Herkenrath

Regrets: ITTO and Secretariat of UNCCCD. However, to prepare for the meeting, ITTO had contributed to the development of the prototype of the CPF information framework and UNCCD Secretariat had agreed to update its own pages on the CPF Reporting Portal (www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar).

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr Michael Martin, FAO, welcomed the participants and expressed his appreciation for the participants' agreement to meet on a Sunday, which demonstrates a great commitment to advance the streamlining task.

Participants agreed that the objectives of the meeting were: (i) to discuss the value added of the proposed CPF information framework to the CPF member organizations that collect and analyze information and to the countries that compile the reports; (ii) to examine the ways to further develop and eventually use the framework; and (iii) to decide on the next steps.

2. Recent developments in UNEP-WCMC work on harmonization of national reporting to biodiversity-related treaties

Peter Herkenrath, UNEP-WCMC, gave a presentation of the results of the workshop that UNEP-WCMC had convened in cooperation with the governments of Belgium and the UK in Haasrode, Belgium, 22-23 September 2004. The workshop had reviewed the outcomes of four pilot projects that tested different approaches to harmonization of national information management and reporting to biodiversity-related conventions and addressed needs for avoiding duplication, increasing efficiency and reducing burden of reporting. It had recommended, for example, clarification of the purpose of reporting by the governing bodies; development of a web portal that links to the reporting guidelines use of information; shift of focus towards outcome-oriented reporting (boosted by 2010 target); and a modular approach to reporting through identification of common themes across conventions. The meeting had also acknowledged the CPF Task Force's practical steps to reduce reporting burdens and increase access to information. See <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/workshop.htm>

3. Recent developments in national forest-related reporting within UNFCCC

Ms Jenny Wong, UNFCCC Secretariat informed other members of the recent developments in the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol reporting. COP 10, held on 6-17 December 2004 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, adopted a decision on "Good practice guidance for land use, land-use change and forestry activities under Article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol". This decision includes:

- tables on the common reporting format (CRF) for estimates of greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks resulting from activities under Article 3, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Kyoto Protocol;
- guidance on reporting of this supplementary information for inclusion in an annex to the national inventory report.

In addition, the UNFCCC secretariat had incorporated the LULUCF CRF tables and related technical modifications into the guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Annex I Parties. This complete updated document is entitled "Guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part I: UNFCCC reporting guidelines on annual inventories (FCCC/SBSTA/2004/8). This document will facilitate reporting of inventories from Annex I Parties in 2005 but the LULUCF section may be further modified, based on views and experiences of Parties, and following further consideration by the SBSTA at its 23rd session.

COP 10 had also adopted a decision on simplified modalities and procedures for small-scale afforestation and reforestation project activities under the clean development mechanism in the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and measures to facilitate their implementation, including a draft COP/MOP decision for adoption at its first session.

4. Development of the joint CPF information framework for forest reporting

4.1 Prototype

FAO presented a prototype (web site) of the joint CPF information framework. It builds on the CPF Portal on Forest Reporting (www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar), which provides access to forest-related country reports to all the major international processes. To enrich this information service, an option for a transversal look at the country reports was provided. In this new phase, users could search information items extracted from the reports by country, by process and by thematic element. The prototype was initially based on information from a few selected countries reporting to CBD, FAO, ITTO and UNFF. It includes information items on:

- Actions taken to implement international forest-related commitments (≈ process);
- Situation and trends in ecological, social and economic aspects of forests (≈ outcome).

The framework organizes the information according to the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management, which are based on a decade of work on criteria and indicators around the world, and were acknowledged at UNFF-4: 1. Extent of forest resources; 2. Biological diversity; 3. Forest health and vitality; 4. Productive functions; 5. Protective functions; 6. Socio economic functions; 7. Legal, policy and institutional framework.

It was pointed out that there may be a need to further refine the descriptions of the seven thematic areas of SFM, particularly the “forest biodiversity”. Refined descriptions could help in organizing data for the CPF information framework.

The technical platform of the information framework within FAO’s forestry information system) would also enable the use of other keywords (or thematic elements) for search.

4.2 Usefulness and benefits of the joint information framework

Participants reiterated that the main purpose of the framework is to further improve access to forest-related information submitted to several CPF members, with the objective of streamlining reporting and reducing reporting burdens on countries.

The key questions discussed were: (a) the value added for countries, secretariats and other users to have the reported information categorized and searchable by thematic elements; and (b) the ways in which the joint information framework would help in designing questionnaires and reporting formats.

Participants restated the expected benefits of a joint information framework both to countries and the CPF members, in view of reduced reporting burden, as described in the Project Outline that was endorsed by CPF on 2 May 2004¹:

- better in-country coordination among national focal points and among the reporting processes;
- easier and more accountable preparation of future reports;
- easy access to compiled and organized country information;
- better use of the reported information;
- enhanced consistency and comparability of information submitted to and used by various international instruments, organizations and processes;
- reduced overlap in information requests because reported information can be used for several purposes and across different processes;
- improved prospects for synchronized information requests; and
- improved prospects for integrated information management systems in countries.

In addition, participants emphasised that the information framework could help in designing questionnaires and reporting formats, for example by reducing duplicative request of information and better structuring of reports. The networking among the task force members was also valued as it offers a communication and feedback channel for designing questionnaires and sharing the reported information. Some governing bodies, such as COPs of CBD and UNFCCC had already decided on the reporting formats for the coming few years.

However, some processes, such as FAO’s FRA and ITTO’s C&I have already structured their reporting closely according to the thematic elements of SFM. While the current review of the

¹ Project Outline for a CPF initiative to develop a joint Information Framework for Forest Reporting
www.fao.org/forestry/site/7694/en

effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests may give further guidance also for reporting, participants noted that the IPF/IFF proposals for action could be structured according to the thematic elements of SFM.

Participants also noted that a common way of presenting information would lead to its wider availability through the framework, which could also help improve decision-making at the national level as well as efficiency of reporting.

Furthermore, participants took note that in some processes discussion is on-going on the need to shift the focus from process reporting (action) to outcome-oriented reporting (situation and trends) based on targets and/or indicators.

In concluding, the participants reiterated that the information framework provides a great opportunity for CPF member organizations to streamline and harmonize forest-related reporting by further developing the framework and, most importantly, then using it in their own work, and for countries to develop a more streamlined approach to national reporting. They also agreed to seek further endorsement on this by the CPF members.

4. Next steps

Members agreed to the following steps to further develop and present the information framework:

Further development of the prototype

- CBD Secretariat agreed to provide a cross-mapping of goals CBD's programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity against the seven thematic elements within the following week; and UNFF Secretariat said it could provide a similar table for the IPF/IFF proposals for action later (FAO had already done so for the FRA reporting tables and ITTO for their indicators on sustainable tropical forest management).
- FAO agreed to populate the prototype with information extracted from a few more country reports.

Possible in-country activity

- FAO was assigned to propose an approach (e.g. a meeting of focal points in one country) for a preliminary assessment of benefits of the joint information framework and for offering assistance in capacity building for better information management.

Next meeting/possible expert consultation

- UNFF Secretariat agreed to investigate the possibility to host a small CPF task force expert consultation on 12-13 April in New York. Participants would include the task force members and selected experts (max two) from each of the four suggested countries (Guyana, Norway, Philippines, Uganda). A second option for the venue could be CBD Secretariat in Montreal. The purpose of the meeting would be to seek country feedback for the further development and use of the information framework. FAO offered to provide travel support for the participants from the developing countries and would also draft a concept note for the meeting, including its proposed objectives.

CPF endorsement

- Task Force agreed to seek CPF's commitment to further develop and use the information framework. FAO will propose to include this on the agenda of the next CPF meeting.

Side-events

- UNFF Secretariat agreed to arrange a time slot for a proposed side-event on “monitoring, assessment and reporting” related initiatives of CPF, i.e. streamlining of reporting; harmonization of definitions and the Global Forest Information Service (GFIS) at UNFF-5 in May in New York.
- Task Force also proposed a side-event on streamlining forest reporting at SBSTTA-11 of CBD in December in Montreal. CBD Secretariat agreed to make the arrangements.

Documents

- CBD Secretariat agreed to take the lead on drafting an information note on CPF work on streamlining forest-related reporting to SBSTTA-11.