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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

Thirtieth Session

Antalya, Turkey, 4-6 May 2016

Report from the outcome of the debate of the joint session of the 38th European Forestry Commission (EFC) and the 73rd UNECE Committee on Forest and the Forest Industry

Executive Summary

The Council at its 151st session in March 2015 as well as the Conference at its 39th session in June 2015, in reviewing the document “Assessment of FAO Governance Reforms (C2015/26 Rev.1)” endorsed the suggestion “*that the priorities identified by the regional technical commissions on forests and fisheries could be included as an integral part of the Regional Conference reports to Council as regard priorities for the work of the Organization in each region*”.

The European Forestry Commission (EFC) at its 38th Session held on 2-6 November 2015¹ in Engelberg, Switzerland, as part of the joint session with the 73rd UNECE Committee on Forest and the Forest Industry (COFFI), accepted this recommendation and requested for the EFC report to be presented as separate agenda item at the ERC.

Considering that the full report² is covering matters related to the EFC as well as the UNECE Committee on Forest and the Forest Industry, this ERC paper provides a secretarial summary of EFC related matters.

Guidance Sought

The Members are invited to review the summary report and to:

- Accept that the EFC reports become an integral part of the Regional Conference and, if appropriate, an independent agenda item
- Request the EFC to identify and discuss priorities of work for the region in its future sessions and issues to be brought to the attention of future ERC Sessions, taking into consideration the caution needed to avoid duplication of work, as the priorities of the regional technical commissions are already reflected in the reports of the Technical Committees.

¹ www.fao.org/forestry/efc/72568/en/

² Report of the joint seventy-third session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and thirty-eighth session of the European Forestry Commission: www.fao.org/3/a-mp473.pdf

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page;
an FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications.
Other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org*



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I. Background

1. The 38th Session of the European Forestry Commission (EFC) was held jointly with the 73rd Session of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI), as well as the 3rd European Forest Week, in Engelberg, Switzerland, on 2 - 6 November 2015.
2. More than 230 representatives from 39 countries (32 EFC member countries), one member organization, one observer country, 2 inter-governmental organizations, 1 inter-governmental process, 22 non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local entities, academia and the media were in attendance.
3. Objectives were to discuss and assess policy and technical issues relevant to forestry in the region, in particular global and regional policy developments and regional implications, forest products and services, markets and investments, forest ecosystem services, strategic review of the Integrated Programme of Work 2014-17 of COFFI and EFC, FAO activities in the Region, and FAO work in gender, youth and education and forest and landscape restoration.

II. Summary Report

A. Global and regional policy context

4. The Commission and the Committee requested FAO and UNECE, within their mandates, to:
 - a) Collaborate to support country implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as they relate to forests, in cooperation with Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) members;
 - b) Work jointly on developing global forest-related indicators, building on existing indicators, related to SDGs and efficient ways of measuring them, in the framework of the Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators, and further requested FAO and UNECE to continue their inputs to this group;
 - c) Continue jointly to provide support to countries, through providing tools and technical assistance to integrate issues related to climate change mitigation and adaptation into their forest and related sectors; and to assist in strengthening national forest monitoring systems for climate change mitigation;
 - d) Continue jointly, through the Integrated Programme of Work, to regularly update member States and other stakeholders on the forest-related global and regional policy developments, and to contribute to the SDG implementation and review process.
 - e) Continue efforts to streamline reporting, inter alia through the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ), in the next global reporting cycle;
 - f) Strengthen cooperation with Forest Europe and continue the efforts to increase data quality and comparability;
 - g) By recognizing Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) as a unique and valuable resource that is the foundation of global forest reporting, urged countries to provide the highest quality data to the CFRQ, and requested FAO and ECE to support countries to improve their data;

B. Markets and investments in Forest Ecosystem Services

5. The Commission and the Committee requested FAO and UNECE, within their mandates, to:
 - a) Compile studies and information and disseminate them in an easily-accessible format;
 - b) Give due attention to the differences arising from the different levels of actions (global, regional, local, communal);
 - c) Analyse and compare existing schemes of payments for forest ecosystem services (FES);

- d) Develop and publish guidelines for practitioners on how to finance, pay for and institute markets for forest ecosystem services building on successful examples in member States; and that FAO consider expanding the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) toolbox in this area;
- e) Raise awareness of the value of FES, particularly among politicians, with the aim of creating the necessary enabling policy environment.

C. Forest Ecosystem Services

6. The Commission and the Committee reflected on the important role of the FAO Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds in disaster risk reduction and watershed management and encouraged continuation of work in this direction including broader cross-sectoral collaboration.
7. The Commission and the Committee stressed the need to consider biodiversity conservation in a broader context and in connection with the most recent research results in the area.
8. The Commission and the Committee requested FAO and ECE, subject to their capacities and mandates, to include climate change mitigation and adaptation activities in their Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW).

D. EFC/COFFI integrated program of work

9. The Commission and the Committee requested FAO and UNECE, to:
- a) Prioritize the integrated program of work and give priority to the joint work in the area of forest products and markets, wood energy, adoption of SDGs and the outcomes of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF11), forest resources assessment, and the forest reporting.
 - b) Continue their joint efforts to assist member States in implementing the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy on a voluntary basis within their existing mandates.

E. EFC matters

10. The Commission:
- a) Supported country efforts to plan and implement activities related to the restoration of forests and other degraded lands, in particular through activities of the Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) Mechanism;
 - b) Recommended to FAO to seek further cooperation with partners to promote the restoration of degraded lands, in particular through direct involvement in global partnerships and initiatives;
 - c) Recommended FAO to engage in more cross-cutting and inter-departmental work and to support landscape approaches to achieve greater food security, poverty alleviation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources;
 - d) Recommended FAO to pursue active engagement with multilateral, bilateral and private sector resource partners, including the GEF, Green Climate Fund and multilateral and regional development banks, to enable FAO to increase its support to member countries for capacity development in inter-sectoral planning, institutional development and application of landscape approaches on the ground.
 - e) Welcomed the report on follow-up to the decisions of the thirty-seventh session of the EFC and FAO activities in the region and stressed the importance of the FAO work in the region.
 - f) Recommended that FAO continue to support the development and dissemination of the SFM Toolbox and the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources and noted the need to expand

the thematic coverage to include the issues of climate change adaptation and forest and landscape restoration.

- g) Invited countries to mainstream gender and youth into their forest policies and ensure and monitor their implementation; increase the participation of women and youth representatives at forestry events; identify major challenges facing the future of forest education and explore innovative approaches to tackle these challenges and attract more students to the field of forestry; and provide adequate resources to FAO to strengthen gender and youth mainstreaming in forestry.
- h) Recommended FAO (i) to work on supporting education in forest issues for the public at large, taking into account possibilities for synergy with UNECE in the regional context"; (ii) to support countries by strengthening capacity and providing technical support for gender and youth mainstreaming in forest policies and their implementation; (iii) to support the economic empowerment of women in the forestry value chain, where appropriate, through enterprise development; and (iv) to work with the Advisory Panel on Forest Knowledge to provide guidance for modernizing forestry related education.
- i) Noted the importance of providing input to FAO governance and, while acknowledging the benefits of the coordination system, noted the need to allow enough time to consider the items, reflecting their importance.
- j) Decided to recommend that the FAO Regional Conference for Europe receive the report of the Commission starting from this session henceforth as an independent agenda item (Annex I a). The Commission also considered the draft recommendation for the Committee on Forestry (COFO) agenda (Annex I b).
- k) Appreciated the report and welcomed diverse work activities of the EFC Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds and stressed the need for strengthening further the commitment to the Working Party.
- l) Took note of the report and the achievements of *Silva Mediterranea* with appreciation and welcomed the active work and significant progress of the Committee.

11. The next session of the Commission was scheduled as a joint session with the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry to take place in Poland in 2017.

12. The need for improved structure and time management of the joint sessions was noted and the bureaux were invited to give considerations to innovative solutions, including allocating different days for discussing Commission, Committee and joint items.

Annex I

European Forestry Commission recommendations

a) EFC recommendations for the attention of the ERC

<i>Priority issues for the RC to consider</i>	<i>Expected outcome (information/discussion/decision)</i>	<i>Possible follow up activities for FAO</i>
Report on the 38 th session of the EFC	Information/Discussion	Based on endorsement by the ERC FAO to incorporate regional priorities in Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) (<i>N.B. parallel track to COFO</i>)

b) EFC recommendations for the attention of COFO (issues to be considered for inclusion in the Agenda)

<i>Priority issues for COFO to consider</i>	<i>Expected outcome (information/discussion/decision)</i>	<i>Possible follow up activities for COFO and FAO</i>
Forests' contribution to the SDGs	Discussion/decision	Guidance for members and FAO
Strengthening contribution to the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF)	Discussion/decision	Guidance for COFO and FAO for enhanced collaboration and contribution
Forest and climate change after United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP21	Discussion/decision	Guidance for COFO and FAO for follow up action
Forest fires	Discussion/decision	Guidance for FAO to enhance its work on forest fires
Forest information	Discussion/decision	Guidance for FAO on shaping its programme related to forest information collection, analysis and dissemination, including, <i>inter alia</i> , FRA, and Criteria and Indicators (C&I)
Youth and Education	Discussion/decision	Guidance for members and FAO to mainstream youth into forest policies and strengthen forest education
Consideration of initiating the revision of the Forestry Strategy	Discussion/decision	Guidance for FAO to strengthen the contribution of forests and forestry to sustainable development