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FAO European Forestry Commission matters**Food and Agriculture Organization****European Forestry Commission****Thirty-sixth session**

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**Review of the mandate and modus operandi of the European
Forestry Commission (EFC) Working Party on the
Management of Mountain Watersheds****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The note explains the procedures taken to review the mandate and modus operandi of the EFC Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds. Participants at the 27th Session of the Working Party proposed and the 35th Session of the EFC approved an external consultancy to: analyse the past and current structure, mandate and modus operandi of the Working Party; analyse country involvement; compare other ongoing processes, networks and organizations working on similar themes; and propose a new mandate, institutional structure and modus operandi for the Working Party. The preliminary findings of the review will be presented and discussed on the occasion of the 28th Session of the Working Party, and the Secretariat of the Working Party will subsequently present the results of the review to the 36th EFC Session, where participants will be invited to provide guidance and recommendations for the future direction of the Working Party.

1. Since the establishment of the EFC Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds in 1952, a number of processes, programmes and networks on mountain watersheds have been created in Europe, which to some extent, deal with similar issues as the Working Party. Additionally, over the past few years, a trend of decreasing interest and participation from member countries and observers in the activities of the Working Party has been noticed. The above facts may provide an indication that the Working Party in its current form is no longer attractive to its members and will continue to suffer from dwindling interest.
2. In order to give the Working Party a new profile and to address strategic issues, participants at the 27th Session of the Working Party in Slovakia, April 2010, endorsed the proposal to initiate a major review of its mandate and modus operandi through an external consultancy. The proposal was formally approved at the 35th Session of the EFC in Lisbon, Portugal in April 2010.
3. The review of the mandate and modus operandi of the Working Party has officially started on 02 March 2011. The exercise is being conducted through a desk review of relevant documents as well as through direct consultations with the Steering Committee of the Working Party and the focal points of member countries.
4. The main issues the review is addressing are the following:
 - (a) Past and current structure, mandate and modus operandi of the Working Party;
 - (b) Reasons motivating countries to participate in the activities of the Working Party or hindering their involvement, as well as their expectations for the future work of the group;
 - (c) Most important related topics in different parts of Europe and relevant issues for the new mandate of the Working Party;
 - (d) Current institutional landscape of relevance for the Working Party, mission and functioning of different ongoing processes and networks, potential niches for the Working Party;
 - (e) Institutional set up of different networks and groups of experts as potential alternatives to the structure of the Working Party;
 - (f) Proposed new mandate, institutional set up and modus operandi of the Working Party and terms of collaboration with other on-going processes of a similar nature.
5. Thus far, questionnaires have been distributed to member countries of the Working Party to solicit their inputs and views concerning the potential new structure and governance of the group, approaches to ensure financial sustainability and thematic areas to be prioritized. Additionally, a number of countries have been targeted and contacted for more in-depth suggestions. These countries included Switzerland, Turkey, Norway and France. Switzerland and Turkey were visited by the consultant in charge of the review.
6. In order to better understand the current relevant institutional mechanisms in Europe as well as to build synergies and collaboration, many networks and organizations working on topics relevant to the group have been consulted, including FOREST EUROPE, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, PLAN ALP, International Research on Disaster Reduction, European Forest Institute Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, FAO's Sub-Regional Offices for Central and Eastern Europe (SEU) and for Central Asia (SEC), and the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. Questionnaires have been distributed

to member countries of the UNECE Water Convention to assess the interest of water sector experts in strengthening their collaboration with forestry experts.

7. Core concerns of the review have been discussed on the occasion of the joint meeting of the TC and EFC Bureaux held in Geneva on 12 May 2011 and of the Steering Committee meeting held in Vienna, Austria on 28 June 2011. According to the preliminary findings, some countries propose to expand the mandate of the Working Party to cover forests and water issues and to enhance the focus on disaster risk management in mountains, particularly in the context of climate change.

9. The preliminary findings of the review will be presented and discussed on the occasion of the 28th Session of the Working Party, which will be held in Kastamonu, Turkey, from 12 to 16 September 2011. The Secretariat of the Working Party will subsequently present the results of the review as well as the main outcomes and deliberations of the 28th Session to the European Forestry Commission during its 36th Session. The Commission will be invited to consider these inputs, provide guidance and make recommendations for the future direction of the Working Party.
