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Joint Committee/Commission matters

Food and Agriculture Organization

European Forestry Commission

Thirty-sixth session

Antalya, 10-14 October 2011

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in a changing international environment: briefing and discussion of recent developments

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document provides an overview of the outcomes of the recent forestry international and regional events of relevance to the work of the Committee and the Commission

The Committee and the Commission are invited to take note of those outcomes and, as appropriate, provide guidance on how to take them into account in the integrated ECE/FAO programme of work

I. Twentieth session of the Committee on Forestry

1. The Committee on Forestry (COFO) was held at FAO Headquarters, Rome, from 4 to 8 October 2010 in conjunction with the second World Forest Week (WFW). Both session and the second World Forest Week focused on the theme: "forests and sustainable development".
2. The Committee adopted recommendations on programme and budget for consideration by the FAO Council.
3. The FAO Council endorsed the report of the session and:
 - (a) Requested FAO to continue its work towards a further strengthened Global Forest Resources Assessment in 2015, prepare a long-term strategy for that programme, and continue to lead international coordination in this area. The Council recognized the need for a voluntary Trust Fund to enhance country capacities in this field.
 - (b) Recommended that FAO develop a comprehensive report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources and assist countries in integrating conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in sustainable forest management.
 - (c) Recommended that FAO continue to review critical issues related to forests, water and soil, and support Member States in this area.
 - (d) Requested FAO to support countries in utilizing the potential contributions of forests and trees outside forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation, including the reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD-plus), while focusing on the areas of its comparative advantage.
 - (e) Noted that supporting Member States' policy and technical work was a key function of the Organization and requested FAO to strengthen its capacities to assist countries' domestic forest law enforcement and governance policies and encourage public and private sector finance for forests.
 - (f) Recommended that FAO continue its leading role in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.
 - (g) Requested FAO to use the International Year of Forests (2011) as an opportunity for highlighting the role of forests in sustainable development and to support countries' efforts in this regard.
 - (h) Recommended that adequate resources be allocated to the forest programme, especially in decentralized offices.
4. The Committee also submitted potential issues of global significance for consideration by the FAO Conference.
5. The FAO Conference endorsed the report of the session. The Conference:
 - (a) Noted the need to include fire management in reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries (REDD-plus) programmes and in broader land-use and landscape policies and programmes.
 - (b) Invited countries to strengthen their efforts to address the challenges of forest governance in collaboration with other sectors, and recommended that FAO support countries' efforts in this regard.
 - (c) Recommended that countries and FAO highlight forests' contributions to the global developmental agenda in the preparations for the Rio+20 Earth Summit (2012), and

that they pay particular attention to vulnerable areas such as drylands. The conference also noted the relevance of the International Year of Forests; and supported the proposal for establishing the International Day of Forests.

(d) Noted further the quality of work on forest resources assessment and encouraged its further development by strengthening the reliability of the information rather than broadening it.

(e) Welcomed the programme priorities for Strategic Objective E and encouraged FAO to continue building on its comparative advantages in future priority-setting.

6. In addition, the Committee on Forestry approved changes to its rules of procedure and requested the secretariat to prepare, in consultation with the Steering Committee, a Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) for 2012-2015 for consideration at its twenty-first Session, which will be held in Rome in September 2012.

7. The Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission are invited to take note of the outcome of the twentieth session of the Committee on Forestry for their future work, as appropriate.

II. Ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

8. The ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was held from 24 January to 4 February at UN Headquarters, New York. This session, during which the International Year of Forests was officially launched, focused on the theme: "Forests for People".

9. The session recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft decision about the Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the ninth session of the UNFF on the occasion of the launch of the International Year of Forests.

10. The session adopted the resolution on forests for people, livelihood and poverty eradication, which can also be found in the report of the session (E/2011/42 - E/CN.18/2011/20).

11. The Ministerial Declaration consists of seven commitments:

(a) Improve the livelihood of people by creating the conditions to sustainably manage forests.

(b) Integrate sustainable forest management into development plans.

(c) Accelerate implementation of the Non Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) and efforts towards the four Global Objectives on Forests.

(d) Take a meaningful decision on financing at UNFF10 in 2013.

(e) Implement the forest related outcomes of the General Assembly meetings in September 2011 regarding the Millennium Development Goals.

(f) Work with CPF organisations (Collaborative Partnership on Forests), in particular the three Rio Conventions, to integrate Sustainable Forest Management into their strategies and programmes.

(g) Contribute to Rio+20 Conference by highlighting the benefits of forests and the contribution of Sustainable Forest Management to the themes and goals of the Conference.

12. The resolution on forests for people, livelihood and poverty eradication covers:

- (a) Poverty eradication;
- (b) Implementation of the NLBI (a simple voluntary national reporting is expected for the tenth session);
- (c) Regional cooperation (strengthen the contribution to the implementation of NLBI, promotion of North-South and South-South cooperation);
- (d) International Year of the Forests 2011 (raise awareness and strengthen political will);
- (e) Enhanced cooperation with partners including Member States and CPF members;
- (f) Means of implementation (a new round of meeting for the ad hoc expert group toward a decision at UNFF10).

13. By launching the International Year of Forests, the ninth session of UNFF gave broader visibility to forests and created momentum before the next United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio+20" to be held in June 2012.

14. As 1.6 billion people, nearly one fourth of the world's population, depend on forests for subsistence, livelihood, employment and income generation, there is a need for a more "people-centered" sustainable forest management. UNFF demonstrated that forests can provide a crucial contribution to poverty eradication, especially in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

15. The Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission are invited to take note of the outcome of the ninth session of UNFF for their future work, as appropriate.

III. Second Mediterranean Forest Week

16. The Second Mediterranean Forest Week was held in the Palais des Papes, Avignon, France, from 5 to 8 April 2011. This week was organised by the secretariat of the FAO Silva Mediterranea Committee together with the Mediterranean Regional Office of the European Forest Institute (EFIMED), as well as several organizations aiming to promote forest cooperation in the Mediterranean region. Beside a scientific seminar and working group meetings, it consisted of the following sessions and events:

- (a) Enlarged Executive Committee of Silva Mediterranea.
- (b) Session on Wildfire Prevention in the Mediterranean region.
- (c) Session on the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS).

17. The Second Mediterranean Forest Week was also an opportunity to promote the new Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests, signed in 2010 by FAO, Plan Blue, France (French Ministry of Agriculture, MAAPRAT), Germany (German International Cooperation, GIZ), EFIMED and many other organizations involved in the adaptation of Mediterranean forests to climate change.

18. During the Press Conference held on 6 April, two new members joined the Collaborative Partnership: the International branch of the French Association of Forestry Municipalities, COFOR International, and the French Agency for Development, which confirmed its financial contribution through the French Environmental Fund (FFEM) during 2011.

A. Enlarged Executive Committee of Silva Mediterranea

19. The FAO Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions, Silva Mediterranea, meets every four years to discuss common issues and work on regional cooperation and sustainable development (its twenty-first formal session will be held in 2012). However, the Enlarged Executive Committee of Silva Mediterranea, consisting of nominated members and key partners of the Mediterranean forestry cooperation (Bulgaria, France, Morocco, Portugal, Turkey and the six coordinators of the working groups), meets annually in formal sessions to share information with the Secretariat of Silva Mediterranea.

20. In addition to the main recommendations on the regular activities of the various working groups of the Committee, substantive results of this meeting are the following:

(a) Continuation of the strategy to mobilize financial resources through the preparation of regional projects by the various working groups (Cork Oak, Mediterranean Forests and Sustainable Development, Forest Genetic Resources and Mediterranean Forests and Climate Change) and through promotion and advocacy activities that are implemented by the working group focused on “Sustainable Financing Mechanisms” (WG6).

(b) Preparatory work for the State of Mediterranean Forests (SoMF) to be presented during the twenty-first session of the Silva Mediterranea Committee in 2012.

(c) Discussion on an Integrated Strategy for Mediterranean Forests to be presented to Member States at the next Silva Mediterranea Committee session.

B. Session on Wildfire Prevention in the Mediterranean region

21. Recognizing the importance of the prevention of wildfires at the Pan European and Pan Mediterranean levels and based on recommendations of several recent events organized in the Mediterranean for improving prevention of wildfires (Sevilla Conference in 2007, Sabaudia Expert meeting in 2008 and Rhodes Workshop in May 2010), the main objective of the session was to endorse a “Position Paper” on Wildfire Prevention in the Mediterranean Region, to be presented at EU level, in member countries of the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests and to decision makers in the context of the Union for the Mediterranean.

22. The draft version of this paper was presented to participants as a structured model of guidelines for wildfire prevention policy and practices. It integrated the main recommendations of the previous events (Sevilla, Sabaudia and Rhodes) and the main results of recent research projects (Fire Paradox and other European research projects) on prevention of wildfires in the Mediterranean.

23. The draft version of the Position Paper was discussed by participants, who gave their suggestions on the recommendations/proposed actions and on the main conclusions of the document. After the second Mediterranean Forest Week, a round of consultation among the participants allowed to develop a final version of the paper, which integrates all the changes discussed in Avignon.

24. The Position Paper on Wildfire Prevention in the Mediterranean was finalized, adopted and endorsed by Mediterranean partners (see executive summary in the annex).

C. Session on the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS)

25. The result of the session is a programme of actions for 2011-2012 for the extension of EFFIS in South and East member countries of the Collaborative Partnership on

Mediterranean Forests (Morocco, Algeria, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Lebanon and Turkey).

26. The Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission are invited to take note of the outcome of the Second Mediterranean Forest Week for their future work, as appropriate.

IV. Sixth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe

27. The sixth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe was held 14 to 16 June 2011 in Oslo. The Ministerial Conference was hosted by the Government of Norway, who has been holding the chairmanship of Forest Europe since the previous conference in November 2007 in Poland. The Conference was organized jointly with the Government, of Spain who has now the chairmanship.

28. During the two-day political dialogue, the Ministers agreed on a common vision, strategic goals and measurable targets for European forests by 2020 and on negotiating a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe. This two-track approach, combining the voluntary process with the negotiation of a legally binding instrument, is reflected in the two decisions adopted by the ministers¹:

- (a) Oslo Ministerial Decision: European Forests 2020;
- (b) Oslo Ministerial Mandate for Negotiating a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe.

29. In paragraph 27 of the Oslo Mandate, the Ministerial Conference requested the Forest Europe Liaison Unit and invited UNECE, FAO, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the European Forest Institute (EFI) to jointly support the negotiation process. The distribution of roles among the Liaison Unit, UNECE, FAO, UNEP and EFI is described in the Annex to the Rules of Procedure.

30. UNECE, FAO and UNEP will be responsible for:

- (a) Servicing meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and its Bureau including session management, document management and reporting, as well as any other tasks requested by the Bureau or the Committee.
- (b) Providing legal advice.
- (c) Providing advice on synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and processes.
- (d) Liaising with United Nations organizations.

Providing analysis and information in support of the negotiations.

31. The joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, the FAO Department of Forestry, and the UNEP Regional Office for Europe will service the negotiation process according to an agreed distribution of tasks based upon the expertise of each organization and the resources they can contribute within their mandates.

¹ The two decisions can be found on the following pages:
www.foresteuropa2011.org/documents2.cfm.

32. In addition, the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section developed an extrabudgetary project to respond to this request. The project was submitted for the consideration of UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM)². It will start in September 2011 and end in December 2013. It falls under Work Area 5 "Policy and Cross-Sectoral Issues" of the integrated Programme of Work on Timber and Forestry.

33. Extrabudgetary contributions will consist of secondment of staff and staff time from FAO and UNEP, as well as funds from donor countries to support the participation of countries with economies in transition.

34. UNECE will host the project and establish the related trust fund. This project would allow the use of extrabudgetary resources for the servicing of the negotiation process without infringing on the delivering of the current joint UNECE/FAO Programme of Work on Timber and Forestry.

35. The Committee and the Commission are invited to:

(a) Welcome the commitment of interested donors to provide extrabudgetary resources in support of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, including secondment of staff;

(b) Request that the UNECE and the FAO contribute to the servicing of the negotiation of the Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe, as appropriate. This includes the preparation and processing of related documents, their translation into the UNECE working languages, and to make them available to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee.

² The project was informally presented to the EXCOM on 24 June and will be considered for endorsement in the first half of September 2011.

Annex

Position Paper on Wildfire Prevention in the Mediterranean

Executive Summary

1. While wildfires are already a preoccupation in the Mediterranean, in the light of the scientific world's diagnosis of new climatic scenarios, managers are faced with a general trend of increased burnt areas and a rise in the frequency, intensity and severity of fires (a wildfire is any uncontrolled fire in combustible vegetation that occurs in the countryside or a wilderness area. Other names such as brush fire, bushfire, forest fire, grass fire, hill fire, peat fire, vegetation fire, veldfire and wildland fire may be used to describe the same phenomenon depending on the type of vegetation being burned).

2. Significant prevention efforts have been focused on training, investigation, awareness raising and structural prevention. As a consequence of social economic processes (rural abandonment, aging of rural populations, changing management of production system, etc.), the vegetation structure has already changed drastically increasing the risk of a traditional fire use (traditional fire is the use of fire by rural communities for land and resource management purposes based on traditional know-how).

3. However, these efforts need to be intensified to deal with the consequences of climate change. The opportunities to address wildfire prevention at international level were identified within the framework of:

(a) The fourth International Conference on Wildland Fire in Seville, Spain (2007);

(b) The FAO Workshop on "Forest Fires in the Mediterranean Region", Sabaudia, Italy (2008);

(c) The workshop on "Assessment of Forest Fire Risks and Innovative Strategies for Fire prevention", Rhodes, Greece (2010).

4. During those workshops, several recommendations on wildfire prevention were provided by experts from Mediterranean countries. The present position paper was prepared on the basis of the conclusions and recommendations of these previous events in the Mediterranean.

5. The main recommendations of this position paper on wildfire prevention are focused on:

(a) Enhancement of the international cooperation on wildfire prevention;

(b) Integration of wildfire prevention in National Forest Programs/Policies and in National Strategies for Adaptation to climate change;

(c) Promotion of knowledge and education on wildfire prevention;

(d) Enhancement of sustainable financial mechanisms for prevention of wildfires;

(e) Enhancement of harmonized Information Systems to deal with new wildfire risks.

6. This position paper on Wildfire Prevention was endorsed by the main Mediterranean stakeholders during the Second Mediterranean Forest Week organized in Avignon from 5

to 8 April 2011. This document is an opportunity to address wildfire prevention in the context of climate change and to implement these recommendations in all countries of the Mediterranean. It will also be presented as the position of Mediterranean stakeholders during regional sessions of the fifth International Wildland Fire Conference to be held in South Africa (Sun City) on May 11, 2011.
