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Report from the Outcome of the Debate of the Joint Session of the 40th European Forestry Commission (EFC) and the 77th UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI)

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.1¹), endorsed the suggestion that “*the priorities identified by regional technical commissions on forests and fisheries could be included as an integral part of the reports of Regional Conference to the Council as regard priorities for the work of the Organization in each region.*”

The 40th Session of the European Forestry Commission (EFC) was held jointly with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) in Geneva, Switzerland, from 4 to 7 November 2019.

This Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) paper provides a secretarial summary of EFC-related matters. The full report from the joint session is available on the UNECE website.²

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm732rev1e.pdf>

²

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/timber/meetings/2019/20191104/ECE_TIM_2019_2_FO_EFC_2019_2_unsubmitted.pdf.

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I. Background

1. The 40th Session of the European Forestry Commission (EFC) was held jointly with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and the 5th European Forest Week in Geneva, Switzerland, from 4 to 7 November 2019.
2. More than 180 representatives from 28 countries (18 EFC member countries), one Member Organization (European Union), two intergovernmental organizations, one intergovernmental process, 23 non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local entities, academia and the media registered for the meeting.
3. The joint session discussed and assessed policy and technical issues relevant to forestry in the region. In particular, the issues included global and regional forest policy developments and regional implications, forests and the circular economy, forest products and services, markets and investments, forest landscape restoration, FAO activities in the region, the emerging invasive species risk to European forests, FAO's work on biodiversity and the role of sustainable wood value chains in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as FAO governance matters.

II. Summary Report

A - EFC and COFFI Joint Matters

Forests and the Circular Economy

4. The committee and commission considered the relevance of circular concepts as they relate to the forest-based sector (Paragraph 25).
5. The committee and commission further invited the ECE and FAO, through the joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, to pursue related activities containing research and stock-taking elements and proposals for guidance tools and recommendations for Members, taking into account discussions held during the joint session (Paragraph 26) and stressed the importance of working with all relevant stakeholders in these efforts (Paragraph 27).

Global and regional policy context

6. The commission and the committee requested that the ECE and FAO, within their existing mandates to:
 - continue to support countries in the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as they relate to forests and of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017-2030 (Paragraph 29a);
 - update Members and other stakeholders on forest-related global and regional policy developments, contributing to the achievement of SDGs and the implementation and review process of the UNSPF 2017-2030 (Paragraph 29b); and
 - continue forest monitoring and outlook work in the region (Paragraph 29c).

EFC/COFFI Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work (WIPoW) 2018-2021

7. The commission and the committee reviewed the implementation of the WIPoW of EFC/COFFI for 2018-2021 and:

- established a new Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests for the period 2020-2021 and agreed on its terms of references (Paragraph 36a);
- approved the merging of the Team of Specialists on Forest Policy into the Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook and agreed on the new terms of reference of the Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook (Paragraph 36d);
- agreed that the Team of Specialists on Green Jobs, as part of its work, will also work on the visualization of case studies relevant to the Guidelines on the Promotion of Green Jobs in Forestry (Paragraph 36f); and
- expressed appreciation to FAO for agreeing to provide the Secretary for the Forest Communicators' Network (Paragraph 36g).

B - EFC Matters

Follow-up to the decisions of the 39th Session of the European Forestry Commission

8. The commission appreciated the progress made and stressed the importance of FAO's work on (i) invasive species and how to mitigate the impacts of bark beetles in the region; (ii) climate change adaptation and resilience; (iii) forest monitoring and reporting, including the Global Core Set (GCS) of Forest-related Indicators and on terminology and definitions of degradation; and (iv) public-private partnerships, in particular in restoration (Paragraphs 73a, 73b, 73c and 73d). The commission recommended that FAO provide more frequent updates on changes in forest area and land use as part of the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) programme (Paragraph 74).

Presentation of forestry activities of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

9. The commission encouraged countries in the region to (i) more effectively incorporate integrated landscape approaches amongst various land management agencies responsible for agriculture, forestry and fisheries into relevant national planning processes and enhance intersectoral collaboration at the landscape level; and (ii) provide financial and/or in-kind contributions to support the FAO regional forestry programmes, and FAO project work, in particular with a view to providing complementary funding for Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) projects (Paragraphs 78a and 78b).

10. The commission recommended that FAO (i) continue to incorporate integrated landscape approaches in operational forestry work in the region, taking full account of the multifunctional role of forests; (ii) support natural resource management (including forests) through the strengthening of national policies, financing, the provision of incentives, the establishment of taxation and governance frameworks and measures – including regulations, standards and monitoring for forest management interventions and practices – and the support of capacity development in this regard; (iii) support the Forest Invasive Species Network for Europe and Central Asia (REUFIS) and its activities, in particular in organizing topical trainings on emerging invasive species and seeking synergies with other relevant organizations such as Forest Europe; and (iv) strengthen regional cooperation on forest fires (Paragraphs 79a, 79b, 79c and 79d).

Progress of Silva Mediterranea

11. The commission welcomed the activities presented; urged FAO to explore ways and means to develop and implement the project 'MedForYouth-Empowering Young Entrepreneurs around the Mediterranean'; and invited all interested parties to contribute to the preparation of and encouraged

high-level participation in the seventh Mediterranean Forest Week to be held in 2021 in Tunisia (Paragraphs 81a and 81b).

Progress report of EFC Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds

12. The commission took note of activities of the Working Party and supported the recommendations contained in the document (Paragraph 83).

Panel discussion: Emerging invasive species risk to European forests

13. The commission encouraged countries in the region to strengthen their participation in the REUFIS and contribute to the activities of this network to strengthen regional collaboration in relation to forest health and control of forest invasive species in the region (Paragraph 85).

14. The commission requested FAO to (i) continue supporting the REUFIS and the implementation of its activities; and (ii) support cross-sectoral forest protection measures that contribute to biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation and mitigation (Paragraphs 86a and 86b).

FAO's work on biodiversity

15. The commission invited Members to (i) continue to mainstream biodiversity across agricultural sectors; (ii) provide feedback on the FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors; and (iii) strengthen the implementation of international agreements relevant to biodiversity and forests, as well as the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (Paragraphs 88a, 88b and 88c). The commission encouraged countries to prepare their country reports for the Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources, and to submit them to FAO by 30 June 2020 (Paragraph 89).

16. The commission requested FAO to (i) initiate, upon the adoption of the FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors, appropriate follow-up actions – including a plan to mainstream biodiversity in the forest sector – and report to the regional forestry commissions (RFCs) on progress made at the next appropriate session; and (ii) continue to report on the forest-relevant work of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources, and the preparation of the Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources (Paragraphs 90a and 90b).

The role of sustainable wood value chains in achieving the SDGs

17. The commission invited countries in the region to (i) support the objectives of the Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World (SW4SW) initiative and their dissemination and implementation; (ii) strengthen the initiative by connecting it to other relevant processes and initiatives, at global, regional and national levels; and (iii) provide financial and/or in-kind contributions to scale up the SW4SW (Paragraphs 92a, 92b and 92c).

18. The commission requested FAO to (i) support country efforts in the region to assess and harness the main contributions of sustainable wood value chains to the SDGs and climate change, as well as to engender and strengthen wood-based bioeconomy at the national level; (ii) seek further cooperation with regional partners to strengthen sustainable wood value chains and their contributions to sustainable forest management, sustainable landscapes and climate change objectives, including the United Nations Decade of Family Farming and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration; and (iii) engage with the public and private sectors to improve the public perception of sustainable wood products,

emphasizing the benefits of sustainable wood value chains and pointing out the differences between sustainable and unsustainable wood products (Paragraphs 93a, 93b and 93c).

Global processes

19. The commission (i) invited countries to promote nature-based solutions to climate change and encouraged the implementation of the solutions presented at the United Nations Climate Action Summit (Paragraph 95d); (ii) recommended that the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) consider the opportunities provided by the United Nations Decade of Family Farming and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration for increasing forest and landscape restoration activities (Paragraph 95g); and (iii) invited the Members of the International Commission on Poplars and Other Fast-Growing Trees Sustaining People and the Environment (IPC) to engage in the IPC's continued reform and invite countries that are not members of the IPC to consider joining the IPC under its new scope (Paragraph 95i).

20. The commission requested FAO to (i) continue contributing to the Global Climate Action Agenda and promote forest related initiatives, projects and programmes, as well as support countries in the development of their forest and other land use related proposals for the GCF; (ii) explore ways and means to help further enhance the forest sector's contribution to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and to highlight the importance of the local context; (iii) further promote urban forestry activities; (iv) take an active part in the United Nations Decade of Family Farming and increase its support to forest and farm producer organizations through the Forest and Farm Facility; (v) inform COFO on plans for the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration; and (vi) support the implementation of the priorities listed in the European Union communication 'Stepping up European Union Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests' (Paragraphs 96 a-f).

Implementation of the UNSPF and collaboration with the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), beyond WIPoW 2018-2021

21. The commission requested FAO to (i) continue supporting the implementation of the UNSPF; (ii) work with the UNFF secretariat to explore opportunities for organizing regional events during technical sessions of the forum aiming at enhancing global-regional interaction and highlighting the contribution of RFCs and other UNFF regional and subregional partners to the implementation of the UNSPF and the achievement of the Global Forest Goals; and (iii) continue its leadership role in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) (Paragraphs 100a, 100b and 100c).

Preparations for the 32nd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC), COFO 25 and the XV World Forestry Congress (FAO governance)

22. The commission (i) developed its recommendations for ERC, COFO and the programme priorities and requested the secretariat to translate these into the template as contained in Annex VII and share them with other commissions, as well as the secretariats of the ERC and COFO; and (ii) invited the Chairperson of ERC to give adequate attention to the recommendations of the commission in the agenda of the Regional Conference (Paragraphs 102a and 102b).

23. The commission (i) invited countries to support the XV World Forestry Congress and to encourage the widest possible attendance and participation from all sectors within the region; (ii) based on priority issues in the region, proposed themes and topics that could form the basis of technical sessions at the congress; and (ii) encouraged members, if appropriate, to support the congress financially, especially participation from developing countries (Paragraphs 103a, 103b and 103c).

Election of officers, date and place of next meeting

24. The election of EFC Executive Committee members was not possible due to lack of quorum. The commission requested that the secretariat arrange an extraordinary session of the EFC at the earliest possible time to elect EFC Executive Committee members (Paragraph 109). The next session of the commission is scheduled as a joint session with the UNECE COFFI. No venue has been identified at this stage.

Annex 1

European Forestry Commission recommendations

A) Recommendations of the European Forestry Commission for the attention of the FAO Committee on Forestry (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>	<i>Commission</i>	<i>Reference to other RFC recommendation</i>
FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors, appropriate follow-up actions – including a plan to mainstream biodiversity in the forest sector and contributions to the post-2020 biodiversity framework	Discussion/decision	Development of policy recommendations and programme elements for the Programme of Work and Budget (PWB)	EFC	Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC), North American Forest Commission (NAFC)
FRA: findings and ways forward, including the development of forest information systems and the application of new technologies, as well as further work on GCS	Discussion/decision	Development of policy recommendations and programme elements for the PWB	EFC	NAFC
Discuss collaboration with UNFF, including organizing possible regional events highlighting the contribution of RFCs and other UNFF regional and subregional partners during technical sessions	Discussion/decision	Development of policy recommendations	EFC	
Climate change: Follow-up to the United Nations Climate Action Summit and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25)	Discussion/decision	Development of policy recommendations and programme elements for the PWB	EFC	APFC, Latin American and the Caribbean Forestry Commission (LACFC)
Strengthen regional collaboration on forest fires	Discussion/decision	Development of policy recommendations and programme elements for the PWB	EFC	LACFC, NAFC
Collaboration on integrated landscape approaches with agriculture, forestry and fisheries at all levels	Discussion/decision	Development of policy recommendations	EFC	
Forest health and adaptation challenges and opportunities in the changing climate	Discussion/decision	Development of policy recommendations and programme elements for the PWB	EFC	APFC, LACFC
United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and United Nations Decade of Family Farming	Discussion/decision	Development of policy recommendations and programme elements for the PWB	EFC	

B) Recommendations of the European Forestry Commission for the attention of the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC)

<i>Priority issues for ERC to consider</i>	<i>Expected outcome (information/discussion/decision)</i>	<i>Possible follow-up activities for FAO</i>
Consider the report of the 40 th Session of the EFC	Discussion/decision by ERC	
Collaboration on integrated landscape approaches with agriculture, forestry, fisheries, water and energy, based on a nexus approach, at all levels	Discussion/decision	
Discuss approaches to invasive species in food and agriculture and forestry	Information/discussion	
United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration: emerging opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration (including with the European Commission on Agriculture [ECA])	Information/decision	