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**Food and Agriculture Organization  
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**Economic Commission for Europe  
Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry**

**Food and Agriculture Organization  
European Forestry Commission**

**Eighty-first session**  
San Marino, 20-23 November 2023

**Forty-second session**  
San Marino, 20-23 November 2023

**Report of the eighty-first session of the Economic  
Commission for Europe Committee on Forests and the Forest  
Industry and the forty-first session of the Food and  
Agriculture Organization European Forestry Commission**

## **I. Introduction**

1. The Joint session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and the European Forestry Commission (EFC) was held in San Marino, Republic of San Marino, from 20 to 23 November 2023.
2. The web page of this meeting<sup>1</sup> includes additional information, parliamentary documents as well as presentations (whose content and conclusions are not part of this report).

## **II. Attendance**

3. Delegations from the following member States participated in the session: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.
4. Representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) attended.
5. A representative of the European Union (EU) participated as an observer.<sup>2</sup>
6. Representatives of the European Forest Institute (EFI) and Forest Europe participated as observers.
7. The following non-governmental organizations attended as observers: Albaforest Centre, Business for Nature, Canadian Wood Council, Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI), Dovetail Partners, Earthwatch Europe, European Panel Federation,

<sup>1</sup> <https://unece.org/info/Forests/events/374850>.

<sup>2</sup> The European Union is a member of the EFC.

Expertise France, International Forestry Students' Association, Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development, Probos Foundation, Québec Arbres, Quebec Wood Export Bureau, Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Union of European Foresters (UEF), Union of Timber Manufacturers and Exporters of the Russian Federation.

8. Representatives of other organizations, the private sector, local entities and academia attended as observers: City of Istanbul, City of Montreal, Gothenburg University, Kaufmann Art, London National Park City, Nature Based Solutions Institute, Roma Capitale, Russ Taylor Global, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Timber Exchange, University of British Columbia, University of Hamburg, University of Michigan, University of Washington, UPM, Valois Vision Marketing.

### III. Opening

9. The Joint session was co-chaired by Mr. Peter Blombäck (Sweden) and Ms. Liubov Poliakova (Ukraine), who welcomed delegates and thanked the Republic of San Marino for generously hosting this meeting.

10. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, San Marino, Mr. Luca Beccari welcomed delegates and stressed the importance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for his country's efforts to contribute to environmental protection and the achievement of the global goals. He also pointed to the challenges faced by microstates, particularly in land and territorial management and the balancing of economic, urban, agricultural and environmental interests. He drew attention to the need to reflect on the improved involvement of microstates with their limited economic, human and territorial resources in global efforts, taking into account their interests and needs.

11. The Minister for the Territory, Environment, Agriculture and Civil Protection, San Marino, Mr. Stefano Canti, stressed the importance of the 2030 agenda for San Marino and the 2021 Voluntary National Review (VNR) as well as the San Marino Country Profile prepared by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), noting the valuable sharing of experiences. He also informed delegates that the 2022 session of the ECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (CUDHLM) had resulted in the signing of the San Marino Declaration (integrated into San Marino's national sustainable development strategy in 2023) and expressed his hope for an equally fruitful meeting this year.

12. The Executive Secretary of the ECE, Ms. Tatiana Molcean, welcomed delegates. She highlighted the contribution of forests to national and global goals for sustainable development, biodiversity and accelerated climate action. She stressed the importance of ECE's technical work for building resilience and designing approaches to the multifaceted problems facing forests and their often very disturbed ecosystems. She noted the unique work of ECE on boreal forests which were essential to regulating the global climate. She highlighted ECE's urban tree work and the needed national and regional policies to support local efforts. Forests and forest products, she stressed, played a key role in carbon sequestration and in our economies, but they also provide livelihood and innovative wood products that can revolutionize sectors ranging from construction to textiles. She also highlighted that the forest sector was under pressure and this year's main theme of biodiversity was very relevant in this respect. In 2022 the most ambitious global agreement on biodiversity in the history of environmental governance was adopted, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). While forests are on the global agenda, this required the channelling of efforts towards actions based on solid evidence and data for actions at all levels and upscaling to prevent further loss of species. This was one of the tasks of ECE, she stressed, adding that this message would be emphasized at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, where ECE will host events on carbon sponge cities, fashion and urban forest action. She expressed her sincere gratitude to the Republic of San Marino for hosting this Joint session as well as for planting its second "petite forest" with ECE.

13. Ms Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) opened the Joint session on behalf of FAO. She

highlighted the long-standing partnership between FAO and ECE, over seven decades, and underlined how cooperation across the United Nations system makes its work more meaningful and impactful in support to Members. One example of the good collaboration is the Global Forest Resources Assessment, which has served as the blueprint for global forest data since 1946. For the 2025 edition, FAO, ECE and Forest Europe are working closely to collect data on forest resources as well as on the environmental, social and economic dimensions of forestry in this region. She further highlighted the contribution of forests to a circular bioeconomy and to sustainable agrifood systems. To drive forward an agrifood system transformation, FAO advocates for integrated land restoration and water management solutions and for prioritizing agroforestry systems that are adaptive and resilient. She emphasized that agroforestry alone could increase food security for 1.3 billion people. Looking ahead, she pointed out the need to ensure that synergies at the international level are reinforced through collective political will and ambitious climate action in view of the upcoming COP28. She called for concrete outcomes to transition to a circular bioeconomy based on sustainable materials; to prevent forest loss through fire, pest and diseases and land use conversion; as well as for greening cities and enhancing urban forestry. She recalled that FAO and its partners were committed to achieving the sustainable management of forests and to strongly working towards a sustainable food and livelihood secure future where our natural resources are restored, conserved and sustainably used.

#### **IV. Adoption of the agenda**

14. Delegates adopted the agenda.

#### **V. Biodiversity - implications of the Global Biodiversity Framework for forests in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe**

15. Ms. Paola Deda, Director of the ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division, opened the session stressing that biodiversity was an integral part of sustainable forest management and forest landscape restoration and that the session will serve as a much-needed platform to learn, exchange and act.

16. Mr. Zhimin Wu, Director of FAO also welcomed delegates and stressed the commitment of FAO to supporting member States in mainstreaming biodiversity into forest policy through a number of strategic initiatives.

17. The session moderator, Mr. Keith Anderson (Switzerland) welcomed panellists, noting that the implementation of the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) will invariably shape the future of forests in the ECE region.

18. A representative of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in her video keynote address, noted that the ECE region faced complex biodiversity challenges given the many different types of forests of the region. She outlined tools and actions contained in the GBF that could help address them, for example effective legislation, technology transfer, capacity-building and market-based mechanisms.

19. A representative of the FAO presented results of a FAO study on mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry. He noted that effective interventions were needed to better mainstream biodiversity within the forest sector, including harmonizing environmental policies and regulations and identifying synergies with other areas of government policy (e.g. climate change and food security).

20. A representative of the European Forest Institute (EFI) highlighted the trends on forest biodiversity in Europe, including management and policy options available to address biodiversity loss in forests. She stressed that these tools needed to be assessed and applied in the local context.

21. A representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Czech Republic, presented data on biodiversity indicators and protected areas in Czech forests. He also highlighted strategies

the government is taking to integrate biodiversity conservation in sustainable forest management, in line with regulatory requirements of the EU.

22. A representative of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment outlined the implications of the GBF for forestry in Switzerland, including important questions about protective status of forests and conflicting demands posed by different forest users.

23. A representative of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, in a video message, outlined the implication of the GBF for cities, highlighting the local framework for enhancing ecosystem services in the city of Istanbul.

24. A representative of Business for Nature highlighted the business action in co-leading the transformation towards an equitable, nature-positive and carbon-neutral world, and the insights and proposed actions related to the GBF.

25. A representative of Forest Europe presented the European Forestry Alliance and its work in reviewing biodiversity indicators for sustainable forest management, stressing the need for high quality data to support the monitoring processes.

26. A representative of the city of Montreal made a presentation about how Montreal turned a pest infestation into an opportunity to improve the overall resilience of its urban forest.

27. A representative of Expertise France highlighted successful biodiversity initiatives implemented in other parts of the world and explained how these experiences can offer valuable lessons for the ECE region.

28. A representative of the University of Hamburg outlined the implications of various aspects of biodiversity for the forests of the ECE region, including how to balance competing demands and thereby improve policy responses to biodiversity loss.

29. The delegate from Türkiye informed delegates about the threats facing forest biodiversity in Türkiye, and actions, incentives and strategies to address those challenges.

30. The delegate from Spain noted that biodiversity is a key element to make forests more resilient, especially in the face of climate change and increased forest risks. Through sustainable forest management strategies, Spain aims to make forests more biodiverse, resilient and ensure the continuous supply of vital ecosystem services.

31. The delegate from Germany stressed the need to synergize the implementation of the GBF and the Global Forest Goals, urging FAO to promote such an approach. He also highlighted the important work done under the EFI Integrate Network, which aims to enhance biodiversity in sustainably managed forests across the Europe.

32. The delegate of Poland stressed the importance of creating enabling conditions to strengthen the environmental functions of forests, including biodiversity, while balancing social and economic functions. He highlighted that sustainable forest management can enhance biodiversity in forests, providing some positive examples of indicators in Poland.

33. A representative of the Albaforest Centre stressed the importance of an integrated approach to the management of forest resources and the mainstreaming of the protection of biodiversity in sustainable forest management, with emphasis on the regular monitoring of law enforcement and curbing illegal logging.

34. The Committee and the Commission thanked the participating experts for their insights and:

(a) Welcomed the discussions on “Biodiversity - implications of the Global Biodiversity Framework for forests in the ECE region”; and

(b) Highlighted that biodiversity is an integral part of sustainable forest management and forest landscape restoration and thus a key component of the Integrated Programme of Work.

## **VI. International and regional forest-related developments**

### **A. The global and regional policy context**

35. The Chair of the FAO Committee on Forests (COFO), in a video presentation, highlighted the importance of forests and forestry in addressing land degradation, forest damage and wildfire prevention, as well as the need to restore degraded lands, conserve forests, enhance and sustainably manage forest biodiversity. He invited Member States, and those who are not COFO members, to join the next COFO session, which will take place in Rome, Italy, on 22-26 July 2024.

36. A representative of the FAO presented the contribution of FAO to the global forest policy processes. He also informed delegates about the work of FAO governing bodies. He notified the participants that these topics will be discussed by the FAO European Forestry Commission later in the week.

37. The Head of the Liaison Unit Bonn, Forest Europe, presented the work of Forest Europe in support of sustainable forest management in Europe, including the work in support of Ukraine. He highlighted the objectives of the next Ministerial Conference in Bonn, Germany, in October 2024 and stressed the need for collaboration.

38. A representative of the European Forest Institute (EFI), in a video message, presented the work focused on providing scientific data and information on forest management, including on forests in cities, forest biodiversity and the forest contribution to bioeconomy. He highlighted the close collaboration with Forest Europe as a scientific partner.

39. A representative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) informed participants about the relaunching of the Agadir Commitments for the restoration of forests, and stressed the importance of paying attention to emerging phenomena such as greenwashing. She also highlighted the need for reinforcing policy regulations to prevent illegal dumping of waste in forests and the need to intensify cooperation and data collection.

40. Germany thanked the Committee and the Commission for their good cooperation with Forest Europe.

41. The Committee and the Commission took note of the policy developments at the global and regional levels with bearing on the work of the Committee and the Commission, including on the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030, and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

42. The Committee and the Commission requested ECE and FAO (within their existing mandates) to:

(a) Continue supporting members States in the implementation of SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as they relate to forests, and the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030;

(b) Update member States and other stakeholders on the forest-related global and regional policy developments, to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 implementation and review process.

### **B. Fostering exchanges and cooperation among regional and international organizations on forest-related work relevant to the Integrated Programme of Work**

43. A representative of Forest Europe, who had been chairing the European Forest Alliance since its establishment in November 2022, provided an overview of the Alliance's activities in 2023. He highlighted the two online meetings and the coordination of work. He also provided a brief overview of the joint background paper presented at the biodiversity session of FORESTA23. He stressed the usefulness of the European Forest Alliance as an informal information exchange forum among the participating secretariats and the focus on specific joint topics within the mandates of each secretariat, mentioning possible future topics

such as exchanges on communication strategies, forest monitoring or the inclusion of new members. He also announced that the next organization chairing the Alliance in 2024 would be ECE.

44. The Committee and the Commission:

(a) Thanked the representative from Forest Europe and current Chair of the European Forest Alliance, and recognized the potential for further expansion, which the proposed initiative can leverage;

(b) Welcomed the progress on fostering exchanges and cooperation among regional and international organizations, in particular the informal regular meetings of the five secretariats (ECE, European Environment Agency (EEA), European Forest Institute Integrate Network (EFI Integrate Network), FAO and Forest Europe).

## **VII. Joint Committee/Commission matters**

### **A. Global stocktaking of international forest work**

45. Upon request by the Joint Bureau, the secretariat presented a global stocktaking of initiatives in international forest work.

46. A representative from Poland highlighted the growing expectations towards forests and the need for their better coordination to avoid conflicting goals in forest management.

47. A representative of Spain expressed her appreciation for the work of the Committee and the Commission on compiling international and regional forest processes. She encouraged further monitoring of current and emerging initiatives with the aims of enhancing collaboration among regional organizations and avoiding duplication.

48. The Committee and the Commission thanked the secretariat for the presentation and requested the ECE and FAO, within their existing mandates, and upon availability of resources, to:

(a) Monitor current and emerging forest-related work and processes;

(b) Review the impact of the new processes on the work of the Committee and Commission.

### **B. Progress in preparation for the 2025 cycle of the Global Forest Resources Assessment and Joint pan-European data collection on forests and sustainable forest management**

49. A representative of the ECE secretariat informed delegates about the progress made in the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2025 and in the 2025 Joint ECE/FAO/Forest Europe Pan-European Data Collection (JPEDC) on forests and sustainable forest management. The secretariat outlined the new digital interface for national data submission for the JPEDC, informed delegates about recent workshops and about the next steps in the reporting process. The work was implemented with the support of the European Union and the Governments of Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. While progress was made, additional funding is needed to finish the data collection. He stressed that the successful implementation of the JPEDC depended on the availability of efficient long-term funding and procedural arrangement.

50. Delegates from Austria and Sweden voiced their appreciation of the progress made and the results achieved, indicating the importance of digitalization in international reporting, particularly for reducing the reporting burden at the national level and improving the consistency of reported data. Delegates underlined the importance of the process, and necessity of its continuity. They noted that the deadline set for national data reporting (end of 2023) might be difficult to meet for some countries.

51. The Chair concluded by stressing the significance of the process and added that the availability of funding was crucial to its successful completion.

52. The Committee and the Commission:

(a) Took note on the progress made in the 2025 cycle of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment and the Joint ECE/FAO/Forest Europe data collection on forests and sustainable forest management;

(b) Expressed appreciation for the collaborative work done by countries and secretariats in the preparation, organization and conducting of the national data collection for both processes;

(c) Stressed the importance of the availability of resources for the continuation of the pan-European data collection;

(d) Encouraged member States to continue collaborating with ECE, FAO and partner institutions to achieve synergies in data collection, analysis and management, to reduce duplication of efforts and to support the implementation of the ECE/FAO/Forest Europe data collection on forests and sustainable forest management.

### **C. Forest economics and markets**

53. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Director of the Sustainable Forests Initiative (SFI) moderated the session on forest economics and markets. The Market Discussions focused on trends and drivers of forest products markets in the ECE region in 2022 and 2023. Experts provided an outlook into possible market trends in 2024. The secretariat thanked member States for 18 Country Market Statements and 28 Timber Forecast Questionnaires in preparation of this session

54. The president of Dovetail Partners informed delegates about North American forest policies focusing on legality and sustainability requirements for wood products. She highlighted the latest developments on the Lacey Act on legal and sustainable forest products, the extent and impact of wildfires in Canada in 2023, biomass energy developments and carbon markets. She also highlighted the trends in forest certification in the ECE region, which recorded the lowest certified area in over a decade in 2022.

55. An independent specialist from Belgium informed delegates about forest policies in Europe, including the regulation on deforestation free supply chains (European Union Deforestation Regulation - EUDR). Member States and representatives from the forest-based industries stressed that there was broad consensus on the objectives of the regulation. The delegation from Canada stressed their goal of preventing deforestation globally while ensuring that a robust trading relationship was maintained in forest and agricultural products. Canada also voiced concerns over certain aspects of the EUDR on deforestation-free products, specifically the requirements for geolocation. Discussions focused on the possible application of the EUDR and the need for more detailed information and guidance from the European Commission on its practical application, in particular on the geolocation for larger forest plots and possible flexibilities for adapting it to the national or subnational forest conditions and management. Several private sector representatives voiced concern about possible cost increases related to EUDR and implications for the trade in wood products. The Russian Federation reaffirmed its commitment to sustainable forest management, combating deforestation and preserving biodiversity. At the same time, delegates expressed concerns about the legal uncertainty of the phenomenon of "degradation", etc. They drew attention to the fact that the efficiency of international trade depends on knowledge and respect for the laws of countries-producers and importers. The Russian Federation further stated that costly and resource-intensive schemes for verification of origin by "independent parties should be voluntary owing to their likely negative impact on small- and medium-sized enterprises, forest-dependent communities and the final price paid by consumers.

56. The Vice-President of the Union of Timber producers and exporters of the Russian Federation provided an overview of the main policies and market trends in the Russian Federation in 2022 and 2023 and an outlook into 2024. The presentation highlighted the

change of forest products' exports in the past two years as well as the fluctuating logistics costs for sawnwood, panels for some main export markets (China, Middle East and North Africa and India). The speaker highlighted how wooden housing construction is being developed to create additional domestic demand for forest-based products, such as sawnwood, wood-based panels and cross-laminated timber (CLT). Necessary policies for developing bioenergy were adopted to create the domestic demand for wood fuel (wood pellets, wood residues). The main drivers for the forest industry in the Russian Federation in 2022 and the first nine months of 2023 were the production of furniture for the domestic market, and the considerable growth in construction.

57. The CEO of Russ Taylor Global in a video presentation outlined the main trends on sawnwood markets in the ECE region and highlighted the latest findings in the recently published ECE Data Brief on sawn softwood. After describing the global trends, he analysed trends in Europe and the Russian Federation and provided an outlook into 2024 based on the discussions and finding from the sixteenth session of the international softwood conference (ISC). The market trends presented by the expert were more pessimistic for production in Europe, with probable reductions in the near future. He noted more positive trends in the United States and a lower production for Canada with a stable consumption. Production and consumption of sawn softwood in the Russian Federation showed a strong rebound in 2023 and is expected to remain stable in 2024.

58. The CEO of Timber Exchange provided an overview on the latest trends in global trade of sawlogs and sawn softwood. The speaker highlighted that the market of roundwood and sawn softwood trade experienced a volatile period, with extreme fluctuations in traded volumes and prices from 2020 until 2023. The speaker anticipated reduced availability of raw materials for sawmills in Europe and Canada that may lead to shifts in global trade of sawlogs and sawn softwood.

59. A professor from the School for the Environment and Sustainability at the University of Michigan and Economic Advisor of the European Panel Federation presented the trends and drivers behind the wood-based panel markets in the ECE region. He highlighted the high dependency of consumption and production of wood-based panels on developments in the housing, construction and furniture sectors. He noted that production and consumption of wood-based panels had contracted significantly in 2023 because of the economic downturn in 2023; only structural wood based panels were expected to recover to some extent in North America in 2024.

60. The CEO of Valois Vision presented the trends in pulp, paper and paperboard markets in the ECE region. He highlighted the global decrease in graphic paper demand that accelerated during the pandemic. The large-scale closures of paper capacities was followed by massive closures of pulp capacities in 2023; this was likely to continue in 2024. He stressed that pulp producers in the ECE region would see increased competition from producers in Latin America in the medium term because of investment into market pulp expansion. Also, China invested significantly in new wood pulp, paper, paperboard and tissue capacity.

61. A professor of forest economics from the Swedish Agricultural University and a professor of the department of technology, management and design of furniture and wood products from Belgrade University provided an update on trends and developments in wood energy policies and market trends for 2022 and 2023. The speaker highlighted that wood pellets dominated the global trade in energy-related forest products which in 2022 had been exposed to disruptions and high prices. Market growth continued in 2022, albeit at slower rates in wood pellet production and trade across the ECE region. The production and consumption of wood fuel and wood pellets in the Western Balkans followed the global trend. Prices for wood fuel in the Western Balkan region were expected to further decline in the first quarter of 2024 because of high inventories. The production of wood pellets was expected to normalize in the second half of 2024.

62. The Committee and the Commission:

(a) Took note of the trends of forest products in the region, and the contributions of the sector towards sustainable development;



(b) Thanked delegates for their statements on the latest trends in production and trade of forest products and their proposed amendments to the draft Market Statement (ECE/TIM/2023/4- FO:EFC/2023/4);

(c) Approved the amended Market Statement (published as a post session document);

(d) Took note of the extensive data and information collected and the publications by the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, in particular the Forest Products Annual Market Review 2022-2023 and the three newly developed Data Briefs on sawn softwood, pulp and paper, and wood energy;

(e) Invited member States to continue reporting in 2024.

#### **D. Reporting on the implementation of the 2021-2025 Integrated Programme of Work and related decisions**

##### **(i) Report of the Joint Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management**

63. The Chair of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management (Joint Working Party) presented the report of the forty-fourth session, which was held in Geneva, Switzerland, 30 May–2 June 2023. He noted that the next session was scheduled for 22-24 May 2024.

64. Members of the Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics presented a summary of the findings and proposed activities of its Ad Hoc Task Group on Removals and its Ad Hoc Task Group on Wood Energy Statistics (ECE/TIM/2023/Inf.6-FAO:EFC/2023/Inf.6 and ECE/TIM/2023/Inf.7-FAO:EFC/2023/Inf.7).

65. The secretariat also presented a request for the extension of mandates of the Teams of Specialists until 2025 as contained in document ECE/TIM/2023/5-FAO:EFC/2023/5.

66. The Committee and the Commission:

(a) Endorsed the report of the Joint Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management contained in document ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2023/2 and approved the request to extend the mandates of all Teams of Specialists as contained in document ECE/TIM/2023/5-FAO:EFC/2023/5 until 2025 which will be submitted for adoption to the Executive Committee of ECE;

(b) Invited the Working Party to continue its activities under the Integrated Programme of Work;

(c) Supported the activities proposed by the Team of Specialists on Forest Products and Wood Energy Statistics as presented during the session.

##### **(ii) Review of 2023 activities, and planned activities and publications for 2024**

67. The secretariat drew attention of delegates to the report on the activities implemented in 2023 under the Integrated Programme of Work and the provisional list of outputs and publications planned for 2024.

68. The Committee and the Commission:

(a) Endorsed the report on the activities implemented in 2023 under the Integrated Programme of Work and the provisional list of outputs and publications for 2024 (ECE/TIM/2023/6; FO:EFC/2023/6), and requested the secretariat to report again in 2024;

(b) Congratulated the secretariat for the results achieved.

##### **(iii) Initiation of a mid-term review of the Integrated Programme of Work – Roadmap for the review process**

69. The secretariat provided the background on the upcoming review of the Integrated Programme of Work contained in document ECE/TIM/2023/7– FAO:EFC/2023/7. The

review of the 2024-2025 will propose the priorities for the Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) until 2029. The secretariat presented the following three options for the review process of the Integrated Programme of Work:

- (a) Secretariat-organized hybrid workshop(s);
- (b) External evaluation and draft IPoW prepared by secretariat;
- (c) Review by the secretariat.

70. The Committee and the Commission:

(a) Based on the recommendation by the Joint Working Party, decided to undertake a review of the 2022-2025 Integrated Programme of Work through one (or two if necessary) hybrid workshop(s). In preparation for the workshop(s), inputs will be sought from all relevant stakeholders. Pending availability of funding, an external evaluator will be involved in the preparation of the relevant documentation for the workshop(s);

(b) After the workshop(s), the secretariat, in cooperation with the Joint Bureau, will prepare a proposal for the Integrated Programme of Work for 2026-2029 to be considered by the Joint Working Party at its 2025 session and subsequently submitted to the Joint session of the Committee and the Commission in 2025 for adoption.

**(iv) The contribution of forests and forest products to a circular bioeconomy**

71. The secretariat informed the Committee and the Commission about the ongoing work on forests and the circular economy and outlined possible activities for the next two years.

72. A representative from Dovetail Partners presented the key findings of the study on Sustainable and Circular Bioeconomy in Forest-based Industries.

73. A representative from the Confederation of the European Paper Industries presented the key findings of the study on Circularity Concepts in the Pulp and Paper Industry.

74. A representative of Poland highlighted the role of wood in a circular bioeconomy and active forest management for maintaining the sustainability of forests and various ecosystem services. She also stressed the important role of forests and the forest sector in achieving the SDGs and the transition to a circular bioeconomy.

75. A representative from Türkiye thanked the secretariat for the organization of the national policy dialogue on “The future of the forestry and wood-based industries sector in Türkiye in the transition to a sustainable bioeconomy” and informed the Committee and the Commission about the follow-up of Türkiye to recommendations of the policy dialogue discussions.

76. The Committee and the Commission:

- (a) Thanked the secretariat and the contributing authors;
- (b) Took note of the ongoing work on forests and the circular economy and the outcomes of the discussions held during the June 2023 Joint Working Party session;
- (c) Requested the Joint Section to:
  - (i) Finalize the two studies (contained in ECE/TIM/2023/INF.4-FAO:EFC/2023/INF.4 and ECE/TIM/2023/INF.5-FAO:EFC/2023/INF.5) for printing as an official United Nations publications by the end of 2023;
  - (ii) Continue the work on circular bioeconomy through targeted knowledge-sharing and capacity-building (including events and activities) upon availability of funds.

**(v) Forest damage in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe**

77. The secretariat outlined the main steps and results of the project “Improve capacities of the ECE member States on assessing forest damage/disturbance in the UNECE region”. The secretariat thanked Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany and the United States, as well as

international and national experts for their support, which was essential for the implementation of the project.

78. An expert from the University of Hamburg, and the coordinating lead author of the study “Reporting on forest damages and disturbances in the UNECE region”, presented the preliminary findings of the project, highlighting the main conclusions and possible solutions to improve international damage/disturbance reporting in the ECE region.

79. The delegate of Greece gave the Committee and the Commission an overview of forest fires in Greece. He outlined the scale of the recent damage and related policies and activities by the Government to reduce risks and damage caused by forest fires.

80. Delegates underlined the high relevance of forest damage and expressed their appreciation for the work by the Joint Section and international experts. Countries shared information on their national work in enhancing forest resilience, improving damage detection and management, as well as related monitoring systems. Recent, extraordinary damage of forests in the European region was also brought to the attention of the meeting. Participants supported the continuation of the work of the Joint Section on forest damage assessment to enhance international reporting in this area, while ensuring the cooperation between relevant international organizations and processes.

81. The Committee and the Commission:

(a) Took note of the work on forest damage in the ECE region, including the findings from the project “Improve capacities of the UNECE member States on assessing forest damage/disturbance in the UNECE region”;

(b) Requested the secretariat and the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management, within its mandate and in close cooperation with relevant organizations and processes, to develop a proposal for the refinement of forest damage data collection in the ECE region as a possible contribution to international reporting and present it to the next Joint Session, giving due considerations to the cost-effectiveness of data gathering and to continue to support member States in their work on reporting and assessing forest damage.

**(vi) Forest landscape restoration - updates**

82. The secretariat informed delegates about a study and related workshop on the production of forest reproductive material for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Republic of Moldova. In addition, the secretariat highlighted technical support for urban and rural greening afforestation measures in Uzbekistan, and provided information on the developed Forest Knowledge Platform.

83. The Committee and the Commission supported the direction and future activities in this area, particularly in the context of the 2021–2030 United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and requested the secretariat to continue to support member States in their work on forest landscape restoration.

84. The Committee and the Commission:

(a) Took note of the past and current activities on forest landscape restoration and expressed their gratitude to the countries participating in the Bonn Challenge for advancing on the implementation of their pledges;

(b) Supported the direction and future activities in this area, particularly in the context of the 2021 -2030 United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration;

(c) Requested the secretariat to continue to support member States in their work on forest landscape restoration.

## **IX. Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry matters (Economic Commission for Europe)**

85. The session was chaired by Mr. Peter Blombäck (Sweden).

## **A. Matters arising since the last session**

### **(i) United Nations, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and subsidiary bodies**

86. The Director of the ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division informed delegates that the United Nations secretariat was facing a liquidity crisis that led to a recruitment freeze and savings on the operational side. She also mentioned that the ECE had a new Executive Secretary: Ms. Tatiana Molcean of Moldova. She highlighted the successful November 2022 session of the ECE Committee on Forests (COFFI) and mentioned that one of the outcomes was the creation of the informal European Forest Alliance among 5 secretariats (which ECE will chair in 2024).

87. She reviewed the 70th session of the Economic Commission for Europe (April 2023), noting the appreciation expressed by delegations for the work done since the 2021 ECE session on the promotion of a circular economy. She highlighted decision C (70) adopted at the 2023 session on the "promotion of circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources" (<https://unece.org/info/Sessions-of-the-Commission/events/371506>)

88. The theme of the 2023 session on "Digital and green transformations in support of the sustainable development in the ECE region" led to the adoption of the following decision of relevance to the work of the Committee: (B (70)) on "Further strengthening the work of the Commission in support of digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region within its existing mandate as appropriate and subject to available resources" (<https://unece.org/info/Sessions-of-the-Commission/events/371506>).

89. In that respect, she also mentioned that INForest was highlighted already as an important contribution. She also noted the importance of the implementation of the United Nations "Data Strategy of the Secretary General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere: With Insight, Impact and Integrity" which has been guiding the ECE secretariat's work on automating data processes for the benefit of easing data collection, submission, processing and publication of member States; and the expansion of the INForest platform as the core part of the secretariat data strategy for the delivery of the mandated regular budget work. She invited member States to help with fundraising and liaise with relevant Permanent Missions to the United Nations on possible allocation of regular budget (RB) resources in future budgets for the long-term financial support for development and maintenance costs.

### **(ii) Updates on events, meetings, communication**

90. The secretary of COFFI presented updates on the events and meetings organized in 2023 as well as its communication work, highlighting the side event organized by the ECE secretariat on "The city of the future is a green city" at the March 2023 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE region; the 21 March 2023 International Day of Forests' social media campaign on "Forests as Pharmacy"; the side event at the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF); communication material; and the work on forests and climate change to be presented at 4 dedicated events during COP28. The Committee thanked the secretariat for the information provided highlighting the increased visibility of its work and asking delegations to further support bringing forests in the ECE region to the attention of international agendas.

91. The Committee:

(a) Took note of the secretariat's report on matters arising, including decisions B(70) and C(70) as contained in E/2203/37, E/ECE1503 adopted by the seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe;

(b) Asked delegations to provide information on upcoming COP-28-related events to be circulated among delegations prior to the beginning of December 2023.

## **B. Programme of work for 2024 and recommendations on key components of the programme of work 2025**

92. The secretary of COFFI presented the draft programme of work of the Forests and the Forest Industry subprogramme for 2024 and the recommendations on key components of the programme of work 2025. She explained that the allocation of the ECE budget resources to this subprogramme was based on this programmatic document and drew attention to highlighted amendments, including the need for resources allocated to develop and sustain digital customized data platforms to meet the needs of forest statistics collection, validation and publication.

93. The Committee:

(a) Endorsed the Forests and Forest Industry subprogramme's draft programme of work for 2024 (ECE/TIM/2023/10; FO:EFC/2023/10) and the outline of key components of the Forests and Forest Industry subprogramme's programme of work for 2025 (ECE/TIM/2023/Inf.2; FAO:EFC/2023/Inf.2);

(b) Requested the secretariat to prepare the programme of work for 2025, together with an outline for 2026, for review and endorsement at the 2024 session;

(c) Requested the secretariat to develop a digital customized central data platform for forest sector statistics;

(d) Requested the secretariat to seek additional regular budget resources to develop and sustain such a platform.

## **C. Urban forestry and land matters**

94. The secretariat presented the draft regional urban forestry opportunity plan, (ECE/TIM/2023/11; FAO:EFC/2023/11) amended and submitted by the Joint Working Party in June 2023. The plan was developed under a project and was first presented to the eightieth session of COFFI in November 2022. Delegates spoke in support of the adoption of the plan and highlighted the growing recognition of urban forestry for social, environmental and economic objectives. This includes the SDGs and global goals for biodiversity and climate action. Delegates further noted the need for active forest management and a clear set of goals for transparent and coordinated action. At the suggestion of Switzerland (seconded by Poland), delegations agreed to rename the plan as: the "San Marino Regional Urban Forestry Action Plan" in recognition of the host country of this session and its successful work in urban forestry.

95. The secretariat also outlined its work on food in cities and related agroforestry as well as the block-chain enhanced city food management tool, NaturEaTown (NET). Delegates were invited to participate in upcoming pilot applications and assessments.

96. The secretariat presented the "Draft policy guidelines/principles on advancing low carbon construction in cities" (ECE/TIM/2023/12; FAO:EFC/2023/12) developed under a project. Delegates agreed on the usefulness of the document and highlighted the need to take into consideration ongoing similar work in other fora, projects and networks (e.g. the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership) to avoid duplication. Delegates also emphasized the importance of including the work on circularity and encouraged the secretariat to seek input from forest industries and the private sector. Delegates requested the secretariat to develop and present a timeline for the finalization of the document.

97. The secretariat informed delegations that the work of COFFI on greening cities and urban resilience had been presented at the October 2023 session of CUDHLM. That Committee took note of the urban action work of COFFI and agreed to engage in activities of the Informal Expert Network on Urban Nature managed by the ECE Forestry and Timber Section, given the existing synergies with COFFI in the areas of greening cities and urban forests.

98. The Committee:

- (a) Adopted the San Marino Regional Urban Forestry Action Plan (published as a post-session document);
- (b) Took note of the ongoing urban and peri-urban work, related events and projects including work on the blockchain enhanced city food management tool, NaturEaTown (NET);
- (c) Invited member States to comment and provide additional guidance on the structure and content of the draft policy guidelines/principles on advancing low carbon construction in cities;
- (d) Invited the secretariat to consult with relevant processes and publish the final version of the draft policy guidelines/principles on advancing low carbon construction in cities as an official publication in all three official ECE languages;
- (e) Welcomed the possibility of building on the existing synergies with the CUDHLM in the areas of greening cities and urban forests, and widening and intensifying cooperation, including through the Informal Expert Network on Urban Nature;
- (f) Thanked the secretariat and the contributors for their work.

#### **D. Update on boreal forest work**

99. The secretariat updated the Committee on its work and the scoping study on boreal forests and thanked member States for their contributions. An international expert presented the preliminary findings of the study, highlighting the global importance of boreal forests.

100. Delegates underlined the important role of forests in the boreal biome in light of global challenges, highlighting that this was not fully recognized in global forums. It was therefore considered necessary to share more information e.g. on boreal forest management, protection, and the threats they face.

101. Delegates said the cross-sectoral nature of this area could be relevant to the work of all ECE/FAO Team of Specialists, as well as to the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Management and Statistics. They reiterated the importance of improved understanding of the delineation of boreal forests and shared information. The need to work towards the development of a common definition of boreal forests was stressed.

102. The Committee:

- (a) Took note of the information provided and expressed its gratitude for the work by the secretariat and experts;
- (b) Provided guidance for further work on boreal forests in the ECE region;
- (c) Took note of a request to consider establishing an international day of boreal forests.

#### **E. Gender, human rights and disability inclusion in forestry**

103. The secretariat highlighted relevant data on the gender composition of the forest sector and inclusive development strategies and actions that were included in this year's Country Market Statements available at <https://unece.org/forests/2023-country-market-statements>.

104. A representative of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) provided examples of how the organization promoted diversity in the Canadian forest sector workforce, including initiatives to integrate women, youth, and people facing disabilities into green jobs, strengthen forest literacy and promote environmental education. She also noted the importance of respecting the right of everyone to a healthy environment, including clean air, water and a stable climate, linking it also to the work on urban forestry.

105. A representative of the University of British Columbia presented research initiatives that focus on promoting rural development and inclusiveness of Indigenous peoples in Canada in managing forest landscapes and securing livelihoods.

106. The Committee:

- (a) Welcomed the initiatives undertaken to promote gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion in forestry;
- (b) Encouraged member States to report at the 2024 session.

## **F. Capacity-building and technical assistance**

107. Delegates were informed about capacity-building and technical assistance activities since the last meeting of the Committee, including 18 capacity-building events and workshops with close to 770 participants.

108. The secretariat highlighted the workshop on forest reproductive material in the Republic of Moldova, and a published study on criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. In addition, the secretariat also noted workshops on forest information management and wood energy data, events of the Informal Expert Network on Urban Nature, as well as a Forest Policy Dialogue.

109. A representative of Armenia updated delegates about the status of Armenian forests and forest management and the challenges faced. He informed delegates of national plans for forest restoration and afforestation, with the aim of doubling forest areas by 2050.

110. The Committee:

- (a) Took note of the information provided and thanked donors for their continued support;
- (b) Thanked the secretariat, asked for the secretariat to continue work in the area of capacity-building and technical assistance and encouraged countries to provide the secretariat with funds.

## **G. Election of officers**

111. The Committee elected the following Chair and Vice-Chairs, who will hold office until the end of the eighty-second session. Chair, Mr. Peter Blombäck (Sweden); and Vice-Chairs Ms. Laura Coates (Canada), Mr. Tomas Krejzar (Czech Republic) and Ms. Anita Dedic (San Marino). The Committee thanked the outgoing Vice-Chair, Ms. Maureen Whelan (Canada).

## **H. Date and place of next meeting**

112. The Committee:

- (a) Decided to hold the eighty-second session of the ECE Committee on Forests and Forest Industry in Geneva, Switzerland from 13-15 November 2024. Any changes will be communicated to member States in due course;
- (b) Expressed its sincere gratitude to the Republic of San Marino for hosting the session and organizing the planting of the second ECE Petite Forest.

## **XI. European Forestry Commission matters (Food and Agriculture Organization)**

113. Ms. Liubov Poliakova (Ukraine) chaired the session.

## **A. Follow-up to the decisions of the forty-first session of the European Forestry Commission**

114. The European Forestry Commission secretary reported on actions undertaken by FAO in response to the requests made by the Commission at its forty-first session. He informed delegates that specific technical topics will be presented under the related agenda items and updated the Commission on FAO engagement in the countries of the region and its link to COFO.

115. The EFC Chair updated delegates about the organization of the previous EFC session during the COVID-19 pandemic and about the work of the EFC Executive Committee since the last EFC session.

## **B. Presentation of forestry activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia**

116. A Forestry Officer, FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia and Caucasus, presented activities of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in 2022 and 2023.

117. Delegates welcomed the presentation and relevant background information and appreciated FAO's work in the region.

118. A representative of Spain, also on behalf of the European Union (EU) and Norway, provided the following statement: "In relation to the impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine on the situation of the forest sector in the country, the EU and its 27 Member States recall the decisions and recommendations of the 169th, 170th, 171st and 172nd Sessions of the Council of FAO, and reiterate to the FAO Regional Office the need to reinforce the forestry work in that country, notably through the implementation of the recently developed "Forestry Support Strategy for Ukraine".

119. A representative of the Russian Federation provided the following statement "conflict and their characterization with legal implications are not within the mandate of the FAO European Forestry Commission and the Russian Federation opposes any attempts to involve the Commission in the activities which are not within the mandate of its statutory document, the FAO Charter".

120. Representatives of the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine supported the statement of Spain.

121. A representative of Slovakia also mentioned Ministerial Decision of the Forest Europe done to support sustainable forest management in Ukraine.

122. A representative of the Czech Republic informed delegates about the training workshop on modern information tools in support of sustainable forest management (Prague, 20-22 June 2023) organized based on the agreement between the Czech Republic and FAO under the programme GCP/INT/790/CEH – "Training Programs in Selected Areas". The workshop was attended by 29 experts from 15 target countries from Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

123. The Executive Director of AlbaForest informed delegates about key challenges in Albania but also relevant for the subregion, such as illegal logging, overharvesting and overgrazing.

124. The Commission encouraged countries in the region to:

(a) More effectively incorporate integrated landscape approaches among various land management agencies responsible for agriculture, forestry, fisheries and livestock management into relevant national planning processes and enhance intersectoral collaboration at the landscape level;

(b) Require all formulators of country projects to integrate poverty considerations and conduct poverty analyses when designing projects, take advantage of entry points to address poverty and ensure interventions are inclusive and leave no one behind;



- (c) Promote the sustainable production and consumption of NWFP by:
  - (i) securing the conservation and sustainable supply of NWFP;
  - (ii) building competitive, equitable and sustainable value chains;
  - (iii) improving transparency, data and information flow on NWFP;
  - (iv) establishing enabling conditions in policy, financial and innovation terms.

(d) Provide financial and/or in-kind contributions to support the FAO regional forestry programmes, in particular on phytosanitary standards in forestry in the region, and FAO project work, in particular with a view to providing complementary funding for GEF and GCF projects.

125. The Commission recommended FAO to:

(a) Strengthen the integration of landscape approaches in operational forestry work in the region, as well as into existing and future REU Regional Initiatives, considering the multifunctional roles of forests;

(b) Integrate poverty considerations into the design and formulation of projects, in particular large project such as GEF and GCF, applying approaches such as poverty measurement, poverty profiles, poverty mapping and poverty-based targeting;

(c) Continue to support natural resource management including forests through the harmonization and strengthening of national policy, financing, incentives, taxation and governance frameworks and measures, including regulations, standards and monitoring for forest management interventions and practices, and support capacity development in this regard;

(d) Continue supporting countries and other stakeholders, including the private sector, to promote coordinated action enhancing the sustainable production and consumption of NWFP, including capacity-building related to the collection and dissemination of statistics on NWFP; and

(e) Continue to 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.

### **C. Progress of *Silva Mediterranea* and the European Forestry Commission Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds**

126. The Secretary of *Silva Mediterranea* presented an overview of the FAO activities conducted under the auspices of *Silva Mediterranea*.

127. A representative of Portugal thanked FAO for the presentation, in particular the mentioned involvement of youth in *Silva Mediterranea* process, and encouraged engagement of all partners and stakeholders in the process in the future.

128. A representative of Spain informed delegates about its active involvement in the *Silva Mediterranea* process activities, in particular forest fires.

129. The Commission:

(a) Encouraged Committee members to contribute to the development of the activities related to the Mediterranean Flagship Initiative;

(b) Encouraged the Committee to support the implementation of the priority topics of the Mediterranean Youth Task Force;

(c) Recommended FAO and in particular the secretariat of *Silva Mediterranea* to coordinate the preparation of the planned publications (*Unasylva* and *State of Mediterranean Forests*), engaging with members, working groups and partners.

130. The Secretary of the Working Party, presented the activities of the European Forestry Commission Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds, including its most recent initiative on the protective functions of forests in a changing climate.

131. A representative of Austria expressed his appreciation for the work done by the Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds

132. A representative of FAO reminded delegates about the history of establishment of the Working Party.

133. The Commission took full advantage of the services of the Working Party and recommended to facilitate its work by:

(a) Strengthening further their commitment to the Working Party, including through designating a focal point to serve on the Working Party;

(b) Providing continued guidance for the Working Party, in particular in terms of identifying priority topics to be addressed;

(c) Publicizing the work of the Working Party and making full use of its services.

#### **D. Outcomes of the European Forestry Commission external review process**

134. The Secretary of the European Forestry Commission, presented the main outcomes of the European Forestry Commission external review process conducted by the secretariat as requested by the forty-first session of the Commission.

135. A representative of Austria informed delegates that different countries use different FAO services, and that besides the work in the countries Austria considered the FAO contribution to the UNECE/FAO Integrated Programme of Work to be very important and asked FAO to contribute with relevant resources.

136. The Commission invited Members to:

(a) Review and consider the findings of the external review;

(b) Recommend EC of EFC to consider recommendations provided and proposed improving the efficiency, relevance, and effectiveness of EFC governance.

#### **E. Integrated fire management**

137. A FAO Forestry Officer, presented the FAO global and regional level initiatives and activities towards integrated fire management, including main outcomes of the 8th International Wildland Fire Conference, such as the launch of the Global Fire Management Hub; and possible options for regional cooperation on fire management.

138. Ukraine informed delegates about their successful collaboration of forest fires management with Türkiye, in particular the use of the International Fire Safety Training Centre.

139. A representative of Portugal expressed appreciation for the work of FAO on forest fires, informed delegates about the work of Portugal, and stressed the need for collaboration among different international actors in this area.

140. A representative of Sweden reminded delegates that the Ministerial Conference of Forest Europe will take a decision on forest risk management mechanisms next year and that it has already implemented pilot projects on forest fire management mechanism.

141. A representative of Germany expressed its interest in the work on disaster risk reduction in forest fire management and highlighted to need for building synergies. The German Government supported financially the work of FAO to develop the new Global Fire Management Hub in a seed funding project.

142. A representative of Spain thanked FAO for the work on forest fires and informed delegates that Spain promotes integrated management of fires as a very good tool to fight forest fires. She invited the secretariat to bring the summary of the EFC discussions to COFO and offered technical support in that work.

143. The Commission invited Members to:

(a) Continue to participate in the Expert Group on Forest Fires for Europe and use it as a platform to strengthen the regional exchange of experiences and lessons learned, and mutual support;

(b) Promote and adopt the Integrated Fire Management approach;

(c) Invest more in the revision and analysis of fires to be able to focus fire risk reduction efforts strategically;

(d) Champion and adopt the Landscape Fire Governance Framework - Guiding Principles for Adjusting Strategies, Policies, and Management to Global Change and bring it to the discussion at the next session of COFO;

(e) Promote the coordination and dialogue of all initiatives being carried out on fire management in the region to create synergies among them.

144. The Commission invited FAO to:

(a) Continue promoting and leading a common approach by all member Nations in the region regarding Integrated Fire Management;

(b) Strengthen its efforts on developing the Global Fire Management Hub to provide stronger support on the development of regional and national capacities, including through partnership with those in the European region, and, in particular, take advantage of the experience, skills and systems that already exist.

## **F. Forest biodiversity mainstreaming**

145. A Senior Forestry Officer, FAO, presented the FAO Global Programme on Forest Biodiversity Mainstreaming and relevant regional levels works.

146. A representative of Portugal commented on the need for considering ownership structure and specific country contexts in landscape management approaches and invited FAO to share its experience and existing case studies in this area.

147. A representative of Sweden thanked FAO for its work in that area and pointed out the unique role of FAO in facilitating the implementation of the UNFF Strategic Plan for Forests, including its role in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

148. Representatives of the Russian Federation and Switzerland requested more attention to forest biodiversity issues in FAO work.

149. The Commission invited Member States to:

(a) Take note of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its recommendations;

(b) Make all possible efforts to implement the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at national level by mobilizing the required political attention, technical knowhow and financial resources;

(c) Consider, as appropriate to their circumstances, what further actions they can take (i) to promote efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems that consider the sustainable use of forest biodiversity; and (ii) to minimize deforestation associated with agricultural commodities.

150. The Commission invited FAO to:

(a) Further develop and implement the programme on forest biodiversity mainstreaming;

(b) Provide technical support to member States for the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework;

(c) Further strengthen its cross-sectoral work through supporting the process of mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies and practices in forestry, agroforestry, agroecology and in agricultural production landscapes, considering forest ownership and specific country contexts;

(d) Continue developing innovative approaches to manage HWCs; share relevant country case studies on sustainable use and management of wildlife, including in dissemination of key knowledge products and tools on the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme.

151. The Commission sent a message to the European Regional Conference on the application of biodiversity mainstreaming into the integrated landscape management and land use systems such as food production, land restoration/rehabilitation, and enhanced nutrition, and food security.

## **G Global processes and initiatives**

152. A FAO Forestry Officer on behalf of the COFO Secretary, presented updates on global processes and initiatives relevant to forestry, including the outcomes of the eighteenth session of UNFF and the preparations for the nineteenth session of UNFF, the State of the World's Forests Report 2024 (SOFO24), outcomes of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP27) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15).

153. A representative of Kyrgyzstan thanked the host country and FAO for the organization of the European Forestry Commission session. He informed delegates that Kyrgyzstan contributed to the work on mountainous regions and mountains ecosystems following the 2021 United Nations General Assembly resolution proclaiming 2022 the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development at the proposal of the Kyrgyz Government, and the five-year work horizon before the summit which will be held in Bishkek. He also called to the attention of the Commission that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP28) will be held in December 2023 which will also discuss this topic.

154. A representative of Spain supported the continuation of FAO project work relevant to the implementation of UNCCD and the related activities including on deforestation and soil erosion.

155. A representative of the Russian Federation supported the Kyrgyzstan statement and considered it important to send a clear signal to FAO about the demand for the expertise and technical capabilities of the organization to achieve goals and objectives of the Five Years of Action and made an action proposal which was included in the recommendations.

156. A representative of FAO also informed delegates about the ongoing work in this direction, including the creation of a group of experts from organizations relevant to the topic.

157. Georgia thanked the host country and the Joint Section of the organization of the Joint Session. He highlighted the importance of health and occupational safety of forest workers in his country and at the regional level, where foresters still experience many work-related risks and safety hazards. He asked for the inclusion of this issue in the COFO agenda. He pointed out *Silva Mediterranea* as an example of a successful cooperation among the countries in the Mediterranean region and encouraged the creation of a similar initiative for the Black Sea countries. He informed delegates that Georgia will start the EFC membership process.

158. A representative of Tajikistan thanked the host country and the Joint Section for the organization of the meeting. He informed delegates about the situation in his county, mostly covered by mountains, the related alarming trend of thawing glaciers and the key role of forest in delaying this process. He asked for FAO support in this area.

159. The Commission Chair encouraged non-EFC members to become members.
160. A representative of the International Forestry Students' Association expressed thanks for the integration of youth in the Commission discussions and the World Forestry Congress expressed the readiness of the group to continue collaboration.
161. The Commission:
- (a) Thanked FAO for the report on global processes and initiatives and welcomed with appreciation the information provided on developments and activities in regard to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, the eighteenth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the 2025 edition of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment, the upcoming State of the World's Forests Report 2024, the XV World Forestry Congress and the Youth Call for Action, and the second World Forum on Urban Forests;
  - (b) Took note and welcomed the theme for the International Day of Forests 2024 on "Forests and Innovation".
  - (c) Requested FAO to intensify its participation in the implementation of "the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions", announced by the United Nations General Assembly at the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan".

## **H. Inputs to Food and Agriculture Organization governance and forestry strategic planning**

162. A FAO Forestry Officer, on behalf of the COFO Secretary, and the Secretary of FAO Regional Conference for Europe (ERC), presented inputs to FAO governance, including the twenty-seventh Session of the FAO Committee on Forests and the outcomes of the Regional Forestry Commissions and updates on the thirty-fourth session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (RCE 34). A FAO Senior Forestry Officer, presented the FAO's Forestry Roadmap 2024-31 from Vision to Action towards 2031.
163. A representative of Canada informed delegates about the work of the North American Forest Commission (NAFC) and informed them that NAFC identified further work on the definition of forest degradation as a priority.
164. A representative of Switzerland proposed inclusion of forests, agroforestry and agroecology in the agenda of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe.
165. A representative of Spain noted the relevance of all discussed topics for the conference and highlighted the forest degradation, deforestation and deforestation-free supply chains to be of highest significance. She also stressed the need of coordination of efforts on halting deforestation at the global level and highlighted the role of FAO in those efforts.
166. The Commission provided (as contained in the annex) recommendations to COFO EFC recommendations for the attention of COFO to ERC; EFC recommendations for the attention of the ERC; and EFC recommendations for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry related to the agenda of the current session.
167. The Commission encouraged Members to:
- (a) Continue to actively support the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) as the main instruments in forestry for linking the global and regional levels under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31;
  - (b) Develop recommendations for the Regional Conference for Europe, for the Committee on Forestry (COFO) agenda and the programme priorities for the work of FAO in forestry;
  - (c) Take note of the process to develop a new framework document for FAO's work in forestry between 2024 and 2031 and provide guidance, as deemed appropriate;

168. The Commission recommended FAO to:

(a) Ensure that recommendations are presented to the secretariats of COFO and the Regional Conferences (RCs);

(b) Share the recommendations of the Commission with other Regional Forestry Commissions.

## **I. Election of officers, date and place of the next meeting**

169. In accordance with its Rules of Procedure and established practice, the Commission, elected by acclamation Mr. Keith Anderson (Switzerland) as Chair and Mr. Abduvokhid Zakhadullaev (Uzbekistan) Mr. Boris Greguška (Slovak Republic) and Ms. Elaine Dick (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) as Vice-Chairs to hold office until the end of forty-third session.

170. The Commission congratulated the newly elected Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Commission and warmly thanked Ms. Liubov Poliakova (Ukraine), outgoing Chair, for her excellent service as Chair of the Commission and as Vice-Chair of the FAO Committee on Forestry.

## **XII. Adoption of the joint session report and closure of the session**

172. The Committee and the Commission adopted the report.

173. The meeting closed at 2:50 p.m.

**Annex**

[English only]

**A. European Forestry Commission recommendations for the attention of the Chair of the Food and Agriculture Organization Committee on Forests (issues to be considered for preparation of the agenda)**

<i>Priority issues for COFO to consider</i>	<i>Expected outcome (information/discussion/guidance)</i>	<i>Reference to other RFC's recommendation</i>
Climate change related to resilience to drought and other disturbances and damages	Discussion/decision	APFC, NEFRC, NAFC,
	Discussion/decision	-
	Discussion/decision	-
Mainstreaming forest biodiversity	Discussion/decision	FCLAC, APFC,
	Discussion/decision	NAFC, AFWC
Integrated fire management	Discussion/decision	FCLAC, NAFC
		-
Bioeconomy and value chain development		
Multifunctional forest management planning considering ecosystem services wood and NWFPs		
Occupational health and safety in forestry work		

**B. European Forestry Commission recommendations for the attention of the Regional Conference for Europe**

<i>Priority issues for the ERC to consider</i>	<i>Expected outcome (information/discussion/guidance)</i>	<i>Reference to other ERC as appropriate</i>
Consider report of EFC42	Discussion/decision	
	Discussion/decision	
Send a message to European Regional Conference on the application of forest biodiversity mainstreaming into the integrated landscape management and land use systems such as food production, land restoration/rehabilitation, and enhanced nutrition, and food security		
Send a message to the European Regional Conference to consider as key tool agroforestry and agroecology with the work on agri-food systems.	Discussion/decision	

### C. RFC recommendations for the Food and Agriculture Organization Programme of Work in Forestry related to the agenda of the current session

<i>Area/action for FAO programme of work</i>	<i>Priority (H, M, L, De-emphasis)</i>	<i>Type (new, continued)</i>	<i>Level of action (subregional/ regional/global)</i>	<i>Reference to Global Forest Goals of the UNSPF</i>	<i>Reference to the relevant PPA</i>
<b><u>Presentation of forestry activities of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia:</u></b>					
FAO to:					
1. Strengthen the integration of landscape approaches in operational forestry work in the region, as well as into existing and future REU Regional Initiatives, considering the multifunctional roles of forests;		Continued	Regional	Goal 1	BE1, BE3
2. Integrate poverty considerations into the design and formulation of projects, in particular large project such as GEF and GCF, applying approaches such as poverty measurement, poverty profiles, poverty mapping, and poverty-based targeting;		Continued	Regional	Goal 1 Goal 4 Goal 5	BE1, BN1
3. Continue to support natural resource management including forests through the harmonization and strengthening of national policy, financing, incentives, taxation and governance frameworks and measures, including regulations, standards and monitoring for forest management interventions and practices, and support capacity development in this regard;		Continued	Regional	Goal 1 Goal 5	BE1 BP4
4. Continue supporting countries and other stakeholders, including the private sector, to promote coordinated action enhancing the sustainable production and consumption of NWFP, including capacity-building related to the collection and dissemination of statistics on NWFP;		Continued	Regional	Goal 1 Goal 3, Goal 4	BP4 BE1 BE2
5. Continue to 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.		Continued	Regional	Goal 1, Goal 6	BP3 BE1, BE3
<b><u>Progress of Silva Mediterranea and the European Forestry Commission Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds:</u></b>					
FAO to:					
6. Encouraged the Committee to support the implementation of the priority topics of the Mediterranean Youth Task Force;		Continued	Regional	Goal 5	BE1 BL1
		Continued	Regional	Goal 6	BE1
				Goal 5	



<i>Area/action for FAO programme of work</i>	<i>Priority (H, M, L, De-emphasis)</i>	<i>Type (new, continued)</i>	<i>Level of action (subregional/ regional/global)</i>	<i>Reference to Global Forest Goals of the UNSPF</i>	<i>Reference to the relevant PPA</i>
7. Recommended FAO and in particular the secretariat of Silva Mediterranea to coordinate the preparation of the planned publications (Unasylva and State of Mediterranean Forests), engaging with members, working groups and partners.				Goal 6	
<b><u>Integrated fire management:</u></b> FAO to:					
8. Continue promoting and leading a common approach by all Member Nations in the region regarding Integrated Fire Management;		Continued	All	Goal 1 Goal 6	BE1 BE3
9. Strengthen its efforts on developing the Global Fire Management Hub to provide stronger support on the development of regional and national capacities, including through partnership with those in the European region, and, in particular, take advantage of the experience, skills and systems that already exist.		Continued	All	Goal 1 Goal 5 Goal 6	BE1 BE3 BE1 BE2 BE3
<b><u>Forest biodiversity mainstreaming:</u></b> FAO to:					
10. Further develop and implement the programme on forest biodiversity mainstreaming;		Continued	All	Goal 1, Goal 3, Goal 5	BE1 BE2 BE3
11. Provide technical support to member States for the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework;		Continued	All	Goal 1, Goal 3, Goal 5	BE1 BE2 BE3
12. Further strengthen its cross-sectoral work through supporting the process of mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies and practices in forestry, agroforestry, agroecology and in agricultural production landscapes, considering forest ownership and specific country contexts.		Continued	All	Goal 1, Goal 3, Goal 5	BE1 BE2 BE3
13. Continue developing innovative approaches to manage HWCs; share relevant country case studies on sustainable use and management of wildlife, including in dissemination of key knowledge products and tools on the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme.		Continued	All	Goal 1, Goal 3, Goal 5	BE1 BE2 BE3
<b><u>Global processes and initiatives:</u></b> FAO to:					
14. Intensify its participation in the implementation of “the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions”, announced by the United Nations General Assembly at the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan”		Continued	All	Goal 1 - Goal 6	BE1 BE2 BE3

<i>Area/action for FAO programme of work</i>	<i>Priority (H, M, L, De-emphasis)</i>	<i>Type (new, continued)</i>	<i>Level of action (subregional/ regional/global)</i>	<i>Reference to Global Forest Goals of the UNSPF</i>	<i>Reference to the relevant PPA</i>
<b><u>Preparations for the thirty-third Regional Conference for Europe (ERC 33), twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO 26) and the XV World Forestry Congress:</u></b>					
FAO to:					
15. Ensure that recommendations are presented to the secretariats of COFO and the Regional Conferences (RCs).;		Continued	Regional	Goal 5 Goal 6	-
16. Share the recommendations of the Commission with other Regional Forestry Commissions.		Continued	Global, Regional	Goal 5 Goal 6	-