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Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

Report by the Chair

Report by the Chair of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI)

The Chair of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI), Ms. Marta Gaworska (Poland), is pleased to submit her report to the ninety-first meeting of EXCOM on 24 March 2017.

I. Introduction

1. The Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) 2014-2017 (ECE/TIM/2013/2-FO:EFC/2013/2) was adopted by the joint sessions of COFFI and the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC) in December 2013 in Rovaniemi, Finland (Metsä2013). The Programme covers COFFI traditional topics related to forest products and services, such as forest resources and forest products markets. It also introduces new elements to address emerging issues related to sustainable forest management, as well as topics which link sustainable forest management and green economy, such as innovation in the forest sector, ecosystem services and green jobs.

2. In addition to enlarging the scope of the Integrated Programme, the joint sessions in Finland in 2013 agreed to a modified governing structure, which included a new mandate for the ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management, and new Teams of Specialists with modified reporting lines, which were subsequently approved by EXCOM.

3. This report outlines the main achievements of COFFI and EFC in implementing the IPoW in the period between November 2015- and the present time. More information is contained in the report of the seventy-fourth session of COFFI, which was held on 9-13 October 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland - document ECE/TIM/2016/2.

II. Achievements over the past twelve months

4. During the reporting period, the ECE/FAO Joint Forestry and Timber Section (hereafter Joint Section) continued work on the forest sector and its contribution to a green economy and sustainable development. The Joint Section provided data on forests and the forest industry, in support of evidence-based decision-making, and provided assistance to member States for improving forest sector management in the region through coordinated activities of communication and capacity-building. Key highlights (reported according to the Work Areas (WA) of the IPoW) include:

(a) **WA1: Data, monitoring and assessment:** The joint section coordinated, organized and supported data collection on forest resources, forest products markets and wood energy in the UNECE region. The forecast tables on forest products markets were published at the end of 2015. The *Forest Products Annual Market Review 2015-2016* was published in the summer of 2016. The secretariat worked closely with researchers from the European funded COST Action “*Forest Land Ownership Changes in Europe: Significance for Management and Policy*” (FACESMAP) to collect and disseminate information on forest ownership in the UNECE region; the data collection process was concluded and the analysis of the results is ongoing. The review of the 2015 process and results of the reporting on forests and Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in the region has been concluded. The UNECE, FAO and Forest Europe initiated the collaborative work on the new (2020) cycle, including the joint Forest Europe/ECE/FAO work on the reporting on the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA). Pilot reporting on the sustainability of forest

management was finalized, the results were published in a pilot study on the System for the Evaluation of the Management of Forests (SEMAFOR);

(b) **WA2: Policy advice and dialogue:** The Joint Section continued to support member States in facilitating information-sharing and to contribute to global policy forest-related goals and processes including: (i) the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and (ii) the United Nations Forum on Forests. The Joint Section continued to monitor and update member States on the developments of the political agenda related to SDGs, and to contribute to the development of the system for monitoring the implementation of SDGs, in coordination with other FAO and UNECE divisions as relevant. The Joint Section also continued to support the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy and its dissemination. The Rovaniemi Action Plan was presented to a broader audience, outside the forest sector, at a side event at the “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference in Batumi, Georgia, at the “Transition to the Green Economy” conference in Bratislava, Slovakia, and at the International Conference on the “Natural Capital for the Transition to a Green Economy” in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In October 2016, the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section organized a workshop on “Measuring the Value of the Forest Sector in a Green Economy” in the framework of the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan. The Section is developing a regional study on *Forests and Water: Valuation and Payments for Forest Ecosystem Services* supported by FAO, the European Environment Agency, Western University, and University of Padua, Italy. At the request of the Ukrainian Government, a National Forest Policy Dialogue Workshop took place in Kiev, Ukraine in September 2016. The Joint Section published a study on “*Promoting sustainable building materials and the implications on the use of wood in buildings: A review of leading public policies in Europe and North America*” that provides an overview of the current policy and regulatory environment. The Section also organized a workshop on “Streamlining the next round of Forest Sector Outlook studies” in November 2016, in Moscow, Russian Federation.

(c) **WA3: Communications and outreach:** The International Day of Forests 2016 under the theme “Forests and Water” was marked on 21 March 2016 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland. The celebrations consisted of a half-day event aimed at raising awareness about the multiple links between forests and water sources. It featured country experiences and case studies on forest ecosystem services that safeguard water balance and supply as well as the role of forests in increasing landscape resilience to water-related hazards. In addition, an exhibition of forest photos by Jean-Jacques Kissling was displayed in La Passerelle in the Palais des Nations from 14 to 24 March 2016. The video “More heat with less wood” was launched during the 38th Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management to promote energy efficiency and wood energy. The short film informs the broader public about the efficient use and correct preparation of wood for heating and cooking in the households in the ECE region. The original version on the film is in English with Russian sub-titles. Since its publications the film has been translated by partner organizations into Albanian, Georgian and Turkish and was shown on television in some countries (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9z-EGVeKTrc>);

(d) **WA4: Capacity-building:** The capacity-building project “Accountability systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia” was established under the 10th tranche of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA). The timeframe of the project is 2016-2019 and the implementing entity is the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section. The objective of this project is to strengthen the national capacity of five target countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) to develop national criteria and indicators (C&I) and reporting, or accountability systems, for SFM. All five countries nominated national focal points for the project. Cooperation with other organizations (FAO, UNFF, UNDP and UNEP) as well as

with experts from Forest Europe, the Montreal and the Low Forest Cover Country Processes has been established. Continuing the capacity-building work on forest products markets and forest sector workforce in the Balkan region, the Section organized a capacity-building event in December 2015 in Podgorica, Montenegro.

III. Major activities planned for 2017 and beyond

5. The main outputs expected in 2017 are as follows:

(a) **WA1: Data, monitoring and assessment:** The Joint Section will continue its regular work on collecting, validating and disseminating statistical data on forests and related industries. The main outputs expected in this area of work include the completion of the Forest Products Annual Market Review 2016-2017 (policy and statistical information on the forest products markets in the region) and a study on wood energy and on forest ownership in the ECE region. The Joint Section (together with FAO and Forest Europe) will organize the data collection process for the 2020 global and regional reporting on forests, including the development of terms, definitions and classifications as well as the new on-line reporting platform for both processes. The launch of the reporting is planned for the beginning of 2018. In November 2016, the Section will launch the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry 2015 with preliminary analysis available by the 2017 session of the ECE/FAO Joint Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management. Final results will be available for the 2017 Joint Sessions of COFFI and EFC. Forecast tables covering forest products markets will be published following the Committee meetings. Later in 2017 a workshop on examining forest removals data and the overall wood balance will be organized.

(b) **WA2: Policy advice and dialogue:** The Section will also start working towards a set of outlook studies for North America, Europe, and Russian Federation with CIS. The Joint Section will continue monitoring implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy, including the mid-term review of the progress of the implementation of the Plan. Final versions of studies on (i) water related forest ecosystem services, (ii) green jobs in the forest sector and (iii) environmental-economic accounting are expected. The Section will monitor developments, and contributions, as relevant, to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the UNFF Strategic Plan and the quadrennial programme of work; and to the Forest Europe process and its Work Programme as well as other relevant regional processes;

(c) **WA3: Communications and outreach:** The UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section is organizing a library talk on Wood Energy to celebrate the International Day of Forests (IDF) on 21 March 2017 in Geneva (the theme of this year is Forest and Energy). A side-event on green jobs, organized jointly with Forest Europe, will be held during UNFF12 in May 2017 in New York. At the occasion of the 70th anniversary of UNECE/FAO cooperation on forests, a commemorative event will take place in Czech Republic in late May or early June 2017 (Marianske Lazne +70), at the same place where the first International Timber Conference was held in 1947. The main communication event planned for 2017 will be the fourth European Forest Week held in parallel to "Lasy2017" - the ECE COFFI/FAO EFC Joint Sessions. Both events will be organized in Warsaw, Poland in October 2017. It is planned that the European Forest Week will be also celebrated in the member States;

(d) **WA4: Capacity-building:** The regional workshop on "Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia" was held in November 2016 in Yerevan, Armenia to launch the UNDA project. It brought together the five target countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) and

introduced the project to the participants who are expected to support project activities in their respective countries. During 2017, national coaching workshops in all five target countries will bring together national stakeholders. This will initiate the process of the development of national criteria and indicators for SFM. A wood energy information workshop in partnership with the International Renewable Energy Agency was organized in December 2016.

6. More information on activities implemented in 2016 and planned for 2017 is contained in document (ECE/TIM/2016/8) at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42383#/>.

IV. Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the Committee

7. No changes to the subsidiary structure were proposed by the last session of COFFI.

V. Follow-up to the 2015 session of the Economic Commission for Europe

8. UNECE in its High-level statement on the post-2015 development agenda and expected sustainable development goals in the UNECE region (Annex IV, E/2015/37-E/ECE/1472), recognized that it is “ideally placed to continue to make a strong contribution to sustainable development”, *inter alia*, by “strengthening the sustainable management of ecosystems and natural resources”). The high-level dialogue discussion highlighted the role of UNECE in cooperation with FAO for supporting sustainable management of forests and the contribution of forests to a green economy. The Joint Section continues to work to support sustainable forest management in the region and the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy.

VI. Intersectoral activities: new activities and/or progress in existing intersectoral activities

9. The ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section continued intersectoral cooperation with other ECE and FAO units as well as external organizations and processes. The International Day of Forests 2016 celebrated under the theme “Forests and Water” on 21 March 2016 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, greatly benefited from the participation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes; the Ramsar Convention and the UNECE Housing and Land Management Unit. The results of this event will further contribute to the publication on the water related forest ecosystem services.

10. The workshop (and the thematic study) on “Measuring the Value of the Forest Sector in a Green Economy” was organized in partnership with key partners such as the Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) Initiative at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) Partnership of the World Bank. Also the Statistical Divisions of UNECE and FAO were consulted and provided their contribution to the discussion.

11. Work on the promotion of wood construction will continue to involve the Committee on Housing and Land Management (CHLM) and by taking active part in the work of the Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency in Buildings.

12. The Joint Section continues to assist countries in the implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. For instance the Joint Section contributed to work to develop global forest related indicators, related to SDGs, led by FAO.

VII. Technical cooperation activities

13. Technical cooperation is carried out through work with members of the UNECE/FAO Teams of Specialists, national correspondents, and the UNDA project “Accountability systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia”. Below are some examples of technical cooperation activities:

(a) UNECE/FAO Teams of Specialists are the main technical bodies leading technical cooperation and discussion in their respective areas of activity. Under the Integrated Programme of Work for COFFI and EFC, the Joint Section assisted the work of eight Teams, on (i) Sustainable Forest Products, (ii) Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management, (iii) Forest Policy, (iv) the Forest Sector Outlook, (v) Forest Communication - Forest Communicators Network, (vi) Green Jobs - Joint ILO/UNECE/FAO Expert Network, (vii) Wood Energy, and (viii) Forest Products Statistics;

(b) Support provided to national correspondents for their work on the two reporting processes carried out in 2016 related to forest products and wood energy;

(c) The project “Accountability systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia”. The project, which covers five target countries (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) aims at developing national sets of criteria and indicators, with the extensive use of experience and knowledge gained by the international and national criteria and indicators processes.

14. Technical cooperation work will be continued in 2017. This includes activities of the Team of Specialists and reporting processes, with the priority being support to countries of the region in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular *Goal 15, “Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss”*. This will be done through the regular work, e.g. capacity-building meetings for the national correspondents on forests and forest product reporting, as well as the capacity-building dedicated activities, primarily the UNDA project.

VIII. Cooperation with other organizations (beyond the Joint Section)

15. The Joint Section has been effectively cooperating with a number of stakeholders in the implementation of the Integrated Programme of Work. Some of the highlights included:

(a) In the area of gathering and validation of statistical data, the joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section cooperates with a number of organizations. The Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (JFSQ), the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) and the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ) limits the reporting burden on countries by aggregating questionnaires. Moreover, the data collected is used for the development of publications, both produced by the Section and other organizations;

^a Eurostat, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the European Commission and the International Energy Agency (IEA), International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Montreal Process, Forest Europe, the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC/OFAC) and entities of the United Nations system such as FAO and the United Nations Statistical Division.

(b) The joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section cooperates with key organizations^b that join forces to produce comprehensive thematic outputs in areas such as: forest ecosystem services, environmental and economic accounts, forest sector outlook studies and forest ownership;

(c) To implement the UNDA capacity-building project on “Accountability systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Joint Section collaborates with partners from the United Nations system to carry out on the ground actions at the national level, delivering as one, through UNDP and FAO country offices and with other organizations, such as the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ);

(d) The Joint Section continues to cooperate the Forest Europe Liaison Unit. The Joint Section contributes to the majority of actions of the new Forest Europe Work Programme, which includes support to SFM tools developed by that process on criteria and indicators for SFM and work on green jobs and ecosystem services. Collaboration with the Liaison Unit Bratislava, includes the organization of joint activities contributing to, and promoting, SFM and the joint work in regional and global fora.

IX. Other issues that the Sectoral Committee may wish to raise with EXCOM

The importance of Teams of Specialist

16. Finally, an important platform for cooperation and exchange of information between the Joint Section, member States and other organizations is provided by the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists (ToS), which gather hundreds of experts from countries and active organizations in particular thematic areas. Work includes development of reports, organization of workshops and engagement in the ongoing relevant discussions and debates. All teams met at least once last year, in many cases the meetings were hosted by the member States, which helped to share the work and knowledge directly with the national experts of host countries. The following meetings were organized in the period covered by this reporting:

- (a) ToS on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management, in Zagreb, Croatia, on 14-16 September 2016;
- (b) ToS on Forest Products Statistics in March 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland;
- (c) ToS on Sustainable Forest Products in March 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland;
- (d) ToS on Wood Energy, in June 2016 in Zagreb, Croatia;
- (e) ToS on Forest Policy, in October 2015 in Prague, Czech Republic;
- (f) ILO/UNECE/FAO ToS on Green Jobs in the Forest Sector in September 2016, Geneva, Switzerland;
- (g) ToS on Forest Communication (Forest Communicators’ Network) in August/September 2016 in Portland, Oregon, United States.

^b COST Action FACESMAP, the Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) Initiative at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) Partnership of the World Bank.

Evaluation and strategic review

17. The Joint UNECE-FAO Forestry and Timber Section worked over the past year on the review of the Integrated UNECE-FAO Programme of work (IPoW). To support the review, an evaluation assessing the relevance of the 2014-2017 Integrated Programme of work was developed (the results are available at:

www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/OPEN_UNECE/EVALUATION/Evaluation_Reports-with_SPs/07-Forestry).

18. In addition to the evaluation, a full strategic review was undertaken, through workshops and interviews with main stakeholders. Taking into account the results of the evaluation and the review, the Joint Section together with the COFFI/EFC Joint Bureaux developed a draft programme of work which is currently under consideration by member States and is expected to be endorsed by the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission at their joint sessions to take place in October 2017 in Warsaw, Poland.
