

## **FOREST EUROPE EXPERT LEVEL MEETING**

**28–29 Nov 2017, Bratislava, Slovakia**

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### **Summary of key decisions**

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The FOREST EUROPE Expert Level Meeting (ELM) took place in Bratislava, the Slovak Republic on 28–29 November 2017. The meeting was attended by 53 delegates representing 33 signatory countries and the European Union, 11 representatives of 7 observer organisations and the Liaison Unit Bratislava (LUB). ELM was co-chaired by Mr. Boris Greguška (Slovakia) and Ms. Lucia Tornos (Spain).

#### **Agenda item 1. Opening of the meeting**

Mr. Boris Greguška opened the ELM. He informed the signatories and observers about the objectives of the meeting. He welcomed General Director of Forestry and Wood Processing Section of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Slovak Republic Mr. Peter Kicko who delivered the welcome speech.

#### **Agenda item 2. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted without any amendments.

#### **Agenda item 3. Review of FOREST EUROPE: discussion and decision on Working Group recommendations for future direction of the FOREST EUROPE process**

The participants took note of the Final report of the Working Group including recommendations for future direction of FOREST EUROPE.

ELM decided to mandate LUB, under strategic guidance of GCC, to implement set of actions based on recommendations listed in the Annex I.

#### **Agenda item 4. Preparation of Roundtable Meeting on Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe**

Following the Ministerial Decision from the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference held in Madrid in 2015, and in accordance with adopted FOREST EUROPE Work Programme, ELM decided:

- The Roundtable Meeting on LBA will be postponed and take place in September 2018 in Bratislava. The ELM mandated the Liaison Unit to specify the exact date.
- RTM is a meeting format for strategic discussion, exchange of information and views on emerging issues. It gives room for brainstorming and engaging all participants. The RTM output will be presented to ELM for its consideration.
- The RTM will be open for all FOREST EUROPE signatories, observer countries and observer organisations.
- Liaison Unit will prepare a background document to be circulated early 2018, comprising, *inter alia*, a summary of the developments on this issue until today. In addition, the draft agenda will be circulated with the invitation.
- The purpose of the RTM is to exchange views and collect ideas on all options for the procedural follow up of the Madrid Extraordinary Ministerial Decision.
- The RTM will be moderated by an independent moderator in an interactive manner.

**Agenda item 5. Implementation of the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme – progress of the Work Programme activities**

The ELM took note of the information on Work Programme implementation and progress made including the preparation of SoEF 2020.

**Agenda item 6. Communication and outreach**

Examples of communication activities related to the implementation of FORST EUROPE commitments were presented, such as Austrian national set of indicators for SFM assessment, European INTEGRATE Network as well as FOREST EUROPE communication campaign launched at the occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> European Forest Week.

**Agenda item 7. Any other business**

(ELM decided to approve the request of Green Turkey Association and European Organisation of the Sawmill Industry (EOS) for an observer status) - *subject to decision*.

## Annex I. Set of recommendations for future direction of FOREST EUROPE

Recommendations	Existing actions – intensification and/or more effective and efficient approach is needed	New actions (novelty) - discussions and further work is needed
<b>1 Enhance the political relevance of FOREST EUROPE</b>	1.1 Improve <b>inter-linkages with relevant global forest and forest-related policy initiatives</b> (notably the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030, commitments under the Paris Agreement, Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and other forest related goals and targets), reinforcing the agenda-taking role that FOREST EUROPE has with regard to global processes and fora (mainly CBD, FAO, IUFRO, UNCCD, UNFCCC, UNFF).	1.2 Develop a <b>rapid response approach</b> for FOREST EUROPE to become a more pro-active and responsive policy forum, through monitoring latest development and new upcoming issues on forests and forestry. Proposal of rapid response approach is to be elaborated and presented at the next ELM for its consideration.
	1.4 Promote <b>outreach and mainstreaming</b> of forest and forest-related agendas into other sectors policy making.	1.3 Strengthen, promote and use a <b>proactive science-policy dialogue</b> for knowledge management, forecasting and response formulation to the broader societal challenges by engaging relevant partners (notably involving EFI and IUFRO).
	1.5 Facilitate and <b>promote implementation</b> of the FOREST EUROPE resolutions, declarations and decisions in signatories, e.g. by sharing good practices and experiences.	
	1.6 <b>Continue work on Criteria and Indicators of SFM</b> as part of ongoing international efforts.	
<b>2 Strengthen cooperation at all levels</b>	2.1 <b>Enhance the regional cooperation</b> and maintain primary focus on cooperation among countries (country-driven approach), experience exchange, and further facilitate sharing of successful <b>implementation examples at national level</b> , including obstacles and ways to overcome them.	
	2.2 Further strengthen proactive approach of FOREST EUROPE and an <b>integrative spirit to cooperation by fostering partnership and promoting synergies with key regional actors</b> (mainly EFI, FAO/REU, UNECE).	

	<p>2.3 Strengthen inter-linkages with relevant international forest and forest-related policy initiatives, which will <b>reinforce the agenda-taking role</b> that FOREST EUROPE has with regard to <b>global processes</b> and fora.</p>	
	<p>2.4 Further develop <b>cross-sectoral partnerships and stakeholders involvement</b>. Reaching outside the forest sector and further engaging a wide spectrum of stakeholders could increase the recognition of the role that forests and forestry play in solving emerging issues relevant for the society; and at the same time enhance the effectiveness of implementation of the Work Programme with special attention to cross-sectoral topics.</p>	
	<p>2.5 To <b>promote current and future forest and forest-related issues</b> with the aim to increase their relevance and applicability for national forest policy processes; and to share experiences how forests and forest policies can be integrated in broader national policy agenda.</p>	
<p><b>3 Enhance communication using opportunities for partnership</b></p>	<p>3.1 Continue to <b>improve external communication</b> and outreach of the work and tangible outputs arising from FOREST EUROPE, incl. new messages and adequate tools for different target groups, and using social media.</p>	
	<p>3.2 Enhance <b>internal communication</b>, especially through a document sharing portal, online discussion forum and possibly other tools.</p>	
	<p>3.3 Better coordinate and <b>engage signatories and observers and other partners into communication initiatives</b>.</p>	
	<p>3.4 <b>Accelerate communication efforts on FOREST EUROPE work</b> and its outputs in specific working areas, which includes increased media coverage from FOREST EUROPE events. Specific opportunities for raising awareness at global and regional fora could be used for this purpose (e.g. cooperation with EFI, FAO and UNECE in communication activities linked to the International Day of Forests and European Forest Week).</p>	

<p><b>4 Maximize effectiveness and efficiency of structures, procedures and work modalities</b></p>	<p>4.1 <b>Enhance participation and engagement at Ministerial Conference, ELM and other FOREST EUROPE meetings</b> by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>effective meeting management</b>, including inclusive preparations, summaries with key decisions provided at the end of meetings, cost-saving opportunities by holding joint meetings, etc.;</li> <li>b. <b>interactive discussion formats</b> of meetings using different facilitation techniques aiming at better involvement of signatories and observers in discussions.</li> </ul>	<p>4.3 Consider <b>simplification of different supportive structures</b>/collaborative tools for strategic (Roundtable Meeting, Working Group, Advisory Group) and technical debate (Expert Group, Workshop).</p>
	<p>4.2 Increase <b>participation of ministers</b> at Ministerial Conferences by following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. concentrate on few, most politically relevant topics identified and prepared at ELM level;</li> <li>d. explore possibilities for informal and/or direct discussions among ministers, and if requested, providing space for bilateral meeting arrangements in order to facilitate experience exchange and partnership among countries;</li> <li>e. conduct interactive and more dynamic session formats with professional facilitation;</li> <li>f. consider involving representatives of other sectors where appropriate;</li> <li>g. launching of joint ministerial initiatives to ensure better visibility and outreach of ministerial commitments;</li> <li>h. media coverage and enhanced media communication, invite well-known personalities.</li> </ul>	<p>4.4 Consider <b>operational adjustments of the Liaison Unit</b> that would enhance effectiveness of operation, such as combination of rotating national staff provided by the lead GCC country and seconded staff from other signatories or observer organizations.</p>
	<p>4.7 To maintain the role and arrangement details of GCC such as geographic balance and number of countries involved, rotation principle including duration of membership, nomination practice, transparency of communications and oversight function for the secretariat.</p>	<p>4.5 Consider timely planned <b>transition arrangements</b> of the Liaison Unit with partial overlapping of secretariat teams. Transition of the secretariat should also include transfer of the process documentation (including resolutions, declarations and decisions of ministers).</p>

		4.6 <b>Develop a description of current structures</b> , procedures and work modalities of FOREST EUROPE, including financial arrangements and reflecting any adjustments from the review process to be adopted by the ELM and/or by the ministerial conference as appropriate.
5 <b>Explore future funding arrangements</b>	5.1 Mobilize <b>voluntary financial and/or in-kind contributions</b> from signatories and observers to ensure implementation of specific Work Programme activities as well as to broaden ownership of the respective outcomes among signatories and partners (including hosting meetings and workshops, studies, publications, staff secondments, travel support for eligible countries, etc.).	5.2 Explore possibilities for future funding arrangements, including multi-donor trust fund where signatories, observers and possibly other donors could provide and pool financial resources.
	5.3 Apply <b>cost-saving arrangements</b> e.g. holding back-to-back meetings, tele and video conferences whenever appropriate.	