Expert Group on Adaptation to Climate Change

First meeting 6—7 September 2016
Bratislava, Slovakia

Minutes of the meeting

The first meeting of the Expert Group (EG) took place on 6—7 September 2017, in Bratislava, Slovakia. The meeting was attended by thirty participants representing 13 signatory countries, 7 international observer organizations and other experts (see List of Participants in Annex I). A further 9 signatories and the European Commission were unable to attend but sent their input. EG members are nominated by the respective signatories and observer organizations.

The meeting was conducted as an informal discussion forum to enable brainstorming about key shared issues and challenges as well as outputs to be delivered by the EG on the basis of the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme 2016—2020. They will ultimately contribute to the preparation of the agenda of the next, Eighth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, to be held in 2020.

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by Mr. Jozef Turok, Policy Adviser at the Liaison Unit Bratislava (LUB) serving as secretariat for the FOREST EUROPE process. He thanked all members for their contributions and participation in the meeting, and highlighted the urgency of addressing climate change through sustainable forest management. The participants then introduced themselves.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda, circulated by the secretariat in advance of the meeting, was approved without amendments.

3. Main objectives and expected outcomes of the Expert Group

The item was introduced by Ms. Lucia Ambrušová, Policy Adviser LUB. She presented the main areas and activities of the current Work Programme of FOREST EUROPE, with particular reference to the area 4.5 'forest protection and adaptation to climate change'. Jozef Turok then focused on the objectives, mode of operation and expected outcomes of the EG, referring to the background document circulated ahead of the meeting:

http://foresteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Background_EG_adaptation.pdf

In the discussion, several questions and suggestions were raised. The EG generally aims at strengthening the resilience of forests and enhancing their protection against natural hazards and human induced threats associated with climate change. However, in line with the Madrid Ministerial Resolution 2 and the Work Programme 2016—2020, the main focus is on advancing climate change adaptation measures as part of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM).

To underpin implementation efforts that will feed into the Eighth Ministerial Conference, two technical Workshops will be held in 2018 (see below item 6). Their linkages with the overarching aim of the EG were discussed. More specifically, the EG ***agreed*** to address the function of agroforestry approaches in strengthening resilience of forest ecosystems threatened by drought to be able to better adapt to climate change. Having reviewed the background document, the EG also ***recommended*** that livelihoods and social dimension of SFM be taken under its merit.

A publication on state of climate change adaptation measures in forestry is another expected output of the EG. It will include an analysis of the survey to be carried out before the end of

the year 2017 (see item 5), and additional analyses, case studies and policy recommendations that will be delivered by the two technical Workshops. The state-of-the-art report is expected to be published in 2018.

4. Exchange of information and experience on adaptation measures

Using a simple standardized template, each member of the Expert Group made a presentation on work relevant to climate change including existing strategies/policies on adaptation, examples of adaptation measures already undertaken, and key implementation challenges.

The following signatories and observers contributed and/or sent a written presentation:

Signatory attending	Signatory unable to attend	Observer organization
Austria	Belgium	Carpathian Convention
Croatia	Bulgaria	COPA COGECA
Czech Republic	European Commission	European Forest Institute (EFI)
Germany	France	EUFORGEN
Lithuania	Georgia	EUSTAFOR
Poland	Greece	FAO
Serbia	Hungary	IUFRO
Slovakia	Portugal	
Spain	Russian Federation	
Sweden	Slovenia	
Switzerland	United Kingdom	
Turkey		
Ukraine		

The experts then discussed key messages and identified shared issues from the session in two breakout groups, moderated by the experts from Spain and Switzerland, respectively.

The observed and predicted impacts of climate change on forests in various parts of Europe have been analyzed by scholars. Through its effects on forests and forestry, climate change also influences the broader economies, people and livelihoods. The impacts are mostly viewed as negative, but there may be positive effects, e.g. through more productive conditions in certain areas. There are important differences between countries and regions: some impacts are more important than others depending on the country. The effects of climate change in Europe can generally be grouped into four main geographic areas: Mediterranean, Central Europe, Atlantic, Boreal.

Climate change is manifested through heat and drought, which often lead to forest fires, changing frost regimes, extreme events such as storms, floods and landslides, changing species composition of forest stands, and outbreaks of insects and other pests and diseases. It is widely agreed that main impacts associated with forests observed to date are changes in water availability, biodiversity (including species shift), and changes in productivity of forest ecosystems.

One group suggested to analyze the conditions for adaptation measures for each impact. For instance, tackling pests and diseases requires an improvement of the monitoring. At the pan-European level, efforts should be made to enhance exchange of information among different countries, and use common methodologies (e.g., ICP-Forests). Improvement of prevention measures would also be required. Forest fires, on the other hand, are an example of threat that has different levels in different countries. Prevention measures are again critically important, and international cooperation can help in sharing information and experience.

Overall conditions for successful adaptation measures have been listed:

- Strengthening cooperation between scientists and practitioners (success stories).

- Continued efforts to improve the knowledge related with consequences of climate change for the different services provided by forests: products, carbon balance…
- Learning from case studies, particularly transfer of knowledge and experience from areas already affected by climate change to similar situations in other countries/regions.
- Creating conditions for generation of financial means to support coping strategies, including through valuation of ecosystem services and introduction of appropriate subsidies or taxation schemes. Implementing adaptation measures may involve economical losses in forest ecosystems. This requires support, for instance in the form of compensation payments.
- Identification of markets related with all kinds of forest products.
- Understanding and achieving possible trade-offs in protected areas where the established non-intervention rules need to be put in balance with the need to take adaptation measures (silvicultural interventions).
- Management of genetic resources is a specific but crucial pillar of adaptation ability of forests to climate change. Adaptation strategies must consider not just species changes, but also provenances best adapted to given situations.
- Raising awareness of decision makers about the costs and risks of acting or not acting on timescales, as well as potential positive effects of climate change in Europe.

These conditions are broadly recognized and require attention by policy makers at different levels of policy-making including national, regional and European.

Key challenges identified and discussed by the experts include:
- Ensuring more reliable forecasts of the developments associated with climate change;
- Identifying the most vulnerable regions that require intervention and input (active adaptation vs. passive adaptation);
- Addressing forest management challenges through further development of a robust silvicultural approach (close-to-nature forest management) including adjustment of tree species selection, in anticipation of predicted climate change patterns;
- Promoting changes in national legislation, taking into consideration or based on international agreements and agreements at European Union level;
- Filling knowledge gaps through research: Do we have sufficient knowledge? Is it necessary to produce a "state of the art"? Is it recommended to establish guidelines? As the situation is complex, how do we deal with complexity? Challenge of taking decisions in absence of adequate knowledge. Gap analysis, identification of gaps;
- Generating or mobilizing additional financial resources for adaptation through various approaches: tax measures, subsidies, engagement of private sector.

5. Survey on the current status of implementation of adaptation measures in the pan-European region

In line with the Work Programme adopted by FOREST EUROPE for the period 2016—2020, the EG is expected to develop a questionnaire survey on the current status of implementation of adaptation measures in the pan-European region. The EG received an introductory presentation by Mr. Markus Höhl (Thünen Institute of Forest Ecosystems, Germany) on behalf of the IUFRO Task Force on Forest Adaptation and Restoration under Climate Change. The Task Force has launched a global online survey with the objective to gain data and insights for developing best practice approaches for forest adaptation and restoration under global change.

http://gdi.thuenen.de/wo/limesurvey/index.php/883655?lang=en

The EG ***noted*** that there is a converging purpose of the IUFRO survey and the anticipated FOREST EUROPE effort. In fact, a number questions could be revised and adapted, and same software application used. The Expert Group ***acknowledged*** the IUFRO Task Force and the Thünen Institute of Forest Ecosystems for their willingness to cooperate and achieve synergies

of work. The forthcoming FOREST EUROPE survey could also promote effectively complement the ongoing initiative of IUFRO.

The experts then discussed the existing questionnaire and provided suggestions for possible revisions to fit the purpose of the survey. It was agreed that "region" of each country could be the baseline unit as needs for adaptive management of forests should be assessed by region, taking into account regional peculiarities. Questions to assess motivations for adaptive management, expected/already observed outcomes of adaptive management along timescales and ownership should be added. Each signatory would identify a set of stakeholders to be approached with a request to respond to the survey questionnaire.

A small group of experts ***agreed*** to develop a draft questionnaire taking into account the feedback provided during the session, and using available international experience. Experts from Austria, Spain, Sweden, EFI, EUSTAFOR, FAO and the Thünen Institute of Forest Ecosystems/ IUFRO Task Force will work with and advise the Liaison Unit on the document.

6. Preparation of two workshops addressing agroforestry strategies and forest protection

Two break-out groups (moderated by EFI and Turkey, respectively) discussed the workshops planned in the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme for 2018. They serve to underpin implementation efforts at pan-European level. The following two boxes summarize the feedback provided by experts to ***further guide*** organization of both events.

Workshop 1 -- suggested title, rationale, structure, format

Understanding the contribution of Agroforestry to forest landscape resilience

- Agroforestry (AF) is a way of managing more open forests, which can better cope with drought at the dry forest distribution limit. This may become more important in the future as more forest areas will be affected by severe droughts.
- AF is an important management option to reduce fire risk in fire-prone forests, particularly in the Mediterranean. Silvo-pastoral systems can play a key role in preventing or reducing fire damage.
- Landscape perspective of AF systems, which includes shelterbelts in agricultural fields, using short rotation forestry and coppices for afforestation of abandoned land and creating landscape mosaics, among other benefits. Such AF components in the landscape can have positive impacts on resilience of agricultural and forest systems, e.g. through positive impacts on biodiversity and reduced wind speed.
- Legal conditions for AF in different countries – possible barriers for a wider uptake of AF.

Objective (from the Work Programme): to assess current knowledge and make recommendations for further work on agroforestry strategies for building resilience and promoting adaptation to climate change, combating land degradation, desertification

Structure -- invited presentations:
Bringing regional examples of AF systems, such as
- Use of agroforestry approaches in dryland forest ecotone – option to maintain forests under climate change, for instance in the forest–steppe, e.g. Hungary
- Mediterranean country as example for fire prevention through grazing
- Wind damage moderation through shelter belts, e.g. Austria

A synthesis presentation on countries' experiences and perspectives. To prepare this, a data collection step is needed whereby countries report on their national perspectives on AF systems, including a brief summary on the legal framework. This could be followed by reflections from selected countries.

Sharing experiences from recent EU-wide projects and initiatives on AF systems: AgForWard (ends 12/2017) and AFINet (started 2017). One or two presentations could demonstrate transfer of knowledge and examples of innovations accomplished within the projects. Perspectives of ecology, management and legislation should be addressed.

Possible discussion groups (plenary or parallel sessions):
- Legal aspects of AF implementation
- Focus on resilience (particularly interesting is the question of forests close to drought limits, as these conditions will become more common).

Final session with discussion: forming policy options and recommendations

Partners involved: Country delegates, Projects AgForWard and AFINet, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, European Union EIP-AGRI Focus Group on Agroforestry

Geographic scope: Europe + possibly extension to the Caucasus and Central Asia (FAO)

Dates and venue: dates tbd April 2018, Hungary will host the Workshop

Workshop 2 -- suggested title, rationale, structure, format

Protection of forests against natural hazards and human induced threats

Purpose (from the Work Programme): to share expertise and experience on protection of forests against current and future natural hazards and human induced threats especially those of transboundary character, e.g. drought, forest fires, storms, floods, avalanches, invasive pests, diseases and alien species.

Objective (proposed by the EG): to identify possibilities for improved cooperation for different kinds of threats at policy and practical levels

Structure -- invited presentations:
1-2 invited speakers per parallel session, covering the following areas were proposed:
- implementation focusing on financing of adaptation measures
- management of risk
- forest health monitoring
- biotic and abiotic threats both from practical and government (policy-making) side
- representatives of FAO, EFI

The EG suggested establishment of Organizing Committee that should decide on keynote speakers.

Format of the workshop:
The workshop could be divided into several parallel sessions according to different types of threats.
- biotic threats (pests diseases, alien species....)
- abiotic threats (forest fires, droughts, storms ....)

Each session could start with introductory presentations followed by moderated discussion that would lead to formulation of recommendations. They will aim at experience sharing from countries as well.

Final plenary session should be organized to present results from parallel sessions and to form policy options and recommendations.

Outcomes:
- set of recommendations for cooperation at different levels: (i) governmental, (ii) practical, and (iii) science and academia
- gap analyses of adaptation measures

Dates and venue: dates tbd October/November 2018, Turkey will host the Workshop in Antalya

Duration of the workshop:
Two alternatives were discussed: 1 ½ day workshop+ ½ day field trip, or 2 full days workshop + 1 day field trip. Final decision will be made by the host country in consultation with LUB.

7. Further steps, organization of work, communication tools

FOREST EUROPE website as well as internal communication tools (communication platform, document sharing portal), available to the EG, were introduced by Mr. Igor Viszlai, LUB. It was ***agreed*** that all introductory presentations made by signatories and observers (item 4) and summary report of the meeting would be posted on the platform. Experts may wish to revise and send updated presentations to the secretariat within one week.

The possibility of holding e-Conferences was also discussed.

The secretariat informed the EG of an ongoing effort to produce short video on the perspectives of adaptation of forests to climate change in Europe, which is undertaken in collaboration with communications professionals. Several experts participated in video interviews during the meeting.

8. Conclusions and closure of the meeting

On behalf of the secretariat, Jozef Turok thanked the experts for their contributions and summarized main follow-up actions, which are highlighted in the text of this summary report. He emphasized the importance of the Expert Group, its activities and outputs in the context of preparations for Eighth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe.