

TERMS OF REFERENCE
for the FOREST EUROPE Advisory Group
on the preparation of the report „State of Europe´s Forests”

1. Background

Following the outcomes of the 7th FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference (Madrid, Spain, 20-21 October 2015), the Expert Level Meeting held in Bratislava on 11-12 May 2016 approved FOREST EUROPE (FE) Work Programme (WP) for the period 2016-2020.

The FOREST EUROPE Advisory Group for the preparation of the report „State of Europe´s Forests“ (hereinafter termed “AG”) is established according to the FE WP, Action: 4.2 Forest monitoring and reporting, where it is listed: “The ELM shall reaffirm the Advisory Group for the preparation of the report "State of Europe´s Forests" as an informal body comprising individuals from relevant international organizations and experts”.

Report on State of Europe´s Forests (SoEF) is one of the most important outputs of Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (FOREST EUROPE). This report gives a comprehensive overview on the state and trends in European forests and forestry based on the pan-European criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management (SFM). It has not only informative character, but it is a very significant document for the management and decision-making in forestry and related sectors.

SoEF is based on the national data collected for the pan-European forest reporting which shall since now reflect the Updated pan-European Indicators for SFM (adopted by the Expert Level Meeting on 1st July 2015 and endorsed by the Ministerial Conference in Madrid, Spain). National data on quantitative and qualitative indicators are collected by national correspondents through the Joint FOREST EUROPE/UNECE/FAO questionnaires or from already available sources of international data providers.

FE Liaison Unit Bratislava (LUB) with the help of AG and in the collaboration with partners – related international organizations and signatory countries, set up suitable system for collecting and preparing data for their smooth processing into the final report, which is elaborated by the experts acting in the area of particular indicators or criteria.

Monitoring and reporting on forests and SFM are regular and ongoing activities within the FOREST EUROPE process.

Ministers responsible for forests committed themselves at the Madrid Ministerial Conference in the relation to Forest Monitoring and Reporting:

- *to continue and enhance monitoring and reporting on the state and trends of European forests and progress towards SFM, as well as to monitor and report on the achievements in the implementation of the Goals for European Forests and the European 2020 Targets for Forests.*

The ministers also decided:

- *to work together as well as with relevant international organizations ... on elaboration and implementing approaches for evaluation of sustainability in forest management;*
- *to strengthen cooperation and collaboration with other processes on criteria and indicators for SFM, ... to continue streamlining reporting requirements.*

2. Scope and objective of the work of the Advisory Group

The AG is an informal body invited to formulate its opinions on all aspects related to the scope and organization of the SoEF process.

The objective of the work of AG is to contribute to the preparation of the report on SoEF, by providing technical and scientific guidance to the Liaison Unit Bratislava in their work related to all activities belonging to FE WP Action 4.2 including data collecting for the quantitative and qualitative indicators, analysing the information, reporting and preparing the report on SoEF.

The AG is also asked to review and make recommendations to principally improve existing institutional networks, to make future SoEF increasingly user-oriented and demand-driven and more closely linked with other international processes. More specifically, the AG will carry out the following tasks:

- advise on how SoEF can support sustainable forest management,
- advise on the planning, organization, process and time frame of SoEF,
- advise on technical matters related to data collection, Background Information and Relevant Definitions for Updated pan-European Indicators for SFM, enquiries for reporting and assessment of SFM,
- advise on the scope, content and reporting format for SoEF,
- advise on communication process and meetings among stakeholders in the SoEF process,
- any other SoEF related tasks approved by the AG and in accordance with the “road map” for elaboration of the report on SoEF.

3. Operational mechanism for the FOREST EUROPE Advisory Group on preparation of the report „State of Europe’s Forests“

- a. The FOREST EUROPE Advisory Group on preparation of the report „State of Europe’s Forests“ (hereafter termed AG) is established according to the FOREST EUROPE Work programme for the period 2016-2020 that was approved by the Expert Level Meeting held in Bratislava on 11-12 May 2016.
- b. The AG is composed of individuals nominated by countries and relevant international organizations and invited experts. FE LUB in cooperation with FE General Coordinating Committee (GCC) will propose the organisations and experts to be invited to the AG. LUB members involved in FE WP Action 4.2 will take part in the AG meetings appropriately as needed.
- c. The AG is an informal body and is constituted of not more than 25 members.
- d. Any member country of FOREST EUROPE process, if it so desires, can send its representative to work as an observer to the AG.
- e. The AG can invite experts to provide technical advice during its meeting or can invite professionals to attend its meeting as observers.
- f. The AG will normally meet once a year; however, it can be called, as and when required, including thematic sub-groups meetings.

- g. The AG can also function through direct and indirect (electronic) reviews and consultations, e-mail group discussions and/or other forms of work, if needed.
- h. To provide timely information and maintain transparency in its activities FE LUB will develop and maintain a website on the AG (within official FOREST EUROPE website) that will be open to public.
- i. The AG will have a Secretary provided by FE LUB to manage, document and support its business ; the secretary of the AG will be responsible for drafting, the final version of the minutes for each of its meetings and manage the website for the AG.
- j. The AG will have a Chairperson and a Vice-chairperson that will serve until the report is prepared and delivered. Chairperson and Vice-chairperson will be elected at the first AG meeting and will be selected from the list of nominations provided in advance of the first AG meeting.
- k. The Chairperson and Vice-chairperson will chair AG meetings and will approve the minutes of each AG meeting.
- l. The draft minutes of the meeting will be prepared by the Secretary and distributed to the members of the AG for comments. Based on comments received, the Secretary will finalise the minutes and submit these to Chairperson/ and Vice-chairperson for approval before posting the minutes on the website.
- m. The Secretary to the AG will facilitate necessary communication between the group and the FOREST EUROPE General Coordinating Committee and prepare information to the Expert Level Meeting in the required form and content.