

ANNEX III

Annex to the Review of the MCPFE

Task 3 Group discussions



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1 Introduction to Task 3

Group discussions are essential part of the MCPFE review. The overall aim of the MCPFE review as a whole is to provide the basis for future decisions on the strategic direction of future work of the MCPFE. The main focus is the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of work of the MCPFE. The expected result of the strategic review is a concise report on the findings of the review, including a set of concrete recommendations for action based on these findings.

The objective of Task 3 group discussions is to conduct a more focused and in-depth review and discussion of major findings with a selected number of representatives of three target groups: Signatories, Peers and Stakeholders. The discussions were carried out with a view to validate the findings of the document analysis and the written questionnaire surveys, to identify major points, including strengths, weaknesses and gaps, and to discuss implications and needs for the future development of the MCPFE.

The group discussions reviewed the findings of Task 1 and 2 and provided high-level substantive input for the development of major recommendations to the MCPFE. The Tasks 1 and 2 were distributed to the participants in advance by e-mail: result from document analysis is the MCPFE document review and summary of results from the written survey.

The group discussions were held on 9-10 June (Signatories) at the European Forestry House in Brussels, 11-12 June 2009 (Peers) at the IIASA premises in Laxenburg, Austria, and 2-3 July (Stakeholders) at the European Forestry House in Brussels.

Each group discussion involved 5-8 participants, and complementary interviews were carried out with invitees who were not able to participate in the joint sessions. The experts participated in their personal capacity. The discussions were moderated by Mr. Robert Flies, European Commission (Signatories), Prof. Sten Nilsson, IIASA (Peers), and Dr. Peter Mayer, IUFRO (Stakeholders). Discussions were facilitated by the review team Dr. Ewald Rametsteiner, IIASA and Mr. Ilpo Tikkanen, EFI.

This report is a synthesis of the conclusions and draft recommendations of the three group discussions. Detailed outcome of these group discussions are reported in separate reports (Annexes 1-3), which include also the lists of participants and the agendas of the group discussions. Also the group discussion materials are annexed to this report (Annex 4).

2 Methodology and Work Plan

Three group discussions were carried out with:

- Peers (Group Discussion 1) i.e. relevant international forest-related institutions, conventions or processes for which the MCPFE and its work is directly relevant today or might be directly relevant in the future.
- Stakeholders (Group Discussion 2) i.e. parties who affect, or can be more or less directly affected by the actions and decisions of the MCPFE. This comprises forest owners, representatives of environmental and social groups, forest industry, etc. at different levels. It also comprises MCPFE observer organisations as well as research organisations.
- MCPFE signatory states group (Group Discussion 3) i.e. representatives from a MCPFE signatory state governmental institution (or EC), with some involvement in the MCPFE – individual members participating in their personal expert capacity, not representing member states.

Each of the group discussion workshops involved a selected number of app. 8 experts and took one and a half days each. The design of the group discussions, e.g. criteria for selecting the participants, names, venues, dates and organizational preparation were approved by the Liaison Unit Oslo. The three sessions were arranged in June-July in Brussels and Laxenburg. All discussions followed the same structure and were based on an identical set of materials.

The aim of the group discussions was:

- to review the draft outcome of the document review (Task 1) and written survey (Task2)
- to provide substantive input for the development of major recommendations to the MCPFE.

Tasks 1 and 2 results were distributed to the participants with an e-mail before the sessions.

The group discussions were carried out in accordance with the following principles:

- experts participate in their personal capacity and do not represent their organizations
- discussion follows the Chatham House rule according to which the participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed
- results of the discussion will result in recommendations made by the Review Team. These recommendations are to be concrete, actionable, and prioritised. While these recommendations will be informed by the group discussions, the groups will not be responsible for developing recommendations as such, nor is the group asked to come to consensus on specific (wording of) recommendations.

The discussion results are structured according to the main discussion points (i.e. strategic positioning, relevance, added value, effectiveness and efficiency), and

analysed by comparing the different views and observations within and between the three discussion groups. The results of the comparison are summarised in the text and also a summary table showing main points is included in the report.

3 Results

The following is a summary of the three group discussions constructed under the sub-headings of the five review themes: strategic positioning, relevance, added value, effectiveness and efficiency. The review themes are interlinked and the discussions in the group sessions overlapped across the themes. The following summary collects the discussions and conclusions under the five themes. The summary bases on the discussion group reports. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, the presentation does not follow strictly the group discussion reports which are also constructed under the five themes. The discussion on specific topics in the peer, stakeholder and signatory sessions is concluded under one sub-heading only. This restructuring is made by the review team. Each of the themes is concluded with a table presenting the key points raised in the three group discussions.

3.1 Discussion: Strategic positioning of MCPFE

Both the signatories, peers and stakeholders underline that the focus of positioning of MCPFE is at the pan-European level. The pan-European scope and the cross-country approach are recognised as a value added as such.

Peers stress that the MCPFE high political potential is underutilised both with regard to global negotiations and to strong cooperation within and between the regions. Stakeholders point out that the process is driven by a few countries, and the involvement and level of activity varies across the pan-European region.

The importance of EU has increased during the MCPFE process due to the EU enlargement and development of the forest issues in the EU. EU is one of the signatories, and all 27 EU Member States are the MCPFE signatory states (46 in total). Better linkage between MCPFE platform and the EU approach is seen important: better awareness of the two approaches, better integration and timing of e.g. working groups would make the work more effective and efficient. But also strategic positioning of MCPFE has changed due to the EU development, and there is a need to review and consider how to relate and interact with the EU (esp. forestry strategy of the EU and the EU Forest Action Plan).

1. Strategic Positioning of MCPFE
The strategic positioning of the MCPFE is determined by its relation to topics and other bodies in the international forest policy context
Signatories:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic positioning is topic and issue dependent, and different organizations and actors have different core competences to address specific issues, such as nfps, C & I, timber markets or biodiversity. Impact of strategic positioning can be direct or indirect. - Strength: The MCPFE has a cross-country and pan-European approach, as well as voluntary and flexible policy process with stakeholder involvement; - Challenge: strength in issue identification (voluntary and flexible.), but weakness in implementation (compliance). - Focus has been on forestry core topics. Strategic positioning with regard new issues arising from other policy sectors, such as climate change, has been weaker. Credibility by all forest-related stakeholders is important. - The challenge is also the equal involvement of EU (27) and non-EU countries (19) into the process.
Peers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focus is the pan-European level; positioning is successful in some core forest policy areas, but weak outside forest sector, e.g. in policy fora dealing with biodiversity, climate change or energy. - EU's role has increased (enlargement and role in forest policy issues): need to review and consider different models of how to relate to and interact with the EU, e.g. combining the strength of a voluntary flexible MCPFE process with strengths of the EU approach. - few gaps in topics that the MCPFE did not recognize early enough to take a lead, e.g. forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG). - legally binding agreement of the MCPFE would change the nature of the process, with likely high costs with regard to flexibility, political ambition, and initiative, but possibly with positive effects on national implementation of commitments - MCPFE has high political potential but this potential is under-utilized both with regard to global negotiation power and for strong cooperation within Europe and with other forest-related regional processes and initiatives. - SFM is an important concept for the forestry context and can make a contribution to other sectors, but is possibly not seen as the concept to adopt and use by actors in other policy areas such as biodiversity or water policy. Different topics (biodiversity, water, energy) need to be addressed in their respective policy fora - two different trajectories: either a "forestry club" trying to raise its profile through a legally binding agreement, or a more flexible, swift, more ambitious body that articulates ideas, identifies most important topics and raises these to higher political levels while they are still emerging issues. - Weaknesses relate to the institutional setup and process; common developments of institutions during their lifespan (decreasing "novelty" factor), and related decreasing political attractiveness (to ministers), as well as on the capacity of the MCPFE.
Stakeholders:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MCPFE is well-known within forest sector, but not outside the classical forest sector. - MCPFE is not cross-sectoral enough - Communication should be improved; it is not easy to communicate MCPFE "products". This is the case especially to external sectors, to policy makers and practitioners. - MCPFE concept is too narrow: SFM and protection compared with landscape approach and ecosystem approach. - Key actors' participation: Not all representatives are actively participating. On the other hand, also not all players are part of the process (e.g. from other sectors) - MCPFE process is driven by a few countries – involvement and level of activity varies across pan-European region.

MCPFE is perceived well-known within the core forestry sector, but weakly positioned and not so well-known outside the forestry sector. Linkage to other sectors is weak, and from stakeholders' point of view the MCPFE is not cross sectoral enough. Peers point out that the positioning outside the forestry sector cannot be remedied quickly or easily, but it requires long-term partnerships. Peers mention UNECE and PEBDLS as good cases where such partnership approach has functioned well and could be taken as an example for long-term partnerships.

Stakeholders see MCPFE concept too narrow, because SFM and protection of forests are sector-specific topics compared to the landscape and ecosystem approaches. Peers see weaknesses related to institutional setup and process that affect also the strategic positioning of the MCPFE e.g. through ability and capacity to developing and starting initiatives, and to reach out to and be present in other fora, such as CBD and UNFCCC.

All discussion groups see that the MCPFE has been important in identifying issues. But there are also gaps in topics, e.g. FLEG is raised as an example by the peers on a topic which the MCPFE did not recognise early enough to take a lead. Other themes brought up in the group discussions as issues which are not sufficiently addressed are e.g. climate change, governance, tenure rights and financing of SFM, illegal logging and poverty, protection topics and finance.

Communication is emphasised as important – and as a weak point of the MCPFE – in all three discussion groups. A clear definition of the MCPFE, its objectives and targets would be needed in order to be able to communicate the MCPFE better. Stakeholders perceive that the MCPFE products are not easy to communicate to external sectors, to policy makers and to practitioners. The importance of credibility for stakeholders is underlined both by the signatories and stakeholders. Peers underline that MCPFE must increase their efforts in getting environmental NGOs really involved in the process.

3.2 Discussion: Relevance of MCPFE

In the discussion groups the relevance was linked to e.g. clear focus of the agenda (peers), to level of implementation (stakeholders) and to changes over time and evolvement of the process (signatories).

East and South Eastern Europe countries were raised in all discussions as key areas: relevance of the MCPFE for these countries is high because of the developments and transitions taking place since 1990's. At the same time, it was pointed out that the disengagement of these countries should be of concern for the MCPFE. Signatories and peers pointed out that the SEE regions and countries are an area where the MCPFE can create a true value added. Signatories indicate means for better inclusion by e.g. using EU funds, integration of these countries in the preparation of the process and organisation of MCPFE event in these countries. Peers define that performance could be improved e.g. through capacity building but also supporting a peer-to-peer collaboration platforms – in order to be trusted MCPFE must urgently deal with the non-sufficient achievements in South East Europe, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus.

2. Relevance of MCPFE
Relevance: The extent to which the MCPFE and its objectives are pertinent to needs of other bodies and organizations
Signatories:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevance is subject to changes over time and evolvement of the process itself; - More difficult to maintain relevance with more fora involved as well as to coordinate activities today compared with the situation in the past; - Technical vs. emerging new policy issues; in many new areas MCPFE is one player amongst many other actors; relevance varies among different stakeholders having an interest in forest-related issues; some issues not relevant if seen as "the foresters"; - A number of issues arising from outside forest sector, were not addressed, but on the other hand it is likely good to have a focus; SE-Europe is a key region as well as the key is the policy relevance of the process. - Challenge: most issues come from outside the sector, and there is competition between other processes (climate, CBD etc.); - Relevance of MCPFE to other actors and sectors should be clarified through interactive communication (need to listen and learn); mobilizing interest at pan-European level as well as at global level is important;
Peers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relevance of a body tends to be higher if its agenda is focused in scope, but substantive ("deep"). For the MCPFE this would imply that a number of areas the MCPFE addressed were of less relevance, and the efforts spent there could have been more effectively used elsewhere. Also the limited overall capacity of the MCPFE calls for a clear focus. - observer countries as well as international organizations and stakeholders need to be engaged much more proactively in the Ministerial Conference and in the deliberation on topics in the run up to Ministerial Conferences. - disengagement of countries, particularly some countries in Eastern and South Eastern Europe should be an area of concern to MCPFE, as they might signal waning relevance and interest. These regions and countries are an area where the MCPFE can create truly high added value (capacity building, peer-to-peer collaboration platforms). - relevance of the MCPFE was closely coupled with identifying the most relevant topics, and lifting these to a high political level agenda (proactive regional leadership) - threat of a bias towards positive self-deception of in particular signatory countries of the relevance of the MCPFE and its work, ignoring weak signals of a possible drift sideways, e.g. connected to the emergence and growth of the EU, or of dominating topics outside the forestry core areas, such as climate change and energy. - in the past highest success was often reached when the process kept its flexibility, and provided proactive policy leadership, which makes it attractive at high political level. - important to have governance mechanisms that foresee more in-depth open and transparent monitoring and reporting on progress in meeting commitments.
Stakeholders:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As a general observation it was stated that relevance depends on the level of implementation - MCPFE has global relevance in narrow forest-related issues. - From a pan-European perspective MCPFE has a fair role, but there are other processes (EU and UN processes) with other mandates. The aim should be to achieve a synergetic effect. - At the national level MCPFE has had less role in general, but has had more relevance in the East European countries (transition period in 1990's). - At the EU level, MCPFE is in general relevant; but there are several interests and it is difficult to communicate MCPFE to EU level processes. - There is a fair implementation of: criteria and indicators (C&I), national forest programmes (nfps), topics of water and forests and of protected and protective forests, as well as the MCPFE reports.

Several interests were highlighted as a challenge for MCPFE both by the stakeholders and the signatories. Signatories defined that there is competition between other processes (climate, CBD etc.) and the issues come from outside the forest sector. It is more difficult to maintain the relevance with more fora involved at present than it used to be in the beginning of the process.

Peers emphasise narrowing scope and deepening the substantive aspects. MCPFE would need to strive to push cutting-edge issues. Relevance is closely coupled with identifying the most relevant topics and lifting these to a high political agenda – to provide a proactive regional leadership. Better involvement of observers (i.e. observer countries, international organisations and stakeholders) in deliberation of topics and in preparation of the ministerial conferences would improve proactiveness.

All three groups emphasise the importance of flexibility of the process. The peers see also a threat of bias towards positive self-deception (esp. by the signatory countries) in assessing the relevance of the MCPFE and ignoring weak signals of a possible drift sideways. Openness and inclusiveness of the process is emphasised by all three groups as an important aspect also for the future.

3.3 Discussion: Added Value of MCPFE

Signatories acknowledge that the MCPFE conferences and resolutions have had high added value. Peers see that this has been the case in the past: an important added value has been provided by MCPFE identifying topics of high political relevance. Now such topics of high political interest that could be launched as attractive new topic are more and more difficult to find, and the Resolutions as the main approach and format of outputs over time become less attractive mode of operation. Signatories share the need to focus and address most relevant issues which might create best added value.

High political involvement is needed, but peers and stakeholders see the strong formalisation of the Ministerial Conference also a weakness: no real dialogue or discussion takes place in the conferences which makes it less relevant for peers and stakeholders. The stakeholders however give the MCPFE a credit for providing a networking possibility and a platform for exchange of views – even though at the same time the stakeholders show concern about missing relevant players (e.g. interrelated sectors, investors and private sector).

The pan-European scope is an added value as such – the MCPFE is not only a European Union process. Stakeholders also point out that the MCPFE is referred in the EU Council Working Party on Forestry, and as such help the EU level discussions in favour of forest. Signatories also point out that EU Member States have an important role in this respect i.e. how the EU and pan-European processes interlink and how to engage the EU to pay more attention to MCPFE.

3. Added Value of MCPFE and its outputs
<p>Signatories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addressing issues with comparative advantage might create best added value, and it is good to have focus; added value as well as relevance fluctuate over time; - MCPFE conferences and resolutions have had high added value; - Challenge is to identify areas of high added value. This can be contributed to through improved coordination and collaboration as well as via better communication - Process has contributed to national forest policy development e.g. in terms of renewed forest legislation, nfps, C & I, and implementation of recommendations.
<p>Peers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The strong formalization of the Ministerial Conferences event was not unanimously supported (and neither rejected) – it is less of an initiative generating event than it could be. - it is inevitable that there are fewer and fewer genuinely new topics of high political interest that can be launched as attractive new topic. The resulting need for “recycling” Resolutions, however, results in declining attractiveness of the New Resolution as the main approach and format of outputs over time. - an important added value in the past was to identify topics of high political relevance. It can equally be of high added value to create consensus on topics where signatory countries and stakeholders have diverging views, or to develop a common conceptual basis (such as SFM and C&I). - the added value of the MCPFE as a whole need not be questioned (and the MCPFE would have to be established now if it were not existing). However, “business as usual” cannot be seen as an option for the future. - “packaging” and effective and wide communication of products the MCPFE produces (including Ministerial Conferences, Declarations, Resolutions, meetings, reports, etc.) is important but not a strength of the MCPFE. The products are not sufficiently distributed, promoted and communicated.
<p>Stakeholders:</p> <p>MCPFE's added value is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - networking possibility and providing a platform for exchange of views - technical documents and guidelines - helping national policies: NFPs - helping EU level decisions in favour of forest (Council working party) - pan-European scope as such - flexibility of the process.

Contribution to national policies (nfps) and C&I are mentioned by both the signatories and stakeholders, but stakeholders mention also the concrete outcomes as a value added from the MCPFE, e.g. technical documents and guidelines. Peers point out that also the already available MCPFE products could be made better communicated and promoted by packaging (e.g. toolbox of good practice guidance). Similar consideration is also brought up in the two other discussion groups: it is important to build on what has already been produced.

There is no real substitute for the MCPFE currently. Peers see that the MCPFE has had a noticeable impact on rule-setting issues. The practitioners' level emphasises implementation of the resolutions and good intentions defined: from stakeholder point of view the MCPFE resolutions remain abstract – the national implementation is not communicated as a European process, but a national process. The importance of implementation is raised also the by the peers and signatories. Showing the value added would also require mechanism to set targets and to follow-up and monitor the implementation. Peers state MCPFE must make a substantial effort to increasing the transparency and clarity in monitoring reporting by participating countries.

Linkage and contribution of the MCPFE on one hand to global questions and on the other hand to regional and national/sub-national implementation needs further elaboration. Both peers and stakeholders call for definition how MCPFE contributes to the global forest objectives and to the global goals.

3.4 Discussion: Effectiveness of MCPFE

Stakeholders define that the MCPFE has a limited effectiveness forest policy sector (i.e. effectiveness depends on the instrument), but with regard to other sectors the effectiveness is almost non-existent. Furthermore the public awareness of the MCPFE is non-existent.

Signatories emphasise connection to EU (forestry strategy and the EU Forest Action Plan) as possibility to improve effectiveness of the MCPFE. Stakeholders also call for better synergy of efforts ongoing in parallel in MCPFE and EU (e.g. working groups).

All three groups point also out the role and functions of the MCPFE organisation in relation to improving the effectiveness (and efficiency). There is a need to increase the capacities in the Secretariat, but there are also needed clear and explicit Terms of Reference for the work of Liaison Unit and the General Coordination Committee.

On more general terms, there is a lack of explicitly stated targets for the MCPFE. Target indicators (quantitative targets) would contribute also to monitoring and follow-up. Stakeholders point out that it is not easy to prove and communicate the SFM as an important objective of MCPFE. Staying credible for all stakeholders would require neutral information and monitoring (quantitative evidence) – science would have role to play in this respect. Closer cooperation with the stakeholders and the science would help to identify the weak points and needs for further work.

<p>4. Effectiveness of MCPFE</p> <p>Effectiveness: The extent to which objectives set are achieved and the MCPFE has the desired impact</p>
<p>Signatories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - legal commitments might not be the only option to strengthen implementation; legally binding arrangements may have consequences on the expense of key strengths of the MCPFE of being voluntary, open and integrative process. Difficult legal issues are related to EU legislation vs. non-EU countries - Compliance mechanisms to be explored; - MCPFE impacts through networks and the process itself as well as through MCPFE outputs; - EU, especially Forestry Strategy and FAP, is an essential partner to improve effectiveness of MCPFE; - Many fora and processes exist to share experiences on specific topics/issues to be addressed.
<p>Peers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the products of the MCPFE (such as Resolutions) that were the most politically ambitious and relevant to national implementation of SFM tended to have the highest impact (i.e. in particular H1). Likewise, products in the "core forest topic" tended to have considerably higher impact than those that are not "core forestry topics". - "Resolution recycling" is questioned, because their implementation and impact on the ground (i.e. in forest policies in countries) is likely to decrease, not increase over time. Adding new Resolutions on top of the existing ones does not enhance effective implementation of the ever increasing commitments on the ground either. - effectiveness of the current approach: Currently there are not effective communication structures and procedures within all countries to promote and disseminate MCPFE results, neither between ministry sections, nor with stakeholders – and often possibly even not within the forestry section. - the main bodies of the MCPFE, including the General Coordinating Committee and the Liaison Unit do not have clear and explicit Terms of Reference for their work (affects efficiency but also effectiveness of the work of the MCPFE). Lack of explicitly stated targets for the MCPFE makes it difficult to measure success/progress and impact. - MCPFE is a "group-owned" body, i.e. countries and to a certain extent stakeholders are considered to be co-owners of the MCPFE process. This is a clear strength. However, one of the strength of the process in the past was that it enabled new ideas to emerge and discuss rather openly, and that the MCPFE allowed meeting with not only other country representatives (now increasingly possible through EU bodies) but in particular also with stakeholder representatives and others. - in order to be effective, openness is essential. Equally important is to expand from the core topics and from core groups of people to take up new topics and open up to new people. This needs careful management. - experiences in other fora have shown that partnership and collaboration can be quite enhanced by developing collaboration from concrete topics of joint interest to specific other partners, and by growing a network of collaboration amongst bodies. Using the existing well established partnerships (UNECE, PEBDLS), this approach could grow towards a regional "Collaborative Partnership on Forests".
<p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal means of communication at MCPFE meetings are effective. - For reaching the goals, effectiveness is mixed; it depends on the instrument. - For the forest policy sector there is a limited effectiveness of MCPFE, but with regard to other sectors it is almost non-existent. - Public awareness of MCPFE is non-existent. - There should be a difference between MCPFE and the other processes; clear definitions of different objectives are necessary. - There is a varied impact of MCPFE decisions on national forest policy. - SFM (as important objective of MCPFE) is, in general, not easy to prove and communicate

Signatories see that the compliance mechanisms are to be explored. Peers propose formulation of a long-term vision and targets together with focusing the implementation in each mandate period to 2-3 goals to improve the effectiveness.

All three groups emphasised the importance of flexibility of the process. The flexibility, voluntary nature and openness of the MCPFE are brought up as key strengths – and weaknesses of the process. The topic of legally and non-legally arrangements was discussed in all three groups. Legally binding agreement has pros and cons which are reflected in the discussion across all five review themes: legal obligations would contribute to better implementation and follow-up, but most likely the approach would lead to decreasing flexibility and openness in identifying and defining new issues. The think tank is mentioned in stakeholder and peers group discussions: there is need for a platform to identify and set the topics.

Stakeholders specifically mention that the informal means of communication at the MCPFE meetings are effective. Openness is also underlined by the peers with respect to inclusion of new topics and new people. The feeling of ownership by signatories and to some extent also the stakeholders of the MCPFE is a strength, but there is also need to remain open as well as to expand from the core topics and core groups to take up new topics and open up to new people. Peers and signatories mention UNECE and PEBDLs partnerships in relation to effectiveness, but the peers take a step further: using the existing well established partnerships the approach of collaboration could grow towards a regional Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

3.5 Discussion: Efficiency of MCPFE

All groups discuss the organisational setup and e.g. role, mandate and resources of the Liaison Unit and General Coordination Committee in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency (see above). Stakeholders point out that the policy and technical discussions need right participants with the expertise needed and the relevant political level. Timing is also important: there are parallel processes ongoing especially at the EU level without linkage to / from MCPFE. Also signatories call for better coordination and coherent approaches between the EU and the MCPFE.

All groups raise the question of ability and structures to address emerging issues flexibly. The combination of short-term flexibility and long-term strategic approach at the same time is challenging (see above on effectiveness). Stakeholders also point out that in addition to the monitoring and evaluation of the MCPFE process, it would also be useful to assess the resources invested in MCPFE (i.e. input-output assessment).

Implementation of the resolutions needs to be addressed in order to make MCPFE more efficient. Peers indicate that implementation could be facilitated through e.g. partnerships and capacity building and other means of exchange of experience and extracting best practises.

<p>5. Efficiency of MCPFE</p> <p>Efficiency: The extent the desired effects (outputs, outcomes) are achieved with reasonable input; the speed with which the MCPFE identifies and puts issues on its agenda, and develops solutions</p>
<p>Signatories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efficiency has increased with time and via attention paid at pan-European level approach - Multitude of networking platforms exists in support of efficiency - Co-ordination and coherent approaches between EU-MCPFE increasingly important - Finance is an issue related to efficiency
<p>Peers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MCPFE is currently not a “think tank” for countries and the sector, and does not act in ways to promote this particular role of the MCPFE through bringing in external expertise (incl. e.g. through established partnerships). The role of the “Round Tables” as the “think tank” has diminished over time, as the same people meet and discuss than do at the regular ELMs. This results in a weak “ad hoc” process of issue identification. - the current modus operandi of the MCPFE (consensus, the way topics are identified, etc.) is weakly prepared to take a truly leadership role that would enable the MCPFE to be efficient in identifying key topics and addressing them quickly. - equally, rigid work plans prevent the MCPFE from responding flexibly to developments emerging between conferences. It would thus be necessary to devise a structure and procedures that allow long-term regular work as well as short term flexibility in responding to emerging issues. - MCPFE is perceived weak in disseminating solutions and – in particular – in facilitating implementation through a range of means, including through partnerships and capacity building assistance, e.g. to some Eastern and South-Eastern European countries, but also through other means of enabling experience exchange and in extracting best practice lessons. Implementation being a serious gap identified in earlier Tasks, it is likely necessary to put this area stronger into focus if one is to make the MCPFE more efficient. - legally binding agreement means both advantages and disadvantages i.e. it might help in strengthening implementation of commitments, but the implications at the issue identification and topic setting end (beginning) of the process, including the elaboration of binding commitments and obligations, might be huge. - financing the work of the MCPFE is important issue to be addressed and the options considered
<p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship between resources invested (input) and the outcome (output) is not clear. - Efficiency varies by topics i.e. some topics are taken up early, some issues are missing. - Timing needs attention: there are parallel processes ongoing without linkage to/from MCPFE – especially at the EU level. - There are limited resources for stakeholders to participate. - There are time-consuming deliberations/negotiations to address the issues.

Communication and dissemination are essential. Stakeholders point out that it would be important to find resources to translate the MCPFE resolutions and outcomes to national languages – allowing also checking them with the national legislations. Peers point out (relating to effectiveness) that working of the MCPFE resolutions to sub-national level – or between different Ministries or together with the stakeholders in the signatory countries – is likely hindered by the fact that there are currently no effective communication structures and procedures within countries to promote and disseminate the MCPFE results. Stakeholders call for assessment of obstacles for implementation in the national level.

Involvement of observers (organisations, countries and stakeholders) is emphasised important by all three groups. It would increase participation and speed up the uptake. The stakeholders would need support for their participation e.g. in the working groups, but also better synergy of efforts ongoing in several forums (esp. MCPFE and EU) would improve stakeholders' possibility to participate.

Question of financing is brought up in all three discussion groups: the role, mandate and resources of the LU and GCC should be discussed as a crucial question.

4 Concluding Remarks and Draft Recommendations

MCPFE has its strengths regarding the relevance at Pan-European level especially in core forestry issues, such as concept of SFM, criteria and indicators as well as national forest programmes. Flexibility of the process and its voluntary, non-legally binding nature has allowed addressing a broad range of policy-relevant issues. However, many new issues emerging from outside forest sector and global processes, such as climate change and governance related, e.g. FLEG(T), have not been addressed sufficiently, and thus, being a weak point. MCPFE has, therefore, underutilized its political potential vis-a-vis other actors and processes. Regional challenge still remains in the strengthening of the involvement and participation of East and South Eastern European countries. Full stakeholder participation, especially regarding environmental NGOs, should be activated.

The key points for the development of the MCPFE are focusing on:

- 1) deliberations on legally binding arrangement,
- 2) better coherence with EU policies,
- 3) collaborative partnership arrangements,
- 4) long-term vision with focused goals,
- 5) monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and
- 6) role, mandate and resources of the Liaison Unit and GCC.

Three major mechanisms and development points together with possible institutional arrangements to enhance the strategic approach in identifying and addressing emerging new issues could be deliberated as follows:

- Ongoing deliberations on legally binding arrangement form a core of outlining the strategic directions of the MCPFE, but they have also raised diverse expectations. Optimally discussions on options for legally-binding arrangements should seek for a solution which could contribute to 1) raise the political profile and commitment of MCPFE Declarations and Resolutions, 2) improvement of national level implementation, and 3) still maintain the flexibility and proactive nature of the process;
- To design more coherent policy approaches together with EU policies, such as Forestry Strategy and EU Forest Action Plan (FAP) through seeking synergies between MCPFE Work Programme and FAP, including relevant cross-sectoral enhancement outside the sector;
- To explore Pan-European solutions for collaborative partnership arrangements with key actors, stakeholders and institutions.

MCPFE has created added value especially in contributing to national forest policy development processes in terms of nfps as well as in designing C&I and practical guidelines in support of SFM. At Pan-European level, Ministerial Conferences and their outputs with political commitments are seen valuable and beneficial. However, the added value has been low related to climate change and socio-cultural issues. Better focus on emerging and fewer policy issues could further enhance added value. Added value, as well as effectiveness of the activities, could be enhanced through intensified communication tools and mechanisms targeted especially to national and pan-European policy makers and general public.

Basic prerequisites for improved relevance, added value and the effectiveness of MCPFE would be the following governance development tasks:

- MCPFE, as a Pan-European think tank and platform, should have a long-term and shared vision with well defined and focused, measurable policy goals as a guiding frame; MCPFE should also contribute to global forest-related objectives.
- In support of achieving the goals, regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be designed and resourced. In this context, better interaction between science community, policy-making and practical implementation should be generated.

Efficiency, in terms of identifying issues and addressing them through the work programme and its elements, is dependent on organizational set-up of MCPFE, i.e. overall governance solutions. In this context, improved science-policy-practise interaction is the key. In addition to deliberations on collaborative partnership arrangements, the role, mandate and working modalities, together with resources of the Liaison Unit and General Coordination Committee (GCC) should be revisited. “Think

tank” role of the process in identifying issues could be intensified via e.g. focused expert groups based on partnership between key actors. Efficiency, like effectiveness, in achieving desired outcomes and impacts in forests and forest sector in practise, is dependent on how well the solutions, recommendations and commitments are disseminated and communicated to national actors.