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TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

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**MONITORING, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING
ON SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT**

MCPFE EXPERIENCES IN BRIEF

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Introduction

The “Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe” (MCPFE) as a high-level political initiative for co-operation across Europe aims to address the most important issues related to forests and forestry in its work. Two components of that work might be of interest for the discussion on monitoring, assessment and reporting on the progress towards sustainable forest management (SFM) in the frame of UNFF.

For many years the MCPFE has been working with Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for SFM and has gained significant practical experience with regard to reporting on SFM in the region based on these C&I. Recently the MCPFE has also conducted an assessment of the MCPFE work in comparison to the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action.

In the following the MCPFE work is briefly described and some perspectives are given regarding the relation to the future work of UNFF.

1. Past MCPFE work on pan European criteria and indicators for SFM

Three years after the First Ministerial Conference in Strasbourg and one year after the UNCED in Rio 1992, the Second Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Helsinki in 1993, promoted the forest related decisions of UNCED in Europe and confirmed the commitment of the European forest ministers to co-operate in the promotion of SFM in Europe.

In the follow up process to the Helsinki Conference the pan-European criteria and indicators were developed to promote and assess progress towards SFM in Europe as described in Helsinki Resolutions. This work resulted in the formulation and adoption of a set of 6 criteria and 27 most suitable quantitative indicators for sustainable forest management in 1994.¹ In addition a list of 101 descriptive indicators related to policy instruments was also developed and adopted on expert level in 1995.²

The first effort to test the suitability of the adopted pan-European C&I for SFM and to gather information was carried out in 1994/95. The main results indicated that reference years and the time interval used by the countries varied and that the classifications and definitions used differed, thus creating problems of comparability. In addition the need to broaden the data collection to monitor the whole forest ecosystem and to integrate environmental aspects and socio-economic data into forest statistics was identified.

Three years later the MCPFE produced a report for the Third Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Lisbon, Portugal in June 1998. This report was based

¹ At the adoption of the C&I for SFM the experts stressed that the indicators are neither final nor totally comprehensive since forests have multiple functions, some of which might not be adequately covered and that the indicators will be analysed and further developed during the Process.

² Generally the main features of the pan-European criteria and indicators were identified to be: uniform across Europe, national level, coherent with Ministerial Conference Resolutions, esp. Resolutions H1 and H2, comprehensive and simple, reportable and adjustable

on a preliminary analysis of the UN-ECE/FAO Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment 2000 (TBFRA 2000) and included 21 out of 27 of the quantitative indicators in their assessment. Six indicators and the experiences concerning the descriptive indicators were reported individually by countries. All information is provided in the follow-up reports of the Lisbon Conference.

At the Lisbon Conference the ministers gave a high political status to the pan-European criteria, indicators and operational level guidelines by adopting Resolution L2 "Pan-European Criteria, Indicators and Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management" as one of two resolutions.

With resolution L2 the ministers also decided to proceed to implement, continuously review and further improve the associated indicators for SFM. In order to clarify views and expectations in this respect and to give political-level orientation for further work on C&I after the Lisbon Conference, a questionnaire on the "Improvement of Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, Data Collection and Reporting" was elaborated by the Liaison Unit and sent to the signatories and observers of the MCPFE in July 1999.

As main results the answers received indicate that at present notably Criteria 4 ("Biological Diversity"), 5 ("Protective Functions") and 6 ("Other Socio-Economic Functions and Conditions") are not covered satisfactorily by existing indicators.

Furthermore, the need for further clarification and improvement of terms and definitions and the usefulness of exploring possibilities of further aggregation of data, notably for better communication to decision makers and the public, as well as of enhancing comparability and compatibility of the Pan-European C&I with existing sets of C&I for SFM of other international and regional initiatives were stated.

3. Current MCPFE work on C&I for SFM

As a follow-up action of the analysis and as one part of the overall MCPFE Work Programme the improvement of the MCPFE indicators was started in 2001.

In order to best take into account existing knowledge and experience made on C&I and to adequately reflect the variety of situations and circumstances throughout the European continent, an "Advisory Group"³ was established which consults with other experts and invites further advice on specific issues or aspects on the MCPFE indicators.

In a series of four workshops open to all interested parties the MCPFE is currently preparing for the third workshop to be convened on 14-15 January in Budapest, Hungary. A draft set of improved pan-European indicators should be presented to the consideration and possible adoption of the next MCPFE Expert Level Meeting on 10-11 June 2002 in Vienna. Finally the

³ The Advisory Group is constituted by persons representing the UNECE/FAO, the Inter-secretariat Working Group on Forest Statistics, the UNECE Team of Specialists on the Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment (TBFRA) and IUFRO, the European Forest Institute (EFI), ICP Forests, European Environmental Agency.

improved set will be brought to the attention of the European ministers at the 4th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe 28-30 April 2003 in Vienna.

A report on the state of Europe's forests on SFM based on the pan-European C&I for SFM will be submitted to the Fourth Ministerial Conference.

4. Reporting on IPF/IFF proposals for action

The MCPFE has also been working on a comparison of the overall work of the MCPFE in implementing ministerial resolutions and the IPF/IFF proposals for action. The results of this comparison have been reported to the MCPFE participants in September 2000 and have also been presented at a side event to the first substantive session of UNFF in June 2001 in New York.

The assessment visualises several strong linkages between the MCPFE Work Programme and the IPF/IFF proposals for action, and in some areas the IPF/IFF proposals for action constitute the explicit reference for work of the MCPFE. Important thematic areas of the work of the MCPFE that are strongly linked to the proposals for action are national forest programmes; criteria and indicators for SFM as well as impacts of airborne pollution on forests.

Linkages of a considerable degree have also been established with a number of other issues, including conservation and protected areas; deforestation and forest degradation; fragile ecosystems; needs and requirements of Countries with Economies in Transition as well as transfer of technologies to support SFM; wood and non-wood forest goods and services, including valuation, the relation to substitutes and the role of these products in rural development.

However, the assessment also reveals several thematic areas addressed at the global level that are only partially or not at all dealt with by the MCPFE. For example, issues related to international co-operation in financial assistance, trade and environment, traditional forest related knowledge and economic instruments as well as tax policies have not been considered in the work of the MCPFE in the past.

In general this type of assessment is a first approach towards giving information on the linkages of the regional level to the globally agreed actions.

5. C&I, IPF/IFF proposals for action and UNFF

The importance of regional and national C&I as a basis for reporting on SFM is reflected in the decision on UNFFs multi-year programme of work MYPOW.

The MCPFE has been striving towards mutual exchange and learning with other regional processes on various issues, including on C&I for SFM. In this respect the discussion on comparability and compatibility of indicators used by the various regional processes is important. Especially the criteria on SFM used by the currently existing regional processes so far are characterised by considerable similarities and could be used as a guideline for this discussion. The MCPFE is committed to enhance comparability of the different sets of C&I world-wide and also to engage efforts with other regional processes and organisations to further elaborate *inter alia* common definitions of key terms and concepts.

In some discussions the possibility of developing a core set of indicators on a global level has been pointed out. In this context it is important to consider whether such a core set is achievable, reportable by all countries and meaningful in reporting comprehensively on SFM.

The UNFF in its decision on the MYPOW recognises monitoring, assessment and reporting to be complementary to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. UNFF also stresses the importance of regional and national criteria and indicators for SFM as a basis for reporting on sustainable forest management in the context of MAR.

However, when considering C&I for SFM and IPF/IFF proposals for action the underlying concepts should be recognised. While C&I for SFM are an instrument for monitoring, assessment and reporting on the state of SFM at given points in time, with the possibility for comparisons and developments after some periods of reporting, the IPF/IFF proposals for action are directly oriented towards forest policy processes. This is reflected in the way the more than 280 proposals are formulated and targeted in addressing the manifold issues identified in the global forest policy dialogue. In general they approach forest issues in a holistic and comprehensive way and include measures to be taken at international, regional and particularly at national levels.

This difference between the two concepts does not exclude the linkage of some IPF/IFF proposals for action with certain indicators - especially the qualitative indicators which address policy instruments. However, these linkages have limits when it comes to the policy process orientation of many proposals for action.

In the IPF/IFF proposals for action national forest programmes (nfp) are identified as an important implementation tool which captures their process character. The concept of national forest programmes referred to in the IFF proposals for action has been defined by the IPF in a generic way by setting out a number of elements to be considered during the development and implementation of national forest programmes.⁴

As a monitoring instrument, C&I for SFM could be one part of an nfp and of the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action.

⁴ The MCPFE is currently discussing nfps, aiming at a common pan-European understanding of its principles and elements.