

Review of the MCPFE

Final report

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1. THE REVIEW

Background

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) was launched in 1990. The forest policy context in Europe was considerably different in 1990 compared to 2009. Major changes at national levels comprise the breakdown of the iron curtain, strongly enhanced international collaboration in forest matters beyond forest dieback, substantive enlargement of the European Union (EU), an extension of the explicit concept of sustainable forest management, and implementation of new approaches to further strengthen forest policy setting through new tools and governance approaches. There have also been rapid changes in a wider context influencing European forestry. Examples of these broader transformations are rapid globalization leading to structural changes of the global forest sector and changed profitability, the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution, the emerging threats of global climate change and peaking fossil fuels causing security stresses, and societal changes towards more urbanized lifestyles.

The substantial enlargement of the EU since 1990 has also substantially increased the forest area and forest industrial capacities within the union. The EU states cover considerably more today of the territory encompassed by MCPFE signatory countries than in 1990. Irrespective of the fact that a formal EU forest policy does not exist, the EU has over the years developed ways to better and more engage on matters related to forests. This is demonstrated by the EU Forest Strategy and the EU Forest Action Plan but also through formal policies on biodiversity, climate change, energy etc having high relevance and impact on EU forestry.

In 1990, at the global level, a few major UN treaties influencing European forestry were in place (e.g. CITES). This situation changed dramatically in the early 1990s, with a range of global conventions with relevance for forestry were signed at the UNCED meeting in 1992. Extended negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests resulted in the establishment of a UN forest-related body, The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and a recently adopted non-legally binding instrument.

Thus, MCPFE operates under considerable different conditions today than at its inception.

The Role of MCPFE

The establishment of the MCPFE as an international platform in 1990 was a bold move of international governance leadership. Over the years, the MCPFE has introduced a range of new concepts for forest policy making with some of them being at the forefront of development. After its inception in 1990, MCPFE is by now a well established and recognized body in the European forest policy arena, but also providing a link between global and regional forest policy setting, as well as

being a platform for national forest policy setting. MCPFE is operating at Pan-European scale and has now the majority of the European countries as signatory countries.

Review as a Strategically Essential Element

Given the substantive changes in the context within which the MCPFE operates today as compared to 1990 and given the large body of experiences MCPFE has accumulated as a process on how to conduct international forest policy co-ordination it is perceived that MCPFE would benefit from conducting an independent and strategic oriented review of the process. The mandate to conduct a review of the MCPFE process within the working-term of the Liaison Unit Oslo was agreed upon at the Fifth Ministerial Conference in Warsaw in 2007. The mandate for the review is declared in paragraph 40 of the Warsaw Declaration, which states “Carry out a review of the MCPFE process by the Sixth ministerial Conference, by assessing progress made and obstacles faced in the implementation of its commitments”

Objectives, Scope and Principles of the Review

The overall objective 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 of the review is the strategic position, the relevance, the value added, the effectiveness and the efficiency of the work of 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 actions based on these findings.

The geographic scope of the review is global (international bodies and processes) to local. *The geographic focus* is the Pan-European region. The *time dimension* is 1990 to present, with a view towards the implications of the findings for the future.

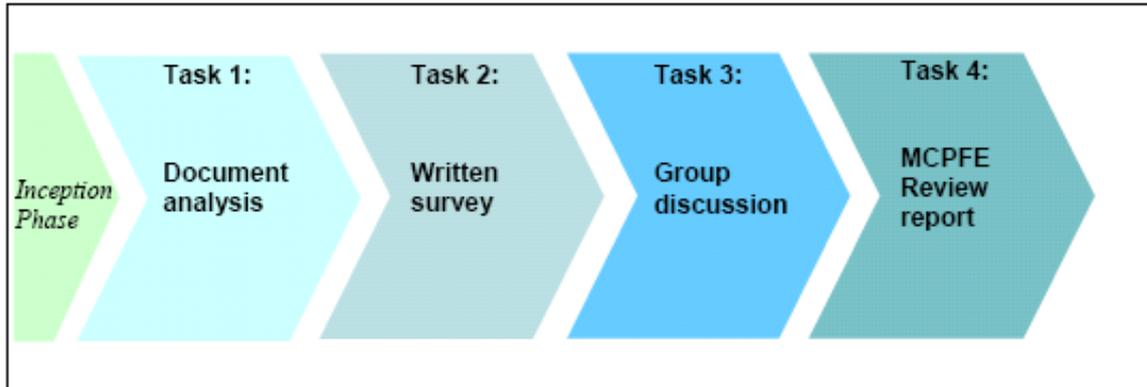
The following *general principles* are followed and ensured in the review.

1. The general approach of the MCPFE review is characterized by dialogue and mutual learning based on review evidence, with the aim to further promote and strengthen a culture of continuous improvements by MCPFE
2. The MCPFE review has an “outside-in perspective” with emphasis on the context factors that determine and shape the way MCPFE needs to operate, and the related coordination and partnerships with other bodies
3. The MCPFE review has reviewed the past , with a view towards the implications of findings for the future, with an emphasis on strategic issues
4. The MCPFE review ensures that appropriate attention is given to the diversity of situations and needs across regions in Europe
5. The MCPFE review has collected the views and experiences of peers and stakeholders from different sectors and geographical levels (global, geo-

regional, national and sub-national), and research, as well as of MCPFE signatories and observer organizations

Methodology

The methodology framework in the form of tasks of the review is illustrated in the figure below. The review consists of four major tasks.



Task 1 – the document analysis – serves as a basis for the subsequent tasks to be executed on a solid knowledge base about the MCPFE process. The document analysis reviews MCPFE documents produced during the period 1990-2008. Also relevant documents from global level forest and forest-related processes as well as documents from regional processes and institutions have been reviewed.

Task 2 – written survey – is a questionnaire-based survey targeting two major groups; “Peers and Stakeholders” for external review respectively “MCPFE signatories” for self-evaluation.

Task 3 – group discussions – is a focused and in-depth review and discussion of major findings in Tasks 1-2 with a selected number of peers, stakeholders and signatories. The experts involved discussed strengths, weaknesses, gaps and needs for future development of MCPFE. The group discussions/dialogues are carried out independently for each of the groups.

The work in all of the three tasks is organized around the core elements of the review, namely *strategic positioning* (relation to topics and other bodies in the international forest policy context), *relevance* (the extent to which MCPFE is pertinent to needs of other bodies and organizations), *value added* (added value of MCPFE and its products in forest policy making), *effectiveness* (to the extent MCPFE goals are achieved and had strived for impacts), and *efficiency* (to the extent the strived for outputs and impacts are achieved with reasonable inputs). In addition challenges and suggestions on improvements of the MCPFE process are identified.

Each of these three tasks is reported in separate detailed reports.

Task 4 – MCPFE Review Report – is summarizing the findings and results of tasks 1-3 and is focusing on prioritized concrete action-oriented recommendations with emphasis on strategic issues with respect to the future development of MCPFE. Thus, this summary report also represents Task 4 of the review.

Review Team

The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) is responsible for the review carried out by a consortium of five independent and recognized experts from IIASA, European Forest Institute (EFI), International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and the European Commission. The five experts were supported in the work by additional scientific and administrative staff from IIASA, EFI and the Life Science University of Vienna (BOKU).

Dr. Ewald Rametsteiner, IIASA/BOKU, served as responsible project leader of the review from its initiation until June 15, 2009. At this latter date Professor Sten Nilsson, IIASA, took over the function as project leader.

2. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS (Task 1)

The captioned analysis documents the evolution of the MCPFE process from its inception to 2008 on the basis of available documents. The analysis includes documents of 28 intergovernmental organizations and stakeholders linked with 109 documents.

The texts of the analyzed documents have undergone a search based on key words related to MCPFE's strategic positioning, relevance, added value, effectiveness, and efficiency. The results of the search were entered into data files for further analysis. The detailed results of the document analysis have been reported in a separate report and should not be repeated here but is attached (see Annex I).

The results of the document analysis indicate that, overall, the MCPFE seems quite well positioned. It is seen as relevant and provides added value. It has been and is fairly efficient and effective in its work. The indications from analyzing documents, however, are considerably more nuanced. If reading results under a different light, they also support the following interpretations:

The MCPFE has *strategically positioned* itself to address a broad range of forest-related topics. The process has picked up and addressed most forest and forest-related issues of relevance, particularly those emerging from the forest related processes and conventions at the global forest policy level (with a clear focus on UNCED Forest Principles and its follow-up, IPF/IFF and UNFF). Overall, the MCPFE thus focused mainly on needs and issues in the global forest contexts, where it has been able to take on most, if not all key aspects of the international forest dialogue (SFM and C&I, NFP, now LBA). In these cases the MCPFE built a

“bridge” to European contexts, led and facilitated coordinated implementation in Europe. Only few key forest policy topics emerging at global or regional levels were not taken up (e.g. illegal logging).

Issues emerging from within the European region (the “*raison d’être*” of the MCPFE) were less in focus after the MCPFE’s initial years. After 1993 the MCPFE seemingly did not make particular efforts to identify and take up needs and issues emerging from within Europe (having addressed forest fires and mountain forests in Strasbourg and countries in transition in Helsinki).

But despite MCPFE’s documented ability to deal with multiple topics, broader topics stemming from “out-side core forestry” and outside the concept of “SFM” remain to a large extent unaddressed. The MCPFE seems not to have been interested or able to position itself to take a substantive lead on issues dealt with in other fora (biodiversity, climate change, energy or other) or are based on other concepts than SFM. In some topics the MCPFE seems to have been a “follower” rather than a leader, i.e. has taken up issues after they were for some time on the agenda at national levels (such as bioenergy) or international levels (incl. EU). In some policy areas the MCPFE has taken up the issue, but was not positioned strong enough to have much impact (see effectiveness section), e.g. on climate change.

Regarding *relevance* one might observe that the MCPFE has maintained its relevance fairly well over a considerable time span, given that a longer-term existence was not necessarily to be expected at the outset. Relevance evidently has varied over time. It seems to have been higher during periods where the MCPFE focused on developing concrete solutions where the global forest policy dialogue indicated or agreed on a conceptual approach and a mechanism was needed to make these approaches more concrete and applicable (the “core products” of SFM, C&I, nfp, possibly LBA). The MCPFE did evidently not emerge as terribly relevant where the “ownership” of a process lies elsewhere (biodiversity, climate change, also research), but also where issues were not truly pan-European, i.e. relevant to all participants (forest fire, mountain forest, but also countries in transition). A stable and increasing number of signatories and observers as well high attendances at MCPFE conferences speaks for the relevance of the process. Yet, a decline in the participation of high-level politicians, in particular Ministers and Deputy Ministers, at the Warsaw Ministerial Conference in 2007 has recently raised concerns about MCPFE’s future political relevance.

The *added value* of work and results of the MCPFE is clearly highest in relation to the tools the MCPFE developed on SFM. This took considerable resources and several years to develop in a process involving stakeholders, but they continue to stand out, as reflected in the documentary evidence. The MCPFE Resolutions that display high value added are those having been most effective in influencing the agendas of the peers (sustainable forest management resolutions). The added value of other types of work or “outputs”, such as Ministerial Conferences or topical meetings are possibly a bit more difficult to trace in documents, but they might indeed also have less lasting added value. Document analysis also shows

that the existence of the body as such, and its functioning as a platform, has considerable added value.

With regard to *efficiency* and related *effectiveness*, documents analyzed indicate that efficiency in taking up issues on the agenda varies considerably, as does the time spent on processing issues and topics. This is to be expected given the different time scales underlying the various topics. During the life span of the MCPFE it has also shown that “producing” an output quickly or a too general result on a topic (i.e. Resolutions) is not necessarily useful from a cost-benefit point of view. A number of Resolutions seem to have had little effect, and were taken up again, with similar weak overall impacts (e.g. climate change). On the other hand, some topics were not taken up at all, or not consistently followed up (e.g. issues related to the major reorganization of Eastern European forest governance, cross-sectoral coordination, illegal logging), evidently for a number of reasons (including resource constraints). One reason might be the implicit orientation towards taking the lead from global level policy issues rather than a more genuine look at European issues (both of which are evidently interconnected anyhow).

Despite the value added of a range of Resolutions, many of the signatory countries have been slow in implementing many of them. The MCPFE (as a body jointly owned and governed by a group of participants, including signatory countries, stakeholders and peers) might not have taken sufficient action to help follow-up and implement commitments made jointly through e.g. capacity building, communication, monitoring, etc. Thus, overall, the impact of MCPFE commitments is limited at national levels (where it should possibly be highest), and also low at global level. In addition, the EU Commission, a signatory of the commitments and one influential body, seems to have shown increasingly less interest in taking up MCPFE results in its own policy initiatives (as evidenced by references in documents).

3. WRITTEN SURVEYS (Task 2)

Based on the analytical framework of the review two questionnaire-based surveys centered around the five core elements of the review were developed. One questionnaire was designed for the peers & stakeholders and the other for MCPFE signatories. Both surveys had 18 questions and the same principle questions but the wordings were different and tailor-made for the two different groups. In total 84 persons were selected and invited to respond to the questionnaires. There were in total 57 respondents, dominated by the signatories (35). As for the document analysis the detailed results of the written surveys have been presented in a separate report and should not be repeated here (see Annex II) for a summary report).

MCPFE is regarded by the respondents as an important and vital forest policy process encompassing a wide network of interest groups and experts. The view is that the MCPFE *strategic position* has improved over time since 1990 and with this development MCPFE’s strategic position has strengthened at national and

international levels. However, the MCPFE is only seen to be very well positioned at pan-European level, and comparatively weak at national levels. It is in fact seen as weaker at national than even at global level. As one of the main roles of the MCPFE is to develop joint commitments to be implemented at national levels, this is possibly not as it should ideally be. The written review resulted in wide agreement about the strengths of the positioning of the MCPFE: its Pan-European scope, informality and flexibility, and the involvement of stakeholders, whereby the participants are and can jointly consider themselves as “owners” of the process. The very same characteristics create conditions that are seen as a major weakness: the voluntary nature of commitments, i.e. the lack of means to follow-up and do what was decided. Respondents also noted that the MCPFE process is at times slow and sometimes yielding too general (unspecific) results.

While, as expected, the MCPFE is seen to have highest *relevance* at pan-European levels, many also see it relevant at EU and national level but considerably less so at global level, where it has had a low impact on policies. There are also concerns among stakeholders and peers that MCPFE has underperformed in influencing EU policies. The governmental representatives tend to evaluate the relevance of MCPFE higher than stakeholders and peers. There is a clear message of a need for a stronger policy for implementation of agreements and resolutions, one way of which is seen to be a legally binding agreement. Respondents also call for more (arrangements for) cooperation between actors – evidently as a means to strengthen cross-sector outreach and co-ordination. They also call for more and better communication, indicating that the results of the MCPFE are not well disseminated and made known amongst participants (and thus also not so widely implemented as they possibly were intended to be).

The results on *added value* show that added value was highest for a conceptual but also practically applicable tool clarifying the core concept of forestry (SFM). But it also showed that a quite high value across all participants is given to explicit and written common policy commitments (Resolutions), and a high level event. All participants also see topical conferences and topical reports (e.g. the State of Europe’s Forests report) as of high value. The value of a range of other guidelines developed by the MCPFE was of high value to some, but not to all participants (e.g. guidance on nfp implementation). Given that quite high added value was seen by a range of work and “products” of the MCPFE there is little reason to conclude that the different general formats used are seen as inappropriate per se.

On *effectiveness* respondents essentially underline the success of work on SFM and related tools. However, at national level, only C&I and nfp guidelines were indeed taken up, and only by a number of countries, not all. While the MCPFE is considered to have become more effective since its inception in 1990, there is evidently more than ample room for improvement if it comes to national level implementation. One perception among the respondents is that deficits identified are also linked with insufficient financial and administrative resources. In order to fulfill agreements and achieve goals in the future the resources of MCPFE has to be increased and be in par with the expected achievements of the process.

Concerning *efficiency* respondents emphasize the strength of the MCPFE as a platform for co-ordination and collaboration at international level, which they see as a real asset. The networking possibilities provided by MCPFE are thus highly regarded. MCPFE is also seen as being quite good in identifying issues. In comparison, they do not rate internal MCPFE process as efficient. They regard them to be often too lengthy and time-consuming (partly because of the institutional structure of MCPFE). There also seem to be a consensus that MCPFE has performed inefficiently in promoting internationally agreed global goals. The possibly weakest point is seen in the communication and dissemination of the results of the MCPFE, i.e. in making implementation happen. The respondents highlight EU and the national level as examples. In sum, respondents essentially perceive the MCPFE to be an excellent forum for political discussions but not as being efficient in changing the destiny of many of the issues it takes up. They call, in particular, for more cross-sector collaboration, and collaboration with more actors. They also want to see the MCPFE to be faster in responding to needs, more proactive and more flexible.

4. DERIVED JOINT OBSERVATIONS OF DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND WRITTEN SURVEYS

The detailed analysis of the documents and the responses in the written surveys were summarized by the review team into joint observations and used as input to start discussions for the five main elements of the review (strategic positioning, relevance, value added, effectiveness, and efficiency) during the succeeding group discussions (Task 3).

Strategic Positioning

1. MCPFE is strongly positioned at pan-European level, but not at global, EU, national or sub-national levels
2. MCPFE is weakly positioned in (almost) all topics outside the “core” forest policy area of (sustainable) forest management. This concerns issues such as biodiversity protection, climate, or energy.
3. Strength: pan-European approach, informality and flexibility of the MCPFE, addresses broad range of topics on forests, focus on SFM
4. Weaknesses: Voluntary nature of the MCPFE process, overlap with other regional and international processes, coordination with EU, and for some: financing MCPFE and internal structure (rotation of secretariat)
5. Development since 1990: position strengthened at national and international levels

Relevance

1. MCPFE is relevant at pan-European, national, EU level, but not on global level, and not outside its “core business”
2. MCPFE is less relevant in South-East-Europe and other parts of Eastern Europe
3. Political relevance fluctuated over the years 1990-2007, but has increased
4. Most relevant topics were: SFM, C&I, and related-topics
5. There is a broad range of not sufficiently addressed topics
6. MCPFE would have been more relevant if it had had power to enforce/foster implementation, had had better communication, and higher efficiency

Added Value

1. The added value of MCPFE output varies considerably. It tends to be higher for conceptual guidance in “core” forestry topics (SFM, C&I, NFP, also PEOLG)
2. The highest added value: MCPFE Resolutions (esp. on SFM (H1¹) and C&I (L2) and Conferences, but also other events
3. Low added value: climate change (H4, V5), socio-cultural (V3); PFA classification, afforestation guidelines
4. Added value of outputs is also uneven over time 1990-2007

Effectiveness

1. Most effective (national level impact): C&I and SFM-related topics, not very effective at global or European level (outside forestry)
2. Effectiveness also due to existence of MCPFE as a body, not only through products
3. Very effective Resolutions: Helsinki 1 and Lisbon 2
4. Effectiveness could have been improved with better communication and collaboration and strengthening of the legal status
5. Effectiveness of the MCPFE increased since 1990

Efficiency

1. MCPFE has been more efficient in identifying needs at European level and in developing common guidance
2. MCPFE has been less efficient in identifying national level needs & disseminating and promoting solutions
3. High efficiency: C&I development & SFM promotion, identifying some topics (climate change), implementing some topics
4. Low efficiency: identifying some topics (cross-sectoral collaboration, improving publicity), lengthy development processes, delivering added value (climate change, coherence), implementing some solutions
5. Efficiency has increased since 1990

¹ Abbreviations denote Resolutions in Ministerial Conferences, i.e. H1 is Helsinki Resolution 1, L = Lisbon, V = Vienna)

The above observations and issues served, element by element as the starting point for the discussions in the Group Discussions/Dialogues, which are addressed in the following section.

5. GROUP DISCUSSIONS/DIALOGUES (Task 3)

The objectives of the group discussions were to review the results of the document analysis and the written surveys and to provide substantive input for concrete strategic recommendations for the future operation of MCPFE.

Three different group discussions/dialogues were organized and executed during two days with each group. The groups involved were; peers (international forest-related institutions, conventions or processes for which MCPFE work is perceived as relevant); stakeholders (parties affecting or being affected MCPFE activities); and signatories (representatives of MCPFE signatory state governmental organizations). Each group discussion had as minimum eight selected experts participating and the dialogues were moderated by three independent moderators. The experts participated in their personal capacity.

As stated above the dialogues used the earlier presented derived observations as starting point for the discussions. The detailed results of the dialogues are presented in minutes for each dialogue and in a summary report for all three discussions/dialogues (see Annex III).

In order to illustrate and obtain an overview of the key findings and recommendations made in the three group discussions, an aggregation is made of the interventions, highlighting those aspects that have been taken up by more than one group. Those interventions with similar messages have been aggregated into one. The purpose with the aggregation is also to try to understand if there are basic and principle differences in views between the three different discussion groups.

From the aggregated key findings it can be seen that there are good correspondence in views among the three groups on some issues but on other issues there are clear differences between the groups. The discussion groups were also asked to provide possible suggestions related to their observations. In a similar way as for the key findings these suggestions have been highly aggregated in order to achieve an overview of the results.

Strategic Positioning

Key findings:

All groups
strongly positioned at pan-European level, but not so much at other levels
strength lies in voluntary, flexible participatory process character

most forest topics were addressed - strong in identifying topics, but some were missed (see also efficiency)
weakly positioned to address topics outside core forestry
Two groups
MCPFE involvement is unequal, not all participants are active and the process is driven by a few countries and stakeholders, other sectors are not present; an issue also arises with EU vs. non-EU countries
too narrow focus (SFM), too little cross-sectorally positioned

Key suggestions:

All groups
make objectives, role and core competencies clear to all
focus on raising issues and setting policy agendas, do it pro-actively by taking initiative and leadership
keep open and integrative process, increase key stakeholder involvement, establish long-term partnerships
Two groups
clarify relation with EU, find working arrangement, integrate with EU policy processes
nurture important non-core forest policy areas, increase cross-sectoral cooperation

With regard to the strategic positioning, the group discussions largely confirmed the findings of Task 1 and 2 with regard to the past and current situation and positioning, adding nuances and further details (see Annex III and the respective minutes from the group discussions). With regard to the way forward the three groups arrived at quite similar suggestions. Implicitly following the observation by one group that “there is no substitute for the MCPFE”, the groups suggest to clarify the envisaged role of the MCPFE, to make its objectives more clear to all, and to identify the core competencies to work on. All groups also instinctively put emphasis on the current strength of the MCPFE, its flexible nature, and its strength in identifying issues, and putting them on the policy agenda. All groups also were clear that it is essential to increasingly work with more partners, and with partners in more sectors.

Relevance

Key findings:

All groups
relevance is dependent on topics: highest in some core forest topics, and weak in many issues arising from outside the sector
relevance requires involvement of those to whom MCPFE wants to be relevant: no (e.g. other sectors) or decreasing (e.g. Eastern Europe) participation is a warning signal;
Two groups

key future issues arise from outside the sector; it is more difficult to maintain relevance in many fora – finding synergies and cooperation is key
relevance is determined by how much is implemented; monitoring implementation is important

Key suggestions:

All groups
keeping focus on a limited number of topics is important
mobilize broader stakeholder participation and involvement of other bodies
Two groups
mobilize ways to enhance relevance to countries in Southeastern Europe
work out ways to strengthen support to implementation

The group discussions highlighted the difficulty of bridging over many issues and players in increasingly many different fora and there is a need to have focus in order to be relevant. The way forward suggested in this situation is to focus, lead, and work through networks and partnerships. The lack of active and regular participation of countries from Eastern and South Eastern Europe was noted with concern. It was suggested to make particular efforts to find ways to strengthen the relevance of the MCPFE in this region, including support in implementation.

Added Value

Key findings:

All groups
MCPFE as a body and platform for networking
Two groups
MCPFE conference, resolutions and guidelines have added value (but concrete formats should be rethought)

Key suggestions:

All groups
focus work on few well defined most relevant issues of high political importance, regularly formulate objectives
improve communication, dissemination and demonstration of added value
Two groups
contribute more to implementation and influencing policy making at different levels (national, EU, global level)

Summarizing the discussion related to added value of different types of formats and work shows that, explicitly or implicitly, there is quite much support (or acceptance) for having Ministerial Conferences (but not in its current format), in addition to the universal support for MCPFE as a platform to network and discuss

key policy issues. There also seems quite high support for some form of written policy agreements that can act as common guidance for future policy decisions. Apart from these generally shared views, there seem to be many alternative ways on how to go about organizing these in more attractive formats, e.g. less formalized and “staged” conferences, different types of policy statements etc. Particularly stakeholders were keen to see more practical tools. Many of these aspects have to do with how the MCPFE organizes communication and dissemination. Here, the responses indicate the desire to see a considerable overhaul of the approach to communication, whereby communication is not so much seen as an “end-of-pipe” task and PR, but a core task.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

Key findings:

All groups
Networking opportunities, informal communication and a sense of joint ownership is highly effective and as important as other MCPFE outputs
co-ordination with a multitude of other actors and networks is needed, and developing coherent approaches is important – particularly with the EU
MCPFE is mostly efficient in identifying issues, but not always – it is constrained by rigid structures and procedures
proper financing is an issue (both of MCPFE and for participation of participants, e.g. of stakeholders)
Two groups
developing solutions for some issues takes time (i.e. both long-term regular work and short term flexibility is needed in structures and procedures)

Key suggestions:

All groups
specify work modalities, including role and mandate (terms of references) of bodies involved in MCPFE (e.g. GCC, LU)
establish more collaboration arrangements to strengthen effectiveness and efficiency, particularly with stakeholders and with other sectors
Two groups
focus on addressing emerging issues and agenda setting (but also: clarify and set long-term visions, goals and quantitative targets, and: establish joint activities at pan-European level; and: monitor and evaluate regularly)

The discussion points touching on effectiveness and efficiency once again brought up the strength of the MCPFE at the issue setting stage, and its weakness at the implementation end. Overall, there was consensus on the importance of going back to explicitly clarifying and setting work modalities and the terms of references for the different bodies of MCPFE. Participants re-iterated that MCPFE should build on its strength to address emerging issues and set agendas, for which it

needs to be properly equipped. This requires flexibility as a process and leaders that are tasked to provide leadership (which also requires the acceptance of more risk). Working out solutions on key issues, which takes time, is also important. Participants indicated that more collaboration arrangements are a good way forward to strengthen the MCPFE in both, addressing issues early, and collaborating in working out solutions. This was particularly also stressed by stakeholders, who also pointed out that limited resources require efficient arrangements. Partnership arrangements will also be the key approach when working with other sectors on topics outside the “core” topic of SFM, which will be needed.

It can be concluded that there are also varying views between the different groups on some issues of recommendations. On other recommendations there is a very close correspondence between the groups.

The experts participating in the discussion groups made it clear during the discussions that they do not necessarily keep the different elements of the review (relevance, value added etc) as separate entities as they evidently are strongly linked. This is confirmed in the results above for both key findings and recommendations. However, the striking observation is the similarity in the issues raised between the different groups although one issue may be listed under relevance for one group but under efficiency for another group. But in principle the three groups are raising the same issues, having similar key findings and recommendations.

Needless to say, there are risks with these kind of highly aggregated summaries due to the fact that nuances are getting lost. But it helps to understand the big picture.

6. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE MCPFE REVIEW TEAM

Based on the detailed analytical work executed in the document analysis, written surveys and group discussions analytical work has been done by the Review Team to condense the generated information/knowledge and suggestions into a set of prioritized concrete action-oriented recommendations based on these findings, for consideration by MCPFE.

In summary, the key recommendations are as follows:

RECOMMENDATIONS:
1. Redefine the strategic position of the MCPFE
a) position the MCPFE as THE lead body pushing for policy solutions on all forest-related matters across Europe through a clear vision and a mission that is understandable to all
b) set goals and measurable targets for the MCPFE that link to global processes, initiatives and targets

c) increase added value of the MCPFE by positioning it as an open, inclusive and flexible high-level policy process able to provide focused strategic policy leadership on main arising issues
d) increase relevance of the MCPFE to stakeholders outside the “core forestry group” by positioning the MCPFE as an open policy platform and interaction infrastructure
2. Strengthen relevance and added value by developing long-term partnerships with other bodies, including the EU
3. Strengthen effectiveness and efficiency of the MCPFE by re-designing roles and responsibilities of MCPFE bodies
a) re-designing the Ministerial Conferences
b) re-designing the Expert Level Meetings
c) re-designing the Liaison Unit
d) re-organizing financing arrangements
4. Strengthening effectiveness and efficiency of the MCPFE by re-designing procedures and main outputs of the MCPFE
a) focus on a platform: enabling interaction, exchange of ideas and knowledge, and facilitating generating policy solutions related to issues of strategic high level policy relevance
b) strengthening support to implementation
c) support to capacity building – Eastern Europe
d) substantively strengthen communication
e) further strengthen the monitoring and evaluation framework for continuous review and adjustment

It can be concluded that there is a strong consensus that MCPFE is an important and successful forest policy process. There is no substitute of MCPFE at hand. The process has had noticeable impact on rule-and policy setting in European forestry. A substantial amount of outputs of the MCPFE process are regarded as highly useful by different user groups. MCPFE has through its work also indirectly influenced the development in other parts of world outside Europe.

But there are also strong concerns whether MCPFE can maintain this strong position in the future. The overall and strong message from the review is that change is needed to secure a vital role of MCPFE in the international forest policy context in the future. In the following the suggested measures to be taken for securing an important role of MCPFE in the future are presented in the form of the following recommendations. Note that the “lessons from the past” on the future role and future arrangements for the MCPFE should be clarified before starting a possible negotiation on a legally binding arrangement on forests in the pan-European region.

It should also be stressed that the recommendations discussed in the following may have substantial financial implications for the MCPFE which has to be taken into account in the discussions on the recommendations made.

1. Redefine the strategic position of the MCPFE

One of the consistent outcomes of the different parts of the review points to a lack of a clearly defined role, and goal (and purpose) of the MCPFE that is widely shared amongst participants and stakeholders. A number of concrete suggestions were made as to what was seen as most appropriate.

a) position the MCPFE as THE lead body pushing for policy solutions on all forest-related matters across Europe through a clear vision and a mission that is understandable to all

The possibly most important recommendation emerging consistently from the MCPFE Review is that the MCPFE has the potential to be uniquely positioned as a body providing high level policy leadership at the forefront of policy development. Its role would thus be to identify, at the early stage, main strategic issues and to raise the most strategic issues of high policy relevance to the agenda of forest policy in Europe, providing the lead for countries and other bodies dealing with forests.

A short and concise vision should address the role of the MCPFE as the lead body to set the forest policy related agenda in Europe (covering the whole continent and focusing on forest-related issues). The vision should be able to speak to all, the public, other sector ministries, or stakeholders that have no regular contact with forests or forestry, and not only to forest policy professionals.

A mission should describe, in a sentence or two, how the MCPFE works to achieve the expressed vision, and should allow communicating the purpose of the MCPFE to a broad audience. From the Review it became clear that the way forward is to provide an open platform and establish lasting networks with other bodies, as further specified below.

Developing a useful vision and a mission that is shared by all will require a process involving stakeholders, in particular of forest-related sectors. This can be done through launching a separate process that allows discussing the views of stakeholders in particular from other sectors on visions and missions. Given that the process needs to be conducted in an efficient way, results of the MCPFE Review can be utilized as initial input for current MCPFE participants and stakeholders' views to develop a draft vision and mission. The views of other sector stakeholders will have to be sought through bilateral consultations on suggested visions. The vision and mission, if developed, needs to be adopted by governments at the Ministerial Conference, and should be adopted also by stakeholders as a sign for their commitment to a shared vision and mission.

b) set goals and measurable targets for the MCPFE that link to global processes, initiatives and targets

One of the main acknowledged roles of the MCPFE and the one that proved most successful in the past is to provide a consistent and systematic link from the global policy level to the European region, but also from the European region to the global level. This requires that the European region, through the MCPFE, takes up goals and (instruments) solutions, where the global level forest-related policy processes succeed, e.g. by taking the global level goals and adapting them to concrete European objectives and targets. It also requires that the European region, through the MCPFE, pushes to succeed, where global level forest-related policy processes fail. Doing so was the recipe for the most important success of the MCPFE in its existence, when the MCPFE was able to define and operationalize SFM in the early 1990s after the failure to reach a focused and meaningful global agreement at UNCED in 1992.

Setting goals and measurable targets in line with global processes will pose a challenge to streamline and make consistent and coherent a number of global level processes and initiatives that touch upon forests, including related to climate change, forest biodiversity, Millennium Development Goals, FLEGT, However, therein lies the added value of the MCPFE. Furthermore, this challenge is faced by all European governments, who might benefit from guidance on a consistent pan-European approach.

The goals and targets set should be voluntary, but it should be clear that their achievement is of high priority, progress monitored and widely reported. Note that the main challenge is possibly to implement goals that have been set in policy processes, not necessarily to set new goals. See also under recommendation 2 below on means to establish benchmarks, structured implementation together with other bodies through partnership agreements, and peer pressure to promote follow-up by MCPFE participants, including stakeholders.

c) increase added value of the MCPFE by positioning it as an open, inclusive and flexible high-level policy process able to provide focused strategic policy leadership on main arising issues

The results of the MCPFE Review have clearly underlined that one of the main strengths of the MCPFE so far was its open and informal nature together with its high-level political nature that allowed (or has the potential to allow) the MCPFE to fulfill a role no other process was able to take up in a similar way: to identify current and future issues, and be an agenda setter rather than an agenda taker.

In fulfilling this role, the MCPFE requires a profile (including structures and procedures) that are conducive to facilitating identifying upcoming and emerging issues, discussing these and launching policy ideas, and that enable it to start initiatives and to set issues on the policy agenda. This recommendation is crucial

in a sense as it would require to be reflected strongly in the vision, and in the implementation arrangements.

This recommendation (as a few others) also touches upon the question of a legally binding agreement (LBA) on forests, currently in exploration. The MCPFE Review clearly and consistently underlined that the main strength of the MCPFE is its character of being an open and inclusive, flexible process able to provide strategic guidance on upcoming issues. This was seen to be incompatible with the role of a body mainly tasked to oversee and implement a legally binding agreement. It was also evident that this main strength is to be retained, and ways are to be found to strengthen implementation of commitments independently. One of these ways to strengthen implementation and acknowledgement of past commitments is a legally binding agreement. In order not to impede the role envisaged from the results of the MCPFE Review, it will be important to find a mechanism of co-ordination between the MCPFE and a possible future LBA that allows open issue identification and topic setting.

This recommendation also touches upon a number of other recommendations, including on the role and responsibility of the Ministerial Conferences, the Liaison Unit, the relation to the EU, and the relation to a potential future LBA related body.

d) increase relevance of the MCPFE to stakeholders outside the “core forestry group” by positioning the MCPFE as an open policy platform and interaction infrastructure

Another widely recognized main strength of the MCPFE so far was the (by and large) open access policy and participatory nature of the MCPFE with regard to stakeholders, creating an environment that is open and informal in nature. This allows stakeholders to interact, voice their views, discuss and exchange information, better understand the rationales for the position of others, and partake in setting policy agendas. Likewise, one of the consistently highlighted weaknesses was the limited reach, particularly across sectors, of participants taking part in the policy process.

Implementing this recommendation would not result in deep changes of principles or structures, but quite deep changes in the way interaction and involvement of stakeholders, other sectors and countries are actively sought, encouraged, supported, and communicated. See also the recommendation on partnership.

2. Strengthen relevance and added value by developing long-term partnerships with other bodies, including the EU

The MCPFE review results point to the fact that a number of longer-term partnerships have been built with other bodies that have had clear beneficial effects for both. The most visible example is possibly the partnership established with the UNECE/FAO, but also the partnership in the context of CBD/PEBDLS. A

similar process of seeking to find a partnership arrangement has been started with regard to collaboration with the science community. However, the most important partnership – coordination/collaboration arrangement - to be explored in this context is with the European Union (the European Commission being a signatory of MCPFE Declarations and Resolutions). In fact, the unclear relationship between the MCPFE and the EU was highlighted in different components of the review, including in relation to effectiveness and efficiency of the MCPFE, and issues emerging from the different status of MCPFE signatory countries with regard to existing EU legal acts and a legally binding instrument currently under discussion.

Bundling these partnership initiatives on forest related policy issues could, either gradually or through a high-profile initiative, result into what was suggested by some of the experts participating in the review to be a “Regional Collaborative Partnership on Forests”. This would also be in line with the earlier recommendation to transfer global level solutions consistently to Europe.

Given that good role models exist of established collaboration arrangements, to implement this recommendation would possibly require the identification and prioritization of policy areas and related bodies with which consultations could be started with a view to find ways to coordinate and where possible synergies in collaboration. It seems most pertinent to start with areas now high on the political agenda, and focus on currently on-going implementation of recent Resolutions, such as Forests, Wood and Energy (W1), or Forests and Water (W2), or on Resolutions that have been adopted and whose political relevance has remained high or increasing, in particular those related to mitigation and adaptation of forests to climate change.

Seeking partnership arrangements with the EU requires to look into means and modalities for structured and regular communication, coordination and, where feasible, collaboration. The considerably different nature of the bodies involved (i.e. the legal basis of the EU and the lack of a legal basis of MCPFE commitments), any such arrangement would have to build on a differentiation of roles that takes advantage of the non-legally binding and thus more open and flexible character of the MCPFE and the legally-binding character of EU related actions. It would also have to find a way to fully recognize the 19 MCPFE member states not being members of the EU, and the nature of the EU institutional structure, where forests are of a comparatively minor interest in all of the individual EU institutions dealing with forests. One suitable and practicable way to explore the options for a partnership arrangement between the MCPFE and the EU is possibly to put together a small task force (e.g. the GCC country representatives) to investigate into options for such an arrangement for collaboration and structured interaction, and their relative pro’s and con’s with different relevant bodies of the EU (i.e. mainly with representatives of different DGs of the European Commission, and the European Parliament).

Should a body be created or asked to act as secretariat for a legally binding agreement on forests in the pan-European region, collaboration and coordination with MCPFE is desirable, particularly with regard to identifying possible gaps or

emerging issues requiring discussions, or for ways to support capacity building and learning with regard to LBA implementation.

3. Strengthen effectiveness and efficiency of the MCPFE by re-designing roles and responsibilities of MCPFE bodies, as well as re-organizing financing arrangements

Strengthening implementation of a re-positioned MCPFE requires the alignment of the modalities of work of the MCPFE. A considerable number of points to that effect were raised in the MCPFE Review. With regard to re-structuring the institutional set-up of the MCPFE, it was notable that the MCPFE Review did not generate suggestions for dramatic changes. This is taken as an indication that in general the main elements of the institutional set-up (Ministerial Conference, Expert level meeting, Liaison Unit) were accepted as appropriate. The Round Table Meeting and the General Coordinating Committee seem to be more unclear to participants in comparison. All of these bodies have specific roles and responsibilities, which are not necessarily clear to all involved. This is potentially counterproductive and inhibitive to the potential of the MCPFE, particularly if the MCPFE is re-positioned as a more pro-active policy setting platform. It then will be required to know whether, how and by whom initiatives are to be launched, whether indeed all participants need to be consulted and give their consent, what should trigger Ministerial Conferences, and what should be their role, etc.

A number of other bodies were not as often raised in the MCPFE Review, as compared to the Ministerial Conference, the Expert Level Meetings, and the Liaison Unit, which are addressed specifically below. The GCC, now acting in a role similar to the Bureau of UN bodies, or Executive Committees, fulfill a useful function of giving support and guidance to the Liaison Unit and the MCPFE. Their role of main sources for funding routine operation of the MCPFE is taken up under procedures / financing further below.

Roles and responsibilities of all of the following bodies should be laid down in Terms of References.

a) re-designing the Ministerial Conferences

The Ministerial Conferences are the most evident sign of the high-level policy character of the MCPFE. As such they are difficult to replace, even if Ministers can and do meet much more frequently than at the start of the MCPFE in 1990. However, the current design of a “highly staged” and quite inflexible format aimed to involve all Ministers responsible for forests of MCPFE signatories is not necessarily conducive to a re-designed MCPFE whose aim is to provide early policy guidance on “hot issues”. The latter is possibly better served by more flexible arrangements where the most effective format to signal high level leadership is chosen, depending on topics. This allows finding more adequate formats to collaborate with other Ministers of other sectors, or stakeholders. However, it also requires rules to ensure initiatives in different formats serving the

pan-European idea and vision of the MCPFE, and provide useful leadership initiative for all.

b) re-designing the Expert Level Meetings

To be indeed a hotbed for involvement and interaction, discussions of new ideas, and initiatives, the Expert Level Meetings would have to be re-designed from current formats leaning towards negotiation-style settings, language and interaction towards arrangements that take proper note of the “open forum” role, by bringing in new knowledge and ideas (particularly from other sectors) on a continuous basis, and possibly a segment that takes care of the administrative role of running the MCPFE as a “group-owned” platform. The Round Table Meetings, originally designed to be an idea-generating forum in the run-up to Ministerial Conferences would thus – in a way – be converted into having a more important function, however, possibly with a different name, and role.

c) re-designing the Liaison Unit

As has been clarified in the paragraphs above, a change in the position of the MCPFE could have consequences on the foreseen roles and responsibilities of Ministerial Conferences, and Expert Level Meetings. This necessitates changes in the roles and responsibilities of the Liaison Unit. Its task would less be to administer a formal process, but to be more active, identifying and pushing for discussion of possible topics suitable to be of high policy relevance to forests, particularly also in relation to other sectors, and supporting high-level policy initiatives. A Liaison Unit to do so would possibly require a more permanent basis and core administrative support, while the international character (and advantages of rotating some of the staff) could be retained.

d) re-organizing financing arrangements

It was found that the financing arrangements could be made more clear to all involved in the process, as it seems not widely known what budget is available for running the MCPFE and who is shouldering the costs. As main costs are being in fact covered by a very limited number of countries (the GCC), there was a general impression that a better base funding and a broader funding base (i.e. more countries contributing) would be advisable. While this would need a separate investigation into realistic options, three areas might be considered as starting points. The first is to investigate into options to involve the EC as one funding body, provided that beneficial partnership arrangements with the EC can be found. The second is to investigate into options to reduce major cost factors such as meeting costs and parts of the administrative costs through a partnership arrangement with a body providing meeting and related administrative infrastructure as an in-kind contribution (e.g. UN bodies with whom a collaborative partnership is well established). The third area concerns means to secure either periodic or regular contributions by participating countries to relieve the Liaison Unit of the need to plea for co-funding of events.

To investigate into funding arrangement options, a small Task Force, e.g. the GCC country representatives, could hold bilateral consultation with the task to identify options and recommendations to be discussed by the MCPFE.

4. Strengthening effectiveness and efficiency of the MCPFE by re-designing procedures and main outputs of the MCPFE

The MCPFE Review has led to detailed insights into the relevance and added value of the wide range of activities and outputs of the MCPFE. Related observations and suggestions can be found in the detailed reports of the document analysis, the written survey and the expert group discussions. The results show, in short, that different outputs (Ministerial Conferences, Resolutions, guidelines, status reports, topical meetings, etc.) have provided added value, albeit some to various degrees. The overall conclusion to be drawn, however, possibly is that the MCPFE achieved its highest added value and effectiveness in two areas: where it provided access to new ideas, knowledge, and people, and where it was able to develop and provide clear conceptual guidance related to implementation on complex but fundamental issues, such as SFM (and related C&I). At the same time there was a clear sense of the limited “marginal added value” and effectiveness of continuing a negotiation-style development of (in the eyes of stakeholder often abstract) Resolution texts for a essentially small constituency of core forestry matters. From that follows that the focus of work and the envisaged outputs of the MCPFE need to be re-designed to be in line with the vision and goals, and expectations of stakeholders, particularly also from other sectors.

a) focus on a platform: enabling interaction, exchange of ideas and knowledge, and facilitating generating policy solutions related to issues of strategic high level policy relevance

This recommendation can be implemented by re-designing or re-adjusting ways how topics are identified and agreed (currently work programs in the follow-up of Ministerial Conferences lock the MCPFE in on topics and issues for a number of years and do not allow it to be flexible enough to address upcoming “hot issues”. Enabling this flexibility is essential for the future, and can be provided in parallel to (limited and focused) longer-term work on solutions in (a few) critical strategic areas. Further re-design is needed how meetings are run, with whom, and with which goal. In order to bring in new ideas and knowledge and in order to focus on the network creating role of the MCPFE with other sectors, it is important to bring in new people with new perspectives and ideas on a regular basis, and to provide a forum of inspiring informal open discussions. This (part of the) role of the MCPFE would need to be designed as explicit “pre-negotiation” space, giving voice primarily to other than current governmental MCPFE focal points (many of whom anyhow meet on a very regular basis at different fora, including in the context of the EU).

b) strengthening support to implementation

One of the consistent messages emerging from the Review is the weakness of current implementation arrangements. While commitments (from many fora) pile up, implementing them is a crucial bottleneck that often is found difficult to address by international bodies, as it is essentially a responsibility of countries, time consuming, costly and cumbersome.

One way to support implementation is to providing the platform to developing and elaborating joint conceptual guidance in few carefully selected issues of strategic relevance (most often mentioned during the Review: adapting to climate change).

Support to implementation can be provided by creating explicit benchmarks (explicit targets and related indicators) to a limited number of agreed goals. To these benchmarks and targets countries would be asked to agree (where necessary at Ministerial level). The MCPFE (Liaison Unit) would be tasked explicitly to put up peer pressure by requesting regular reporting on progress and making concrete results of reporting widely available.

One form of support to implementation, most often mentioned by stakeholders, is also to organize and oversee the development of practical tools that can be accessed, understood and used widely. This would mainly require re-formulating, re-branding, re-packaging and finding ways to deliver agreed or existing conceptual guidance, e.g. on SFM and C&I, for specific groups of users. There is a widely shared sense that much of the valuable work of the MCPFE has not reached practitioners on the ground simply because the language and format of presentation is inadequate (and because the default target group of the solutions so far developed was considered to be those directly involved in the process). This essentially addresses communication, which is taken up again in a separate recommendation below.

Another form of support is to make commitments legally binding and thus strengthen implementation. The findings of the Review indicate that dedicating the MCPFE solely to this role (of a legally binding instrument) is not seen as a suitable future role of the MCPFE.

c) support to capacity building – Eastern Europe

One of the most outstanding achievements of the MCPFE in the past was its initiative and ability to link Eastern European and Western European countries at a crucial period of Europe's history, at the downfall of the "iron curtain" between East and West. This role of providing a way to connecting countries (and stakeholders) across the whole continent is still highly relevant and valuable, also given the fact that only 27 MCPFE countries are part of the EU, and 19 MCPFE countries are not (and therefore do not have the opportunity to meet on a regular basis). In the context of the MCPFE Review, the changes in the level of participation of essentially Eastern and South-Eastern (and mostly non-EU) countries were seen as a key area of importance and potential concern. Two areas emerged as areas

of attention and focus in this regard: promoting more active participation of these countries in the MCPFE itself, and more importantly, putting particular emphasis on the role of the MCPFE to lobby for, and directly support implementation of MCPFE commitments through different targeted activities. This can be lobbying for specific targeted funding amongst national governments where often agencies provide support to Eastern Europe, but do possibly not consider or focus on forests, international bodies, including the EU or the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, etc. Targeted activities can also comprise holding regional events dedicated to supporting the countries with regard to forest-related issues taken up and addressed by the MCPFE (nfps, C&I, bioenergy, water, climate change, etc.).

d) substantively strengthen communication

The MCPFE Review made clear that there is wide support for the MCPFE. There seems to be a shared impression that the MCPFE has potential that is visible, but has not fully been utilized. A key issue that emerged throughout all phases of the Review was the importance of communication, and the recommendation that communication is a crucial area to be looked into to strengthen the relevance, added value, and effectiveness of the MCPFE. Almost any group asked was of the opinion that communication needs to be strengthened in general, and in their particular area. This touches on many issues, starting with the abbreviation “MCPFE”, the “invisibility” and low public (read: other than forestry related stakeholders) recognition of the MCPFE beyond a select and small group of MCPFE participants, the fact that the MCPFE is virtually unknown to players in other sectors linked to forestry (including, e.g. in key areas, bioenergy). It also concerns the reach of outputs of the MCPFE, and efforts to disseminate these to target groups in a format that is useful and relevant to them, etc. If the MCPFE is re-positioned, communication will have to be strengthened even more substantively. This cannot be done by continuing current communication and dissemination strategies and arrangements but it would require a re-consideration of the paradigm that seems to guide work now, where communication is an “add on” activity, but not at the very center of the mission and work.

e) further strengthen the monitoring and evaluation framework for continuous review and adjustment

As the feedback of the MCPFE Review has also shown, any body or process that should stay relevant over a certain period of time is most likely to benefit from a systematic monitoring and evaluation framework. This should allow reviewing the adequacy of its goals, its strategies, work, outputs, implementation, and their impacts. It should allow learning and periodical adjustment. In many cases a review is done on a more frequent basis than in the case of MCPFE, which undertook its first review after some 18 years of existence. Adjusting the framework to efficiently monitor work of the MCPFE can be done by further developing the well regarded current arrangements of periodic reporting on the

occasion of Ministerial Conferences (State of Europe's Forests including on policies and institutions, commitment implementation reports). The principle to conduct periodic reviews could be laid down through a simple agreement at the administrative level or at the Minister level.

7. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE REVIEW PROCESS

The overall objective of the current review is to provide the basis for future decisions on the strategic direction of future work of the MCPFE. The review process has demonstrated that it is at cross-roads on a number of strategic important issues. The review team recommends MCPFE to seriously deal with these strategic issues identified in the review.

As discussed in the background section of the review the environment for MCPFE's activities has changed dramatically between 1990 and 2009. A strategy identified for the process in 1990 is not valid in 2009. The review has clearly confirmed this conclusion and identified a number of crucial issues for MCPFE to deal with in order to have a sustainable and meaningful future. The world will probably change even faster in the future and the next review can not wait for additional 20 years. Every organization must have a routine periodic review system established in order to make needed changes and adjustments to changing developments or transformations. Reviews should be carried out every third or fifth year and they need to be carefully planned and designed. The review team of the current review strongly recommends MCPFE to implement a periodic review system. This will also require a much better developed monitoring system.

The review team judges that the different review components carried out have complemented each other by generating additional information and views and have worked according to plan. The results of the Document Analysis are influenced by the organization having most documents in the review list. MCPFE documents is the largest group in the set of totally analyzed documents. In a similar way, the results of the Written Surveys are influenced by the representation of different interest groups of the respondents. In this task the Signatories group dominated clearly among the respondents. The assessment by the review team is that under these conditions both the Document Analysis and the Written Surveys give a somewhat more positive view on the MCPFE process compared to a fully unbiased sample. The Group discussions had a more unbiased set-up with three interest groups involved. In the analysis the different responses and views from the different groups have been taken into account in forming conclusions.

However, the review team assesses that on the whole the review process and the information generated is scientifically sound.

For future reviews the review team has some recommendations to consider. Thus, the approach and principles of the current review are in large fine. Interviewing all interest groups are of high importance. In the future it is important to get views from crucial interest groups outside the core forestry groups. The MCPFE process

review and the MCPFE impact review are somewhat difficult to separate. In the future we recommend a more detailed implementation review as an addition. The written surveys could in the future be supplemented with telephone interviews. In the current review the use of the results is not well specified which may result in dead-lock situations. In the future this specification needs to be clear and with expressed commitments and political will to implement findings after proper debate.

Finally, there are two observations regarding the process and results, which are important to highlight in this connection.

- (1) MCPFE has in parallel to the review process started a Working Group on Legally Binding Agreements, which already has had several meetings before the review has been finalized and discussed. From a review point of view it is of uttermost importance that the review outcome and the future role of MCPFE are thoroughly discussed before embarking on any conclusions with respect to possible Legally Binding Agreements.
- (2) It shines throughout the complete review material that MCPFE is lagging behind in issues formulation instead of leading the issues development. Thus, MCPFE is currently policy taker instead of being policy setter. This is coming out strongly reading the complete material but not as strongly if just the individual tasks are studied.