OUTPUT FOR THE SEVENTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Introduction

FOREST EUROPE has entered in the period of preparations of the 7th Ministerial Conference. A Round Table meeting on topics for the 7th Ministerial Conference took place on 4-5 November 2014 in Cuenca with the aim to discuss proposals for further work on the content of the 7th Ministerial Conference.

The Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe was inaugurated in 1990, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the process in 2015. This should be duly noted by the ministers and accompanied by a record of achievements so far.

Besides, ministers decided on a vision of forests in Europe to be achieved by 2020 in the decision: European Forests 2020, in Oslo June 2011, which status should be analysed on the half-way to 2020.

The GCC presents the following proposal on a theme and outputs for the 7th Ministerial Conference with the aim of facilitating discussions at the ELM. The proposal has taken into account the suggestions and comments presented during the RTM.

This proposal is structured in three sections dealing with different items/themes which may result on three outputs for the next Ministerial Conference.

The ELM is invited to decide on the overarching theme of the conference and on the topics to be addressed and transformed into outputs taken by the ministers at the 7th Ministerial Conference.

1. General declaration: Overarching theme

Possible title: European forests at the global agenda/ European forests and the world

The 7th ministerial conference will be convened in 2015, which will be an important year for the future forest policy cooperation at global level. At least four global processes will have significant impact on forests policies. The first one is the UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris, the second is the development of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) for the post-2015 development agenda, the third the UNCCD COP 12 in Ankara and the fourth is the review of the IAF (International Agreement on Forests) at UNFF11.

The round table meeting in Cuenca encouraged the use of the 2009 evaluation of the MCPFE for the boost of the process. The evaluation pointed out the need to reach out to other sectors, to establish contact with other sectors both at regional and global level and having more visible links to global processes.

Forests are important for sustainable development. Forests play an important role in the sustainable development and well-being of the European society. Sustainably managed forests have the potential to contribute substantially to generation of jobs and income, in particular in rural areas. However, the economic viability of the forest and forest industries sector in Europe has been of concern for some time. The recent global economic crisis has
affected forest industries and reduced investments in forest management. A new momentum is needed.

Forests are important for climate change. The expanding forest volume in Europe provides considerable carbon storage, capacity for sequestration and potential for substituting fossil energy and as a source of renewable material. Forests are a key factor in the global greenhouse gas balance. Between 2005 and 2010, about 870 million tonnes of CO2 have been removed annually from the atmosphere by photosynthesis and tree biomass growth in the European countries. This corresponds to about 10% of the CO2 emissions in 2008 in Europe. Further substantial amounts of carbon are stored in forest litter and soils, as well as in forest products. Biomass from forests is by far the most important renewable energy source in Europe.

On this basis, the GCC suggests that the ministers at the 7th Ministerial Conference aim at positioning the European forest policy response/approach to these global challenges, notably forest and climate change and sustainable development.

This could be addressed in a general declaration which possible main ideas/content are in Annex 1.

2. Resolution: Green economy and social aspects of SFM

The development of a green economy is key to achieving a low-emission economy. The forest sector is an important actor in this development and should be addressed as such, highlighting the employment and rural development niche, the economic potential of forests, and bearing in mind societal needs and demands.

The forest sector in most European countries is a source of employment with a great potential to generate sustainable jobs and income opportunities. In a world currently driven by an economic, social and environmental crisis the challenge of an holistic, integral approach of a green economy at all levels and sectors of activities gives the forest sector and its sustainable management a great opportunity to demonstrate its potential in transitioning towards a green economy by generating and maintaining jobs and income, contributing to rural development and enabling the long term economic viability and competitiveness of forestry and forest-based industries.

Based on the high rates of unemployment in Europe due to the current economic crisis, forests and the forest sector might provide an opportunity to give a new boost for jobs, growth and investment in rural areas in Europe.

The forest sector is emerging in the economic area, the recognition of the full value of forest services and the application of new market-based instruments show potential for supporting non-market forest goods and services.

How to improve the information on the social aspects of SFM is another important issue to be explored and addressed. It is important to identify the weaknesses in the information concerning the social pillar of SFM and to provide policy makers with more complete and better information to elaborate a more balanced approach on their policies and strategies.

Green jobs in the forest sector in a green economy, maintaining/enhancing the forest sector’s competitiveness, recognizing the full value of forests and the social aspects of SFM are emerging issues of high relevance for FOREST EUROPE signatories.

This could be addressed in a resolution which possible main ideas/content are in Annex 2.
3. **Resolution: Protection of forests in a changing environment**

FOREST EUROPE has since its inception worked on the protection the long-term capacity of forests and forest ecosystems to provide multiple goods and services of forests through its sustainable management.

Rapid impacts caused by storms, insect infestation, or forest fires, as well as gradual ecosystem changes require measures to ensure forests adaptation. Impact on societal benefits, including recreation, water security and supply, and provision of renewable energy depend on securing provisions of those forest services.

Forest management practices require new broadened scope in order to handle those new challenges, for example controlling damage risk and responding to it, or comprehensive and improved forest monitoring for better information on the forest status. Possible climate change impacts call for better and more precise information on forests regarding e.g. carbon data and other aspects of forest status and trends. Changes in the land use and their impact on forests and sustainable forest management due to e.g. increased demand for renewable energy are inter-linked to forest governance challenges (e.g. society participation in decision making, actively and effectively shaping policies on emerging secular issues, as well as local-global connectivity).

A possible response could focus on necessary adaptations in forest management to changed climatic conditions, including threats of pests and diseases, and catastrophic events like forest fires or floods. In addition, this topic could encompass activities focused on assessment of impacts of climate change on forests and vulnerability of forests in changing environmental conditions. Thus, knowledge base would be provided/improved to be able to adapt forests to climate change in order to ensure multiple forest functions and lasting provision of goods and services, including protection of biodiversity in forests.

Recent developments on international fora, having led to different concepts of “protection” and the work by FOREST EUROPE throughout the last 25 years, generate a need and give the opportunity to reaffirm the meaning and significance of the protection of forests in the forest sector and to emphasize its importance as an integral part of sustainable forest management as defined in the Resolution H1 of FOREST EUROPE taking into consideration all the challenges ahead.

This could be addressed in a resolution which possible main ideas/content are in Annex 3.
Annex1: Main ideas of content for a general declaration

1. Main messages

- Sustainable forest management has proved to be the strategy that works and that has restored the forest in Europe after often unsustainable practices in the history of forests – and we have to improve it further. SFM can contribute substantively to global and regional challenges, notably climate change and social and economic development.

- Possible statement on the progress made on the achievement of G&2020 T (to be developed with the main findings of the Midterm evaluation of Oslo Goals and Targets once the report is finished)¹.

- Possible statement on the State of Europe’s Forests (to be developed taking into account the main findings of the SoEF 2015 once the report is finalized).

- Possible statement about the Implementation of the FOREST EUROPE commitments (to be developed when main findings of the Implementation report are known).

2. Possible statements

Sustainable forest management and climate change (UNFCCC):

- Since its inception in 1990, FOREST EUROPE has developed policy tools for promoting and implementing sustainable forest management in the European region. Promoting the role of forests and sustainable forest management in combating the negative effects of climate change through both mitigation and adaptation measures are central tasks. The concept of sustainable forest management and its tools are essential for ensuring adaptation of forests to climate change, as well as optimising the contribution of forests and the forest sector to climate change mitigation. The FOREST EUROPE policy instruments are relevant for reducing emissions through land use, land-use change and forestry activities (LULUCF), as well as reduced deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD +).

- European ministers demonstrate the contribution of forests to climate change mitigation, and promote the use of tools for sustainable forest management developed by FOREST EUROPE as a basis for further development of sustainable forest management in the future climate change regime.

Sustainable Development Goals:

- European ministers commit to developing a European approach to all SDG targets which forests can contribute to. The basis for this will be the criteria and indicators already developed, and the indicators will be reviewed in order to target them towards the SDG targets.

¹ In brackets and italics there are some reflections and explanations regarding the specific bullet point
International Arrangement on Forests:

- European ministers acknowledge the importance of a common understanding of SFM at the global level and commit to a regional follow-up of the decisions to be made at UNFF11 on the future of the International Arrangement on Forests, and to continued cooperation with other regional bodies and processes on a global set of SFM criteria and indicators.

The future directions of FOREST EUROPE:

- The review of 2009 suggests more institutionalized structures for FOREST EUROPE. When reflecting on the report from 2009, there is a need to take into account the developments during the last five years. Since 2009, forest policy work in Europe has been changing. (The potential of current arrangement on forests in Europe should be adequately utilized.)

- There was a general understanding in the round table meeting that the added value of FOREST EUROPE was its function as a high-level platform. We therefore propose to streamline FOREST EUROPE as a high-level platform, as the place where issues are addressed by ministers, and a platform for exchanges between policy makers and stakeholders. FOREST EUROPE should make use of the existing organisations and structures which have emerged in Europe over the last years, and address these structures for analyses, studies, implementation and support. For this, the Liaison Unit can be a small unit, with the main task of preparing ministerial meetings and coordinating with implementing organisations. Increasing possibilities of Signatory states to provide guidance for and contribute to financing intersessional activities may need further scrutiny. The agendas of the ministerial meetings can also be more flexible, in order to be able to capture emerging issues.

Revised set of indicators:

- Ministers endorse the Sustainable Forest Management improved indicators that will serve to better answer the current needs of the forest sector, other sectors and the society (related indicators should be in an Annex) and as a basis for the work towards a common understanding of SFM at global level.

- Ministers commit to use the previously endorsed indicators to promote sustainable forest management by providing valuable information for forest policy developments, cross-sectorial forest related policies, dialogue, communication and outreach.

Monitoring and reporting the achievements on the G&2020 Targets:

- Ministers commit to report on the pan-European evaluation of the achievements of the “Goals for European Forests” and the “European 2020 targets” using the format and structure annexed (related structure should be in annex).

Communication of SFM and outreach with other sectors and among society:

- Ministers commit to increase the efforts to raise awareness on the multifunctionality of forests and the benefits they offer to society, as well as to increase the efforts on communicating the role of sustainable forest management in managing and protecting forests in Europe.

- Ministers commit to work on a further approach and openness to other related sectors in order to build bridges and synergies with other conventions such as climate change, biodiversity, desertification, and other areas as energy, rural development where the forest sector should be able to have a voice.

Cooperation and synergies with other processes and organizations:
- Ministers commit to continue the fruitful pan-European cooperation with all forest-related partners and reinforce synergies with other processes and organizations.
Annex 2: Main ideas for content of a resolution on Green economy and social aspects of SFM

1. To be taken into account
- Lisbon declaration and resolution 1 “People, Forests and Forestry- Enhancement of Socio-Economic Aspects of Sustainable Forest Management”, and Vienna resolution 3 “Preserving and enhancing the social and cultural dimensions of sustainable forest management in Europe”.
- The Oslo Ministerial Decision: European Forests 2020, especially where ministers recognize the potential of forests in fostering a green economy and the need to reinforce the social dimension of SFM.
- The outcomes of the FOREST EUROPE Workshop on Green economy and social aspects of SFM held in April 2014 in Santander, Spain, and the outcomes of the FOREST EUROPE Workshop on Valuation of forest ecosystem services held in September 2014 in Belgrade, Serbia.
- The global and regional on-going work on green economy and social issues, as the Rio+20 and Post 2015 development agenda including the development of the SDGs, the outcomes of the World Forestry Congress: Forests and People: Investing in a Sustainable Future, the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization and the UNECE/FAO ROVANIEMI action plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy.
- The country-specific and sector-specific challenges and conditions to ensure that opportunities for decent work and social inclusion are achieved.

2. Main messages:
- The valuation of forest ecosystem services, the creation and maintenance of green jobs and social benefits of forests play a key role to assure the continued existence of forest ecosystems in the long run. Economic valuation approaches offer a useful way of identifying the values that the whole society place on forest services where they are not valued in markets.
- Forests are key to fulfilling the long-term objectives of sustainability at all levels, including through the provision of essential goods and services in a green economy. The change to a greener economy offers important opportunities to create decent jobs and increase the social inclusion, besides leading the global economy to a path of sustainable growth.
- Green economy must also be understood in the context of the social dimension of SFM. The forest sector has to adapt to changing societal needs, not only in rural areas, but also to respond to urbanized societies’ needs and their vision of forests. (More related to recreational functions)
- There is a need for a pan-European common approach concerning green economy and green jobs in the forest sector. This approach should combine measures to ensure its integration in sustainable rural development, providing sustainable and responsible productive activities that create decent jobs for the rural population with others related to the protection of the environment, thus guarantying the conservation of the forest biodiversity and maintaining other forest ecosystem services.
- A common understanding of the concept of decent green jobs in the forest sector will help the forest sector to communicate its role in a transition towards a green economy and to compare itself to other sectors.
- “Following the vision and mission established in the FOREST EUROPE’s Ministerial Decision: European Forests 2020, [and in a pan-European context],
green jobs in the forest sector are decent jobs (according to the International Labour Organization /as defined by the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization) which are related connected to:

- The management and use of forest ecosystems respecting the principles of Sustainable Forest Management (as defined by FOREST EUROPE, Resolution H1, 1993),
- Environmentally friendly production processes based on goods and services from sustainably managed forests."

(This draft definition was elaborated during the workshop of Green Economy and social aspects in Santander; this could serve as a basis for further work)

- It is important to explore new market niches and employment opportunities linked to non-wood forest resources, which offer great possibilities for the forest sector.
- Sustainable-managed forests with qualified forest managers, trained and safe workers and entrepreneurs contribute to a sustainable and competitive forest sector, playing an important role in rural development.
- The value of nature should be fully considered and accounted in order to assert it at economic and business accountings and markets. More incentives should be provided to forest owners, businesses or individuals to invest in these important services.

(New practices are being advocated to address this problem; for example, through modified forms of accounting and through payments for ecosystem services, in order to continue providing these services as CO2 emissions abatement flood alleviation, water quality, biodiversity and other services provided by woodlands that still remain largely unvalued)

- Integrating nature into accounting and markets offers opportunities for new revenue streams for woodland owners, and potential for forestry to play a mainstream role in services such as carbon sequestration, flood alleviation, soil protection and water quality protection. It also recognises the multi-functional role of sustainable forest management, and the wide-ranging contribution of woodlands to rural and urban development.
- Information about the values of environmental services of forests is needed for national policies, including liability laws, the formulation and distribution of property rights, the adoption of command-and-control approaches as well as for the establishment of economic incentives.
- Systematic knowledge on new private financing mechanisms and strengthening the role of institutions in the development of market-based instruments and in the support of innovation processes is needed.

(A number of successful examples for the application of new market-based instruments show potential for supporting non-market forest goods and services. Although such new financing mechanisms seem promising, they remain relatively rare and have not been extensively studied. Their real potential and limitations cannot, therefore, be assessed reliably. This lack of knowledge includes questions about the role of institutions in the development of market-based instruments and in the support of innovation processes)

3. Ministers could address this topic by committing to:

- Explore ways and means and develop sound national level rules, mechanisms and criteria for labour sustainability and social inclusion.
- Engage efforts to promote decent green jobs and rural entrepreneurialships connected to the different resources and services provided by forests.
- Develop policies to boost innovation and research with the aim of implementing more efficient and competitive technologies to be applied in the forest sector, forest industry, transport and management.

- Encourage and optimize the existing resources, cooperation and networking to increase the involvement and participation of the different stakeholders.

- Explore ways and means to develop long term public policies on the valuation of the environmental assets of the forest, the establishment of economic incentives (i.e. taxation) and the availability of funds to be specifically allocated to encourage entrepreneurship in rural environments.

- Promote policies aiming at fostering social cohesion and public-private participation, as well as incentivise innovation and technologic transfer of production and forest industry in order to develop a sustainable green economy.

- Explore ways to use National Forest Programs or equivalents, as convenient mechanisms for the development of adequate strategies that include specific actions in order to improve occupational health and safety, labour skills and qualification of the workforce, forestry education, job stability, and social equity and gender issues in the forest sector.

- Improve knowledge and statistical capacity on forest job trends, developments and constraints and integrate relevant data into national statistics.

- Improve communication and education as essential tools to raise awareness about what forests offer and to increase the attractiveness of the sector.

- Improve regional cooperation in addressing forests in a green economy, working together with ILO, UNECE and FAO (e.g. the Joint Expert Network (ILO/ECE/FAO Team of Specialist on Green Jobs, the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Policy).

- Use the existing structures to create a pan-European forum or exchange facility to enable the use of economic valuations of Forest Ecosystem Services in the Pan-European region: by supporting access to existing valuations (using or expanding respective meta-databases); by making better use of the existing information (resorting to Value Transfer approaches); by filling knowledge gaps (providing necessary resources for valuation studies where such primary studies do not exist), and by enabling knowledge transfer between countries and organizations working on this topic such as, EFI, UNECE/FAO.

(This forum will follow closely whether some market mechanisms which have been developed for certain goods or services could also be applied to others in future. In addition, as certain mechanisms are better developed in some countries but not well known in others, a cross-border exchange of experiences might give the impetus for the further development of existing instruments. Such knowledge exchange can also help to improve the application of different mechanisms, and enhance their efficiency.)
**Annex 3: Main ideas for content of a resolution on Protection of forests in a changing environment**

1. **To be taken into account**
   - Strasbourg resolution 1, “European Network of Permanent Sample Plots for Monitoring of Forest Ecosystems”, Strasbourg resolution 3 “Decentralized European data bank on forest fires”, Strasbourg resolution 4 “Adapting the management of mountain forests to new environmental conditions”, Helsinki resolution 4 “Strategies for a process of long term adaptation of forests in Europe to climate change”, Vienna resolution 5 “Climate Change and Sustainable Forest Management in Europe” and Warsaw resolution 2 “Forests and water”.
   - The different concepts and definitions of protection used in other processes or conventions (CBD, Carpathian Convention, UNCCD)
   - The Oslo Ministerial Decision: European Forests 2020 *(The vision that all European forests are vital, productive and multifunctional.)*
   - The work carried out by the international organizations concerning protection and risk management such as EFI, IUCN, among others.

2. **Main messages**
   - Forest area in Europe is growing.
   - Forests are an integral part of Europe’s environment, economic activity and society.
   - Recent years have shown an increase of natural disturbances impacting forests in Europe.
   - A changing climate, the pressure of a growing population, land-use changes, natural hazards such as erosion, forest fires, desertification, and damage caused by pests or pathogenic organisms, among others, represent an increasing threat of transboundary character, to forest resources.
   - The frequency and the severity of those disturbances striking European forests have led to the urge of taking action.
   - Sustainable forest management provides the means to protect the long-term capacity of forests and forest ecosystems to provide multiple goods and services. *(this could be a basis for a possible definition of forest protection to be developed)*
   - Forest management in Europe needs to adapt to climate change, in order to secure that European forests are healthy and resilient to natural hazards and protected against human-induced threats maintaining their productive and protective functions.

3. **Ministers could address this topic by committing to:**
   - Strengthen the collaboration and cooperation in the pan-European region to face the current threats and transboundary challenges impacting forests.
   - Develop a platform to exchange management experiences in maintaining productive and protective functions of forests taking stock of the particular experiences and solutions under different climatic conditions.
   - Create a risk management facility in the pan-European region to exchange knowledge and information on the available resources based on the specific countries’ experiences and lessons learnt in risk management. *(There is an EFI ongoing project at this respect)*
   - Raise awareness of the importance of protecting forests.