

EXPERT LEVEL MEETING

11–12 May 2016, Bratislava, Slovakia



Expert Level Meeting

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MINUTES

The FOREST EUROPE Expert Level Meeting (ELM) took place in Bratislava, the Slovak Republic on 11-12 May 2016. The meeting was attended by 45 delegates representing 29 signatory countries and the European Union, 23 representatives of 14 observer organisations and the Liaison Unit Bratislava (LUB). ELM was co-chaired by Mr. Boris Greguška (Slovakia) and Mr. Leopoldo Rojo Serrano (Spain).

(1) Opening of the meeting

Mr. Boris Greguška opened the Expert Level Meeting. He informed the signatories and observers about the new Liaison Unit Bratislava, which has been established under the current co-chairing of the ministerial process by Slovakia. He welcomed H.E. Gabriela Matečná, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic and invited her to deliver the welcome speech.

The Minister expressed the honour for Slovakia to hold the co-chair of the process and to host the Liaison Unit. She said that Slovakia recognises the importance of the task and the responsibility that it carries in FOREST EUROPE. "With 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we all start the new era of global efforts to contribute to sustainable development of the human society. The forest sector in Europe cannot either be omitted in addressing the global challenges nor can it waste the opportunities to strengthen its role towards other sectors in these efforts" the Minister said. She concluded that the implementation of the Work Programme, which is expected to be approved at the meeting, will lead to the Eighth Ministerial Conference in Bratislava in 2020. She wished the delegates a successful meeting and pleasant stay in Slovakia.

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Greguška noted that the meeting was prepared under the oversight of the GCC, which currently consists of the Slovak Republic, Spain, Germany, Turkey and Sweden. He introduced the co-chairs of the meeting – Mr. Leopoldo Rojo Serrano (Spain) and himself. He also introduced Ms. Ľudmila Marušáková- Head of the Liaison Unit Bratislava and thanked the team for organising the meeting. He reminded the audience of the main objective of the ELM as being to discuss and adopt the new Work Programme for implementation of the commitments made at the Madrid Conference including discussion and taking decision on future steps for the review of the process.

Ms. Marušáková Head of LUB welcomed the participants and briefed them on logistics.

(2) Adoption of the agenda

The draft agenda was adopted without amendments.

(3) FOREST EUROPE Madrid Ministerial Conferences 2015 – achievements, exchange of experience, feedback - summary

Mr. Michal Vančo, Policy Advisor, LUB presented a brief summary of the outcomes of the 7th FOREST EUROPE Madrid Ministerial Conference and Extraordinary Ministerial Conference held on 20-21 October 2015 in Madrid. The co-chair reminded the participants of these outcomes as providing the basis for elaboration of the draft Work Programme, which is the central item for discussion and adoption at this ELM.

A representative of Spain re-affirmed the outcomes of the Madrid Conference as an excellent starting point for years to come. Spain is very committed to continue co-chairing the process of FOREST EUROPE and looks forward to the continuation of collaborative activities.

A representative of the European Commission expressed thanks to Spain and Slovakia for the successful organisation of and follow-up to the Ministerial Conference, which has been characterised not only by a high level of participation, but also important agreements were reached that guide our work for the years to come.

A representative of Sweden as a new GCC member thanked Spain and Slovakia as the co-chairing country for the successful completion of the Ministerial Conference. She stated the opportunity to revitalise and once again bring forward the process of FOREST EUROPE as the summit for forest policy cooperation in Europe. The statement also expressed an encouragement of feedback and good discussion on the draft Work Programme.

(4) Implementation of the commitments of the Madrid Conferences - Discussion and adoption of the Forest Europe Work Programme on the Follow-up of the Madrid FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conferences

Ms. Marušáková, Head of LUB, gave an introduction to the structure, guiding principles and contents of the Work Programme document. As an example of successful implementation of the previous ministerial commitments, she briefly described how pan-European cooperation through FOREST EUROPE helped build the National Forest Programme in Slovakia. She also highlighted the role of communication about forests and forestry both at national level and pan-European level. In conclusion, she thanked the Liaison Unit Madrid for smooth handover arrangements and the GCC members for their contributions to the draft WP.

The co-chair Mr. Greguška then made reference to the web-based questionnaire survey, which the GCC decided to conduct prior to the meeting in order to facilitate discussions. Signatories and observers were invited to express their priorities towards proposed actions and activities of the WP. Mr. Rastislav Raši, Policy Advisor, LUB, presented the results of the survey. The presentation is available at:

http://www.foresteurope.org/sites/default/files/Questionnaire_PoW_ELM_2016_v2.pdf

The ensuing discussion was based on several documents prepared for the meeting. In addition to the draft Work Programme itself and the survey results, two supporting documents were prepared, namely an indicative timetable for implementation of the activities and a GCC note on implementation of the Work Programme:

<http://www.foresteurope.org/content/expert-level-meetings-2016>

The co-chair then opened the floor for a general reflection on the Work Programme. Key highlights of the discussion are given in Box 1 at the end of this section.

A representative of Austria expressed gratitude to LUB and Slovakia for organising the meeting. He congratulated the partners concerned on smooth transition of Liaison Unit from Madrid to Bratislava. The example of how national forest policy making has been influenced by pan-European commitments was appreciated by Austria. FE is a political process with important influences on other sectors in the region. There are technical aspects of work to be discussed and pursued, but the political dimension should be kept in mind. The statement highlighted the historical perspective of the process, which began in the period after the iron curtain fall, with participation of countries with transition economies. The Helsinki resolution H3, for example, specifically focused on forestry cooperation with countries in transition. Now many of them joined the EU, bringing forward the European integration. Whereas many positive developments have characterized the FE process, forest policies are still fragmented at European and global scales. It is necessary to promote holistic approaches, and the further work on the conceptual framework of SFM and related tools remains very relevant.

A representative of Germany thanked the colleagues from the GCC for cooperation and acknowledged the presentation of the WP with its tree symbolism – followed by a "word of concern" written by Portugal and available in the documentation – there is a high workload ahead of us. In fact, the resolutions signed by the ministers need to be translated into concrete actions. The statement also highlighted the need for "ownership of the WP", which implies an invitation to contribute, according to interest or competence of each signatory country and observer organisation. The replies to the questionnaire should be understood as willingness to contribute. The contributions could be of various kind, not only the financial support; it could also be, for example, sending experts, helping to develop papers, etc. Survey results show the support for all activities and a strong commitment of many partners to contribute. It will be necessary to discuss details how to implement particular activities also among the GCC members. It is important that we share the burden, in a positive way, and that we are a large and strong group.

A representative of the Slovak Republic welcomed the participants to Slovakia and thanked LUB for organising the meeting. She expressed an interest to act as a leading actor in the area of incorporating the value of forest ecosystem services into a green economy and payments for ecosystem services. Slovakia can offer experts and studies. The action 4.5 (protection of forests in changing environment and their adaptation to climate change) is also a priority.

A representative of Switzerland expressed appreciation for the well-prepared ELM. He mentioned a recent meeting with LUB at the occasion of the UNECE/FAO Joint Bureaux in Geneva where collaboration was discussed. With respect to prioritisation, some important activities such as data collection and SFM tools are naturally included in the WP. Synergies ought to be further pursued between the new FOREST EUROPE WP and the Integrated Programme of Work for 2014-2017 for the ECE Committee on Forest and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission. Topics for cooperation include green economy and payments for ecosystem services, among others. Cooperation could take the form of jointly organised workshops, thus avoiding duplication and contributing to resource savings. Switzerland also puts climate change related activities as high priority. The last two areas, namely review of the FE process and LBA do not belong to the top priorities for Switzerland as there is a preference to make progress on more substantive issues.

The Head of LUB added that a detailed proposal for cooperation with the Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section was received by LUB and distributed to the participants of the ELM. Separate documents on prioritisation were also received from the European Commission, Norway, Portugal and USSE, and were available in the meeting folders.

A representative of Finland expressed appreciation to LUB and the GCC for organising the ELM. In full support of the statement made by Austria, she highlighted the political nature of the FE process. Technical work is important to support the political process, but the different roles of various regional actors need to be carefully considered. Finland did not fill the questionnaire on priorities as inter-ministerial coordination meeting was only held last week. It would also make sense to complete it after the WP is finalised and approved by the ELM. The statement acknowledged the very professional shape of the draft WP, reflecting the Madrid resolutions and decisions. The broader relevant developments were then mentioned, specifically the Agenda 2030 SDGs, the outcomes of the Paris Climate Conference and the UNFF International Arrangement on Forests. These are referred to in the draft WP, but more concrete linkages would be desirable, for instance to define a contribution of FE towards the Strategic Plan of the International Arrangement on Forests. As for activities related to the green economy, they follow the title of the Madrid Resolution, but alternative terms *bioeconomy* and *circular economy* are also used and should be referred to because forestry can contribute directly to those areas of the green economy. The statement also questioned the high number of activities and especially workshops proposed, and called for complementarities with other international actors.

A representative of Latvia emphasised the high-level political nature of FE. He mentioned that other international bodies also work on forest policy issues and have integrated programmes

of work on technical aspects. The risk is that if FE concentrates on fulfilling technical implementation tasks, even if they are interesting, the process may lag behind on political issues. FE should keep a political momentum. For instance, human well-being or future treatment of forests after Paris Climate Conference are becoming political issues. We should concentrate on upcoming political issues that will require ministers' support and high-level agreements in future.

A representative of Hungary thanked the organisers of the meeting. Hungary views the WP as very ambitious, with actions grouped into eight areas that address key challenges, but will be achievable with 46 countries participating and contributing to the process. As many other countries, Hungary faces a situation of scarce resources, which calls for efficient, proactive mode of collaboration avoiding duplications. Due to time constraints, Hungary has not submitted the questionnaire, but looks forward to contributing to the WP implementation.

A representative of the Czech Republic thanked the GCC and LUB for the organisation of the meeting and for a professionally prepared WP. The priorities of the Czech Republic, including SFM tools, SoEF, Review and LBA, are well reflected in the WP. The clear linkages to the work of UNECE/FAO and their Teams of Specialists were also acknowledged in the statement. However, he added that the ToS on Forest Policy was missing. The statement highlighted the importance of contributions to global agenda, specifically the contributions of FE towards preparation and implementation of the Strategic Plan of the IAF and UNFF Quadrennial programme of work.

A representative of France referred to the historic achievements of FE, and stressed the consistency in approach to SFM, keeping up with the outcomes of the Madrid Ministerial Conference. The commitments made are implemented at national level through the policy tool of NFP, which is being finalised in France. The statement also highlighted links with relevant global agreements, namely the Paris Agreement on climate change, CBD, and others. He called for close cooperation with UNECE/FAO, EFI and other international organisations, pursuing programmatic synergies and work efficiencies.

A representative of Council of the European Foresters referred to an additional activity they proposed for the WP, namely to create a working group dedicated to a Declaration of European Foresters. CEF has 58 000 members in several European countries.

A representative of United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) welcomed the new WP, which can be characterised as comprehensive and ambitious. According to its mission, FAO works on a range of policy issues that are pertinent to FE. Therefore, FAO would find it difficult if not impossible to set priorities for the process, which it supports in its entirety. FAO remains committed to the process as a contributing partner to a range of activities identified as priority by the signatories.

A representative of United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) thanked the organisers and expressed the wish to engage in an even more fruitful collaboration with FE. Collaboration between UNFF and regional and sub-regional partners has been further strengthened during recent years. The statement provided a detailed update on the latest UNFF related developments: <http://www.foresteurope.org/sites/default/files/UNFF%20statement.pdf>. It emphasised the importance of strengthening the collaboration between UNFF and relevant regional and sub-regional partners on developing and strengthening SFM programmes.

A representative of Poland started by congratulating the Government of Slovakia on the LUB firmly established. Poland has not responded to the survey on priorities, but will indicate support for actions once the WP is adopted. Specifically, promotion of SFM tools and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies belong to the priorities. The draft WP is well structured and provides a very good basis for discussion. The statement also encouraged a holistic, cross-sectoral approach in the WP.

A representative of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) acknowledged the participation of LUB in UNECE/FAO events in Geneva in March 2016, and expressed an appreciation for the inclusive and cooperative manner of preparing the WP.

Numerous linkages between the WP and the Integrated Programme of Work for the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission were identified in the draft WP version submitted to LUB prior to the meeting. UNECE looks forward to the further fruitful collaboration in effective and efficient implementation process. Finally, the representative of the UNECE underlined the importance of reaching out to other sectors and expressed the need for reflecting this aspect in the WP.

A representative of Ukraine thanked LUB for the preparation of the meeting. The statement suggested that there were numerous activities and meetings planned, some of which might be replaced by online consultations, where possible. She then enquired about a background document on C&I of SFM not mentioned in the WP. The need for flexibility by the FE process in making contributions to the global policy debate was also raised.

A representative of the European Commission (EC) re-iterated the high-level political dimension of the FE process. SFM tools are one of the areas where consensus has been accomplished despite diverse conditions in different parts of Europe. The statement acknowledged the reflection made on the commitments from the Madrid Ministerial Conference, and mentioned an internal consultation with seven Directorates-General in identifying priorities of the EC. A written position on priorities was submitted to LUB prior to the meeting. The EC representative recognised the challenging nature of the WP with a long list of actions, and underlined flexibility that may be needed in support of agreed priorities.

A representative of the European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR) thanked the organisers of the meeting. He expressed readiness to contribute towards implementation of the Ministerial commitments, referring to the new strategy of the Association and enhanced cooperation with international organisations. Despite difficulties to choose priorities among the actions proposed in the WP, the statement mentioned the green economy, payments for ecosystem services and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. The statement stressed the agenda-setting, rather than an implementing, function of the FE process.

A representative of Turkey acknowledged the efforts made by LUB during the transition period, including the reflection on the commitments from Madrid Ministerial Conferences. Turkey has responded to the survey on priority activities, and considers LBA to be one of them. He then offered to host a workshop on "protection of forests in a changing environment", in Antalya at a suitable time to be determined, with the technical and organisational assistance by LUB.

A representative of Norway acknowledged the efficient transition and the high quality documents prepared for the ELM. The priorities of Norway, including SFM tools and adaptation strategies, were described in a letter sent to LUB prior to the meeting. The importance of maintaining FE as a political process was emphasised in the statement. In fact, it is timely to already start identifying key policy issues that could be addressed by the next Ministerial Conference. Sharing responsibilities is needed as resources are limited in the course of implementation of the Ministerial commitments.

A representative of Albania referred to the green economy as being a significant political objective of the Government of Albania. The statement also highlighted valuation of forest ecosystem services as a welcome priority, and recognised the related capacity building needs.

A representative of Slovenia thanked the organisers, and stressed multifunctional forest management as an important concept in the process of FE. He then mentioned other high-level political processes with specific reference to a meeting on forestry of the 16+1 initiative (cooperation China with Central East European Countries), held in Slovenia in May 2016.

Box 1. Highlights of the general discussion on Draft Work Programme

- There was broad support expressed for the new WP as a comprehensive and professionally elaborated document. It provided a good basis for discussion of activities foreseen in the WP. Several signatories and observer organisations described the WP as very ambitious, possibly comprising too many activities and events.

- During the discussion, a number of signatories and observers referred to their priorities for engagement, which were either already communicated through the online survey before the meeting, or briefly described in the statements made during the session. Intention to express the interest to participate in particular activities once the WP is adopted, was also stated by several delegates.
- The importance of FOREST EUROPE providing a forum for debate on and setting of the broader political agenda relevant to European forests was emphasised throughout the discussion. The broader agenda includes notably but not exclusively, advancing the concept of green economy, implementation of forest-related Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030, climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, and forest ecosystem services.
- Sustainable Forest Management policies and tools were acknowledged as a central area of work of the FOREST EUROPE process.
- The cross-sectoral nature of the forest-related political agenda was also stated.
- Linkages and contributions to the global policy processes on forests were strongly encouraged.
- Recognising programmatic synergies and work efficiencies, a close cooperation with other relevant international bodies was recommended.

In the following discussion, the ELM participants deliberated in detail on the activities proposed in the draft Work Programme. This section summarises the discussion on each WP Chapter and captures the decisions made (please see Box 2 for highlights).

WP Chapter 1 Introduction

Finland proposed to improve the wording in the Introduction related to definition of FE, clarifying that protection of forests is an integral part of SFM, which was accepted and amended in the text.

WP Chapter 2 Objectives and main principles

Poland proposed modification in the chapeau, namely to mention key role of signatories in the implementation of the pan-European actions of FE.

The participants discussed guiding principles of the WP covered by this Chapter. Austria, Finland, UNECE and Sweden proposed improvements of the first principle "Cooperation and Partnership" – IUFRO was included, wording "other partners" was replaced by "other relevant organisations and stakeholders" and a new formulations referring to seeking synergies in the implementation of the work programmes and reaching out to other sectors were added.

Switzerland proposed to specifically mention Integrated Programme of Work for the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission in "Cooperation and Partnership", which was supported by the Russian Federation, highlighting the regional dimension of both programmes of work. Ukraine, Belgium and France made supportive statements but recommended that such amendment should not imply exclusion of other actors.

Representatives of FAO, Latvia, Switzerland, Ukraine, Croatia, the EC, Austria and Sweden discussed possible improvement in the fourth guiding principle "Reflecting latest agenda at the global level". Based on numerous comments and suggestions, a new formulation of this principle was proposed by the LUB reflecting the discussion, which was accepted by the ELM.

Finland, Ukraine, Poland, the EC, Sweden, Albania proposed changes in the section Key topics from the Madrid Ministerial Conferences, related to addressing regional and global challenges, review of the FE process, exchange of experiences, links to the bio- and circular economy, protection of forests in a changing environment and climate change mitigation. The EC and Sweden proposed a formulation for the first point of Key topics, "to make SFM tools fit for addressing new and emerging challenges". The amendments were adopted.

Austria, the EC, Switzerland, Germany, FAO and Sweden discussed wording of the section Broader linkages with and contributions to regional and global processes. Recognising its duplicity with the first guiding principle, the section was removed from the document.

WP Chapter 3 FOREST EUROPE Commitments

Switzerland and the EC suggested that the placement of the boxes related to the Ministerial Commitments on Legally Binding Agreement in the scheme (Figure 1 of the Work Programme) be put in line with the other boxes or by an explanatory note.

WP Chapter 4 Pan-European actions, arrangements and responsibilities

Representatives of France, Switzerland, Belgium, Finland and Germany discussed possible improvements in the chapeau, mainly regarding the role of the GCC in exchanging views with COFFI and EFC with the purpose to identify synergies between their work programmes. Based on the proposal of Sweden, the formulation of linkage between work programmes was transferred to the Chapter 2, section Guiding principles (see above).

Switzerland proposed to explain the composition and role of the GCC (co-chairing and member countries). The co-chair briefly explained the rotation principle of the GCC countries, and it was decided to add the explanation in a footnote.

Finland requested to highlight the voluntary nature of FE in this section, which was subsequently formulated and added to the Introduction.

WP Sub-chapter 4.1 Policies and tools for SFM

Finland proposed to improve the wording of the chapeau, which was incorporated in the text.

Ukraine proposed to replace an expert group in the activity 4.1.1 by "analysis delivered by an external consultancy", supported by Slovenia, and to conduct an online consultation followed by the ELM consideration and decision. However, Switzerland, Finland, Germany, France and the EC recommended to leave organisational aspects to the expert group itself, and made reference to the role of the ELM as described in the document. Ukraine accepted the view of other delegates but proposed to keep at least "online consultation" in the activity description.

Poland proposed to broaden the scope of the expert group (activity 4.1.1) to analyse how C&I could be implemented, and to move the start of activities 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 to 2016.

The Russian Federation stressed that the work of UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Monitoring SFM must be considered to avoid duplication of efforts and to engage in a close cooperation and partnership to complement each other, which was supported by Switzerland.

Finland, pointing at the low interest in activity 4.1.3 expressed by signatories in the survey, proposed to re-formulate it so that it can reach out to other sectors, contributing to green- or bio-economy, or linking the forest sector to the wider development agenda if this activity should be kept in the WP. Representatives of several countries supported Finland and expressed their views that focusing on just exchange of lessons learned is not sufficient, and that there is a need for cross-sectoral focus. Switzerland, however, mentioned that the topics need to be chosen carefully to be relevant for all, and that not all countries have NFPs. In conclusion, the ELM agreed with the view expressed by some countries that the activity would be omitted from the WP.

WP Sub-chapter 4.2 Forest monitoring and reporting

Ukraine proposed to add a new activity related to annex of the Madrid Ministerial Declaration "Background Information for the Updated Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management and Relevant Definitions Used for the Updated Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management", which was subsequently merged with activity 4.2.2. She also proposed to add a short text in chapeau for explanation.

Representatives of Poland, Switzerland, FAO proposed to improve wording of the chapeau.

Stressing the importance of Agenda 2030 and its SDGs as a platform to increase visibility of forests and SFM, the representatives of FAO, Ukraine and Finland recommended to strengthen linkages to the global SDG process and related monitoring aspects.

The Russian Federation referred to earlier disputes related to the copyright of SoEF 2015 report as a reason why the Russian Federation did not provide information. Fully understanding the importance of the SoEF, the Russian Federation would like to take part in its next edition provided that the disputes are solved. The representative asked whether LUB was planning to change the practice and introduce a shared copyright arrangement for the next SoEF report, pointing out that such arrangement would provide possibility of its translation into UN languages. Ukraine supported a copyright sharing arrangement with UNECE/FAO Joint Forestry and Timber Section. The co-chair Mr. Rojo Serrano responded as a representative of Spain (not as co-chair) that all together must do their best to solve the issue, produce the report and avoid the situation from the past. He said that details of a possible arrangement would need to be discussed further. LUB is not entitled to take this type of decisions, and the matter needs to be addressed by the GCC or the ELM.

WP Sub-chapter 4.3 Enhancing the role of SFM in a green economy

Finland noted a possible option of combining the activities 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 so there could be only one expert group, and referred to the work of international actors in promotion of green jobs. Ukraine proposed to use questionnaire survey within the Activity 4.3.1. UNECE responded by referring to their study to be produced this year in close cooperation with the Team of Specialists on Green Jobs, which to a large extent cover the issues of the activity 4.3.1 and expressed the willingness to cooperate and support the implementation of the activities.

Hungary proposed to highlight outreach to other sectors within this chapter.

EFI stated that the single workshop proposed as 4.3.3. cannot provide a science-policy interface, and offered to seek synergies with EFI and Think Forest, which are preparing the publication on forest bio-economy. Moreover, importance of bio-economy has been expressed several times during the meeting. UNECE noted two different aspects of the activity 4.3.3, namely enhancing the long-term competitiveness of the forest sector in the green economy on the one side, and the broader science-policy interface on the other side. The co-chair requested EFI and UNECE to provide explanations, in order to be incorporated by the LUB. After a consultation the new formulation was embedded into the WP.

WP Sub-chapter 4.4 Incorporating the value of forest ecosystem services in a green economy

Representative of EFI mentioned studies being conducted, and the expertise available.

Serbia, noting the considerable attention paid to the concept of valuation and payments for forest ecosystem services in the FE process, proposed a more ambitious scope for the activity 4.4.2. The foreseen portal should include common methodologies rather than recommendations for valuation of ecosystem services.

Ukraine suggested that a questionnaire on best practices could be developed. However, Switzerland and Croatia cautioned against new questionnaires and referred to the ongoing work of international organisations already tackling the topic.

The co-chair Mr. Greguška briefly clarified the reasoning of the GCC for a web-based portal proposed in activity 4.4.2. UNECE offered to seek synergies with related knowledge platforms. The proposal made by Serbia to include development of common methodologies for valuation of forest ecosystem services was broadly supported and text of the activity was amended accordingly.

WP Sub-chapter 4.5 Protection of forests in a changing environment including their adaptation to climate change

Spain emphasised the importance of the topic and especially activity 4.5.1, but proposed to include mitigation strategies, with reference to the Paris Climate Conference. Switzerland

considered the balance between mitigation and adaptation in the WP to be adequate, with emphasis on the potential of climate-change-adaptation strategies in forestry. Swiss opinion was also supported by UNFF.

EFI, requested by Finland, mentioned existing scientific evidence, and supported the general need for a survey proposed in 4.5.1.

Switzerland proposed to change the timeframe of the workshops foreseen in activities 4.5.2 and 4.5.3 in the sense that both should deliver pertinent outputs for consideration by the ELM. The workshop that makes recommendations (4.5.3) should follow the workshop aimed at sharing expertise and experience (4.5.2). The proposal was adopted.

Bioversity International made a statement referring to the EUFORGEN programme having originated from the First Ministerial Conference in Strasbourg. It serves as a possible model of a collaborative network for identifying obstacles to progress, linking researchers with policy makers and contributing towards implementation of ministerial commitments.

The EC acknowledged the importance of agroforestry for combating desertification and for promoting adaptation to climate change. The representative mentioned a workshop on agroforestry that the EC is organising in autumn 2016, which will produce outputs that can contribute towards the activity 4.5.3.

Several signatories namely the EC, Turkey, Switzerland, Hungary, France and Slovenia welcomed and supported a new activity on agroforestry (4.5.3), but suggested to broaden its scope to climate change adaptation. Ukraine, supported by Switzerland also proposed to cover forest rehabilitation in a broader sense than it was in the Draft WP. The text was amended accordingly. Suggestions were made to merge workshops or to organise more workshops, but it was decided to keep the two workshops as proposed in the draft WP due to economic reasons. Turkey and Hungary offered to host the events.

France noted the importance of adaptation to climate change in forestry and the associated need for effective exchange of knowledge. The representative also touched upon the important role of forest reproductive material, and noted the possibility to consider expanding the scope of the existing international networks, namely EUFORGEN, to tackle the broader issues related to adaptation in forestry.

WP Sub-chapter 4.6 Enhancing the social dimension of SFM in the context of benefits of forests on human health and well-being

Representative of Luxembourg thanked the organisers for preparation of the ELM and for the documentation. Highlighting the importance of the topic, he recommended broader linkages and cooperation to be established particularly with the health sector for implementation of the activity. Switzerland and Slovenia supported the statement. Slovenia would like to see engagement with the broader public and Switzerland suggested the possibility of inviting relevant actors from public health sector and the private sector (e.g. ecotourism, insurance companies and other) to contribute towards implementation. Austria expressed an offer to contribute to activity 4.6.2 by organising a conference dedicated to forests and human health next year. Hungary stressed the benefits of forests and their sustainable management to human health. Finland made an editorial suggestion that was incorporated in text.

WP Sub-chapter 4.7 Communications and outreach

Belgium highlighted the importance of good communication about forests and forestry to the broader society. Switzerland supported the contents and formulation of the Sub-chapter.

WP Chapter 5 Review of FOREST EUROPE process

This Chapter was discussed separately as item (5) of the agenda (please see below).

WP Chapter 6 Follow-up of Madrid Extraordinary Ministerial Conference

Switzerland expressed the view that the text of the proposed activity (roundtable meeting) fully corresponds to the Madrid Ministerial Decision, however, regarding the timeframe, he

proposed to organise the meeting in early 2018. Ukraine, Latvia, Poland, the Russian Federation and the earlier written statement by Norway supported its delay to the year 2018, highlighting the need for proper preparation and informal consultations among signatories prior to the meeting. On the other hand, Austria, Germany and Slovenia supported the original proposal and suggested to start with the roundtable meeting already in 2016 emphasising that the Draft Negotiation Text is up-to-date now. France proposed to widen the interval from 2016 to 2018 and allocate enough time for the preliminary consultation, which was supported by the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic also proposed to organise the meeting as a high-level event, but Latvia and Finland expressed their preference for informal format such as a brainstorming session of experts. Norway again supported to organise the roundtable meeting in 2018 or to extend the timeframe from 2017 to 2018 underscoring that the Draft Negotiation Text should not become obsolete in few years. He also noted the need to focus on the implementation of the WP and the Working Group on future direction of FE. In further discussion, signatories supported the earlier (Slovakia, Turkey) or the later scheduling of the roundtable meeting (Croatia, Finland, Serbia, Spain). Germany recalled the proposal made by France to set the timeframe of this activity from 2016 to 2018, which was subsequently supported by signatories including Austria, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, Sweden, Switzerland, and adopted by the ELM.

The signatories also discussed organisational aspects and appropriate wording of the activity. Switzerland proposed the formulation "the preparation of the roundtable meeting will be facilitated by informal consultations by member states" and "final decision on the roundtable meeting will be taken at the ELM in 2017". The signatories including Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Sweden and Ukraine further discussed these issues, and also touched upon the role of the GCC in this process. Latvia proposed that informal consultations by the signatories should be facilitated by the GCC, which was discussed and accepted. Moreover, Luxembourg proposed that the GCC could also take the decision regarding the date of the roundtable meeting, which was opposed by Finland stating that such decision could only be taken by ELM. Finland's view was supported by Germany, Poland and Latvia, which noted the important role played by the GCC for taking stock of the informal consultations in signatory countries, which is a political, not a technical issue.

Box 2. Highlights of the chapter-by-chapter discussion on Work Programme

- FOREST EUROPE Work Programme 2016—2020 was adopted at the meeting. It consists of seven thematic sub-chapters, which are highlighted below in this box. Review of the FOREST EUROPE process and Follow-up of Madrid Extraordinary Ministerial Conference are also part of the Work Programme.
- The Objectives and Guiding Principles of the Work Programme were endorsed and supported by the ELM, with several amendments stressing the inclusiveness of FOREST EUROPE and its role in addressing global challenges.
- Further work on **SFM policies and tools** was broadly supported, with priority given to an expert group that will monitor and analyse how C&I are developed and could be implemented and an analysis of the application of C&I subsets.
- The continued role of FOREST EUROPE in **forest monitoring and reporting** was acknowledged, with linkages to be strengthened with the global Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals and related monitoring aspects. Reporting on Goals for European Forests and 2020 Targets is an integral part of the efforts. The meeting called for an early resolution of the issue of copyright arrangement for the next edition of the State of Europe's forests.
- Expert groups and a workshops will contribute towards enhancing the **role of SFM in a green economy**, specifically through promotion of green jobs and increasing long-term competitiveness of the forest sector.
- The scope of the activities on **forest ecosystem services** (an analysis and a web-based portal) was broadened to include the development of common methodologies for valuation of forest ecosystem services.

- Continuing efforts to **adapt forests to climate change through SFM** were supported by the ELM, with an expert group and two workshops included in the WP.
- The **social dimension of SFM** in the context of benefits of forests on human health and well-being will be explored and enhanced through a review and a workshop. Close collaboration with relevant actors from public health and private sectors will be pursued.
- **Communications** and outreach were supported as an integral part of the new WP.
- **The activity related to the roundtable meeting on a Legally Binding Agreement** on forests, as stipulated by the Madrid Extraordinary Ministerial Conference, will be conducted between 2016-2018. To facilitate preparations for the meeting, signatory countries will conduct informal consultations.

(5) Information and discussion on the possible steps in the Review of the FOREST EUROPE process

The co-chair Mr. Greguška informed the ELM participants that a working group (WG) on the future direction of FE needed to be created with two signatory countries serving as co-chairs, to be appointed at this ELM. He also explained that the GCC had discussed possible criteria for selection of the co-chairs. Subsequently, the GCC informally contacted signatories to discuss potential candidates and two countries expressed an interest – France and Ukraine. Fully supporting the proposal for these two countries to co-chair the WG, the GCC recommended to bring the nominations for discussion at the ELM. The co-chair added that the WG co-chairs shall perform their function in line with draft ToR submitted for adoption by this ELM.

The co-chair informed that according to the information received from the candidate countries, Ms. Poliakova on behalf of Ukraine and Mr. Saulnier on behalf of France were nominated. Switzerland asked for clarification about appointment of co-chairs as countries or as persons. The representative of Germany supported by Norway responded that the respective countries are to be appointed as co-chairs.

Norway, Latvia, Finland, the EC, Slovenia and Poland supported establishment of the WG and the proposal for nomination of the two co-chairs. Belgium also supported nomination of France. Norway, Latvia, the EC and Poland then expressed their willingness to join the WG.

The representatives of France and Ukraine expressed their acceptance of the nomination and thanked the participants. The co-chair concluded that the WG was established and France and Ukraine were appointed as its co-chairs. He then asked the delegates to comment on the Draft Terms of Reference for the WG. In the ensuing discussion, a number of comments and amendments were made, which were incorporated directly in the text of the document.

Norway commented on timeframe, and proposed to include the schedule from the Draft Roadmap into the Draft ToR, which was supported by Finland, Ukraine and Germany, and adopted. Latvia proposed to widen the scope of the WG to not only include technical aspects but also conceptual ones *i.e.* identifying current and upcoming issues. This was supported by Finland, Ukraine, Norway, but opposed by Germany arguing with possibly overloading the WG by giving them tasks not mentioned in the Madrid Ministerial Decision. German view to be in line with the Ministerial Decision was supported by delegate of Switzerland who, however, proposed to reformulate Latvian wording to "Taking into account current and upcoming issues" instead of originally proposed "Identifying current and upcoming issues". This change was supported by the delegates of Germany, Serbia and Sweden, and accepted by the ELM. Finland supported by Ukraine proposed to add new wording related to "taking stock of signatories and stakeholders' views on the achievements and added value of FE", which was accepted by the ELM; and "analysing the role of FE as a regional actor", which was further amended by Sweden and the EC to "analysing the interplay of FE with other actors in the pan-European forest policy arena" and adopted by the ELM in this form.

Ukraine proposed to include elaboration of draft rules of procedures for FE into the review process. Defining such outcome was questioned by Germany and Norway, however, stating

that the Draft ToR does not exclude it, which was accepted by Ukraine. Germany seconded Portugal regarding their view expressed by e-mail on a procedural matter, namely that the results of the WG should be presented to the ELM not only for consideration but for adoption. During the discussion, Ukraine, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Hungary Latvia, Serbia and Turkey further discussed the formulation and its possible widening to appropriate action to be taken by ELM. It was concluded that the ToR should guide the work of the WG and not the ELM. For that reason, the original proposal by Portugal "for consideration and adoption by the ELM" was adopted. The Czech Republic, France, Spain, Germany, Croatia and Norway made other suggestions for improved wording to define the mandate for the WG.

Germany proposed that the Roadmap would also need to be adopted, in order to formally adhere to the Madrid Ministerial Decision. The Czech Republic proposed to add the term Roadmap to the title of the ToR. The final outcome was adopted by the ELM as one document titled "Terms of Reference and Roadmap for Working Group on the future direction on FOREST EUROPE".

Box 3. Highlights of the discussion on Review

- The Terms of Reference and Roadmap for the Working Group on the future direction of FOREST EUROPE were merged into one document and adopted at the meeting with several amendments to the draft version.
- France and Ukraine were endorsed as co-chairs of the Working Group on future direction of FOREST EUROPE. Several other countries and observer organisations expressed an interest to join the Group. The Group will commence its work after the ELM and the Review will be concluded no later than the end of 2017.

(6) Exchange of information on international meetings

The Head of LUB introduced a list of upcoming international meetings that are relevant from the perspective of the FE process. The co-chair requested the representatives of signatories and observers to provide LUB with up-to-date information on any relevant upcoming events. The list is maintained at the FE website: <http://www.foresteurope.org/OtherEvents>

(7) Any other matters

The co-chair introduced a request made by CEETTAR (European Confederation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors), supported by the GCC, to become an observer organisation in FE. CEETTAR, established in 1961, advocates for interests of land-based contractors. As of 1/1/2015, CEETTAR merged activities with European Network of Forest Entrepreneurs and formed a single organisation, representing the interests of about 150,000 companies and 600,000 workers in forestry, agriculture and rural works at European level. There being no objections, the observer status of CEETTAR was adopted by the ELM.

(8) Conclusions and closure

Germany proposed that LUB in cooperation with the GCC would finalize the text after the meeting, and even if certain points might require additional approval, to have the Work Programme approved in principle by the ELM. Similarly, leading actors for the activities would be finalized amongst signatories and observers by correspondence after the meeting, based on the results of the questionnaire and discussions at this meeting. The Russian Federation opposed the proposal to approve the WP, which needs additional amendments or alterations (excepting the editorial changes) and noted that the WP would need to be finalized during the meeting, in order to be approved. Finland and Germany, supported by Norway, proposed to clean the text and finalize required changes during coffee break. A small group including LUB, GCC members and those signatories and observers with proposals to be incorporated into the document met and finalized the text during the break.

The final document was then briefly reviewed in plenary. As there were no further comments or objections, the co-chair concluded that the Work Programme had been adopted.

The co-chair Mr. Rojo Serrano thanked the participants for their contributions and for the constructive, collegial spirit of discussion at the meeting. He acknowledged that the ELM had succeeded in adopting the new FOREST EUROPE Work Programme and established the Working Group for the review of the process. He then declared the meeting closed.

List of abbreviations

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEETTAR	European Confederation of Agricultural, Rural and Forestry Contractors
CEF	Council of European Foresters
COFFI	Committee on Forests and Forest Industry
C&I	Criteria and Indicators
EC	European Commission
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
EFC	European Forestry Commission
EFI	European Forest Institute
ELM	Expert Level Meeting
EU	European Union
EUFORGEN	European Forest Genetic Resources Programme
EUSTAFOR	European State Forest Association
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FE	FOREST EUROPE
GCC	General Coordinating Committee
IAF	International Arrangement on Forests
IUFRO	International Union of Forest Research Organisations
LBA	Legally Binding Agreement
LUB	Liaison Unit Bratislava
NFPs	National Forest Programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SoEF	State of Europe's Forests Report
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToS	Team of Specialists
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
USSE	Union of Foresters of Southern Europe
WG	Working Group
WP	Work Programme