

MEETING OF THE GENERAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

10-11 November 2011, Munich, Germany

Draft minutes of the meeting

The meeting of the General Coordinating Committee (GCC) of FOREST EUROPE took place in Munich, Germany on 10-11 November 2011. It was chaired by Ms. Ana Belén Noriega Bravo, Head of the Liaison Unit Madrid (LUM).

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr. Matthias Schwoedler welcomed the members of the GCC to [Germany and](#) the Bavarian region and specially to the new GCC member Turkey. [A welcome address was also given by Mr. Georg Windisch, Director General for Forestry of Bavarian region.](#)

Ms. Ana Belén Noriega also welcomes the participants and ask them to introduce themselves.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without amendments.

3. Information on the establishment of the Liaison Unit Madrid

Ms. Ana Belén Noriega asked the members of the LUM to introduce themselves and inform about the transition between the Liaisons Units, explaining that some bi lateral collaboration would keep on taking place between them

4. The FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference Oslo 14-16 June 2011 - brief evaluation of achievements and strategic direction for the follow up of the Oslo ministerial decisions

Mr. Arne Ivar summed up Warsaw ministerial conference decision on establishing a LBA and the strategic review of the process, points that led to Oslo conference outcomes. He explained the ministerial conference participation and the decision and mandate result of it.

The GCC highlighted the success of the Oslo Ministerial Conference and stressed the significant of the new negotiation track that FOREST EUROPE has begun and the need not to lose the momentum. The GCC [also discussed underlined the need to develop future lines of the process in the importance of the two-track approach, both to be treated with the same importance especially given the hard start of the negotiation track.](#)

[In the light of this, GCC](#) ~~it was also~~ stressed the need to preserved the values of FOREST EUROPE [as, a flexible and proactive process that develops forest policy and SFM tools further,](#) reaches agreements on a consensus basis and establish commitments on sustainable forest management at the highest level of political compromise. It was also mentioned the need to involve the signatory countries in the development of the work programme and in co-financing some of the activities.

GCC also discussed its own role: The GCC must be regarded as a group of specifically engaged countries and facilitators whose members provide financial support, political advise and guidance to the process on a ~~voluntary~~ basis of their voluntary political commitment.

Despite the concept of geographical balance of membership in the GCC, the group underlined that members have no formal responsibility of representing the sub-region to which they belong.

Since a vague mistrust against GCC was introduced into the process for the first time by a few Signatories during Oslo preparations, the need was stressed to make an extra effort on transparency and neutralness in the work. It was pointed out that communications, information and outreaching must play a key role ~~be stressed~~. Some lines were proposed, like the use of Embassys and mission contacts to distribute information of the process in order that Foreign Affairs Departments and Ministers were aware of FOREST EUROPE process. Also, the possibility of creating regional or social partnerships through communications and outreaching based on historical collaboration between countries, leaded by GCC countries. FOREST EUROPE Website could be use to better spread the structure of the process and the Oslo mandate.

The GCC must be regarded as a group of facilitators that give financial support, political advise and guidance to the process. It was stressed the need to make an extra effort on transparency, activeness and ensure neutral steps in the work.

It was also remembered the tasks and work of the Liaison Unit, whose mandate is contained in the Conference Declarations, and its work is on the technical ground, to act the secretariat of the process and liaise with countries and observers.

5. Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe: Preparations to the First session, information and discussion with the Chair of the INC, Mr. Jan Heino

Ms. Malgorzata Buszko-Briggs made a short update of the work done by the Liaison Unit Oslo (LUO) as part of the joint servicing of the negotiation process.

After the Oslo Ministerial Conference a kick off meeting of the five organisations that were to service jointly the negotiations was settled.

An invitation letter was sent from the Minister of Norway, Mr. Lars Peder Brekk, to the organisations that were to serve the secretariat of the negotiation process, the three United Nations (UN) organisations (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme), and European Forest Institute (EFI). All organisations answered accepting the invitation according to the Oslo mandate.

The Chair undertook the mission and invite countries to nominate members of the bureau. The LUO facilitate the arrangements for the first meeting of the bureau that took place in September, where recommendations were made, discussed and approved. Afterwards, invitations for the first intergovernmental negotiation committee (INC₁) where sent. And all secretariat members worked together on background papers and agenda in order to launch the negotiations.

It was further explained by some GCC members, that after Antalia joint UNECE/FAO meeting, UNECE asked for a clarification from their Executive Committee (ExCOM), about the nature of the INC. Their understanding is that UNECE will not be able to serve this process as part of the Secretariat if INC is not independent.

The GCC emphasized the need to follow and implement the Oslo Mandate, and that the first priority is starting the negotiations at the INC1, as planned, by late 2011 or the beginning of 2012. Therefore, absolute clarity is needed about the positions and availability of the members of the INC Secretariat. It is also needed to reinforce the authority of the chair, the Bureau and the INC as established by the Minister's Mandate.

Mr. Jan Heino was invited to join the meeting by audioconference. He explained the state of art, about the ExCOM consultations and that the UNECE secretariat will not release any funds before the situation is solved.

It was proposed to GCC backed up ask Jan Heino's position as INC chair against ECE's role, asked him to discuss with the Bureau and signalled to him give him the message that some GCC and other countries are considering the option of financing the first INC meeting if needed.

Mr. Jan Heino was invited to join the meeting by audioconference. He explained the state of art, about the ExCOM consultations and that the UNECE secretariat will not release any funds before the situation is solved.

He speculated with three possible options: the first option was to postpone the meeting until UNECE clarifies its position, the second option was to hold an informal meeting among interested parties, which could be convened by the Chair or by FOREST EUROPE in Geneva; and the third option was to find another place for the meeting and be serviced only from the INC Secretariat members ready to do it. He thought that postponing the meeting would keep the process more intact and that any other option could have consequences that must be measured.

He also explained that as for the other UN agencies, FAO would be willing to continue on board and UNEP will probably share UNECE views.

The GCC asked Jan Heino to clarify with UNECE what they could do in order to support the INC; stressed that he is the custodian of the process and asked him, under Oslo mandate, to look for a solution that does not contravene the Oslo Mandate. They pointed out that the process cannot be turned upside down, the momentum can not be lost. It was proposed to gain time to negotiate with counterparts and gain their support.

Mr. Jan Heino thought to convene a Bureau meeting by audio or videoconference the week after and LUM proposed to help him to do so on Tuesday afternoon for two hours.

6. Development of the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme

Ms. Ana Belén Noriega presented the draft of the FOREST EUROPE work programme and asked the participants to help in prioritizing the actions and activities proposed in it.

When discussing the general structure of the draft work programme, GCC members questioned the volume of activities and actions and asked to limit them to only one action per item in the Work Programme. They also pointed out not to duplicate what is already being done by other organisations (for example with green economy topic); and stressed the need to find country leaders and financing. Activities subject to financing by volunteering countries could also be proposed. Also some issues of the work programme could further be developed at the Madrid conference.

They agreed in general that the structure and order of topics responds to general priorities and after this general round of comments further discussion was held on every topic of the work programme.

1. Further development of sustainable forest management and its tools

GCC provided proposals for concrete activities, including one from Mr. Matthias Schwoerer (Germany) for an analysis of the state of the art of the implementation of former decisions on [Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management \(SFM\) in monitoring and policy. \(Actually Germany is commissioning an EFI project on that subject 2011-2013 already which is supposed to serve as seed activity\)](#). Also they provided suggestions on ways to revitalise and consolidate sustainable forest management and its tools through the review of SFM definition/explanation and of Indicators according to new knowledge and data collection. [On the other hand it was cautioned to reopen the SFM definition.](#)

In this framework new bullet points of emerging issues as desertification, forest fires and nature protection were proposed to be considered, and to address here the green economy topic as an integrated part of SFM.

It was the general view that the activities should be simplify and only have the first analysis of the state of art, a group of experts to explore improvements in SFM and its tools, and a workshop to explore proposals just before the Expert Level Meeting (ELM).

2. Further improvements in forest monitoring and reporting

Ms. Berit Hauger (LUO) presented the item highlighting that FAO is looking for a joint data collection with global and regional processes that would make easier future reports. Ideas on how to report the 2020 assessment and how the State of Europe's Forests (SoEF) could help the process in the future should be developed; and it has to be considered the link between the reporting and the possible future Legally Binding Agreement.

The GCC welcomed this issue and stressed the intention of further improve the consistency and comprehensiveness of data and its collection and the possibility of harmonizing/merging with other reports.

3. Strengthened efforts against illegal logging and related trade

[Given the great variety of already existing activities in this area, especially on FLEGT, the GCC asked to limit the activities to one workshop to analyze how much European countries are involved in illegal logging through trade \[and what can be done at pan-European level to facilitate joint action.\]\(#\)](#)

It was proposed by Mr. Ismael Belen (Turkey) to include forest certification, non-wood products and social benefits of forests in this issue but there were refrains to open up the illegal logging to non wood products. It was further proposed to explore the non-wood products under topic no.4, Valuation of forest ecosystem services, and stress the trade values in it.

Some GCC members highlighted the need to have on board key countries like Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia; and key actors like the European Investment Bank, the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) and the European Commission (EC).

4. Valuation of forest ecosystem services

It was highlighted to approach it in a more proactive way and reconsider the activities and leading actors.

5. Social issues and Green economy

The GCC argued that the profile in this topic must be lower, avoid duplications and try to merge with other topics. Green economy can be considered in the first item related to SFM, where it has to be accordingly highlighted. And regarding the social dimension of green economy, Mr. Jose María Solano (Spain) proposed that this item could be rephrased as 'Social issues in a green economy'.

Mr. Matthias Schwoerer (Germany) stressed the need to mention the ECE programme on green economy and the Bonn Conference on forest in a Green Economy from last October.

6. Servicing the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe

This topic was already ~~already~~ treated in a previous agenda point.

7. Communication and outreach

Ms. Luisa Cabello (LUM) highlighted that it would be useful to use the Green economy and employment topics to link the ministerial process with the society, and use new technologies such as social networks and web platforms.

Mr. Kristin Dawes (LUO) also proposed to intensify the work with Ministries and countries, and the need to evaluate social media before designing a strategy.

Mr. Ismael Belen (Turkey) pointed out that some actors must be brought to be more proactive in this process like the European Commission; that people from foreign affairs must be also be involved ; and that it could be useful to send, in this new period, a letter to all the Ministers in name of the Spanish Minister, as LUO did in the previous one, to reinforce the process.

7. Next FOREST EUROPE Expert Level Meeting

The GCC settled to have an Expert Level Meeting (ELM) in early 2012, tentatively on 14th-15th of February. And it was pointed out that an information message should be sent as soon as possible to the rest of the countries.

8. Financial matters

The discussion on financial matters was based on background papers presenting the annual balance 2011 closing the Liaison Unit Oslo period and a budget proposal for 2012 and 2013 years for the Liaison Unit Madrid.

The GCC gave a positive comments on the 2012 budget, slightly lower than the other. Mr. Matthias Schwoerer (Germany) stressed the need to have a procedure for a formal acceptance of the budget [replacing the former high level meetings](#), and proposed to do it so through the presentation of formal letters of acceptance [which was accepted](#).

Mr. Ismail Belen (Turkey) asked for a long-term budget plan and a summary description of GCC history and means. Further it was agreed to make a note of the GCC history process.

Ms. Malgorzata Buszko-Briggs (LUO) asked details of the budget regarding the Servicing the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and it was explained that the FOREST

EUROPE budget does include only the tasks for Liaison Unit according to the Rules of Procedure of the Oslo Mandate but does not include any other tasks nor INC meetings.

9. Other matters

Possible new signatory countries to FOREST EUROPE

Tajikistan (and possibly Kirghizstan) have requested to be signatory countries to FOREST EUROPE. It was pointed out that since they were part of former Union of the Social Soviet Republics (USSR), they are signatories and that they only have to be listed as such.

REC and European Investment Bank have applied for observer status to FOREST EUROPE. The application was supported by the GCC. Final approval of observer status will be decided by next ELM.

Mr. Boris Greguska reiterated Slovakia compromise to host the 8th Ministerial Conference following the Spanish chairmanship.

10. Closure of the meeting

Ms. Ana Belen Noriega thanked Germany for hosting the meeting and the members of the GCC for the constructive discussions.

Mr Arne Ivar Sletnes made a farewell-toast from the LUO side and a welcome-one for the LUM.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Germany	Mr. Matthias Schwoerer Mr. Thomas Huber
Norway	Mr. Knut Øistad
Slovak Republic	Mr. Boris Greguska
Spain	Mr. José María Solano López
Turkey	Mr. Mahir Küçük Mr. Ismael Belen Ms. Vice consul of Turkish Consulate in Munich
Liaison Unit Oslo	Ms. Malgorzata Buszko-Briggs Ms. Kristin Dawes Ms. Berit Hauger Lindstad Mr. Arne Ivar Sletnes
Liaison Unit Madrid	Ms. Ana Belén Noriega Bravo Ms. Luisa Cabello Ms. Susana Tejedor Mr. Elena Estrada Wilke