

MCPFE EXPERT LEVEL MEETING

7–8 May 2008, Oslo, Norway

Draft Minutes of the meeting

The MCPFE Expert Level Meeting (ELM) took place in Oslo, Norway, on 7–8 May 2008. It was attended by 88 delegates representing 31 European countries and the European Commission, 20 observer countries and organisations and the Liaison Unit Oslo. The meeting was chaired jointly by Mr. Piotr Borkowski, General Directorate of the State Forests, Poland, and Mr. Arne Ivar Sletnes, head of the Liaison Unit Oslo.

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr. Sletnes welcomed the participants of the ELM. He also introduced his colleagues in the Liaison Unit Oslo, which has been operating since January 2008: Ms. Malgorzata Buszko-Briggs, Ms. Berit Hauger Lindstad, Ms. Kjersti Bakkebø Fjellstad and Ms. Kristin Dawes.

Ms. Sigrid Hjørnegård, Political Adviser to the Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food, opened the meeting with warm regards from the minister, by expressing the importance of the MCPFE process and the challenges ahead. She stated the importance of maintaining the initiative on forest policy in Europe. She stressed that the MCPFE has the opportunity and obligation to show that the forest sector is capable of providing the goods and services from sustainable forest management to the benefit of society. She said that climate change is the most important emerging issue influencing the forest sector, underlining the challenges and opportunities the forest sector faces in implementing the Warsaw decisions. Ms. Hjørnegård questioned whether the MCPFE and its achievements have the necessary recognition outside the forest sector. She highlighted the main task of the meeting, to adopt the Work Programme. Stating that there is a need for change, Ms. Hjørnegård also encouraged the participants to decide on a strategic review of the MCPFE process and the establishment of a working group to explore the possibility for a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe. These activities compliment each other and should start as soon as possible.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda for the meeting was adopted without amendments.

3. 5th MCPFE – exchange of experiences and lessons learned

Mr. Piotr Paschalis-Jakubowicz, Poland, made an introduction by summing up on the Ministerial Conference in Warsaw 5–7 November 2007. The conference was attended by more than 300 participants, including 26 ministers and deputy ministers from 41 European countries and the European Community, 5 observer countries and 28 observer organisations. Mr. Paschalis-Jakubowicz informed that the proceedings had been published less than two months after the conference, and that the organisers had put a lot of efforts in public relations activities to increase the public awareness of the conference and its topics.

The participants of the ELM shared the following views:

- It was noted with appreciation that the Warsaw Conference was well prepared and excellent organised by Poland and the Liaison Unit Warsaw, in cooperation with Norway. The participation, interventions, presentations, documents and field trip made an impressive package.
- The conference has succeeded in creating a solid political result. However, the MCPFE faces a great challenge in reaching out with the results to, and impacting on other sectors.
- In the follow-up of the conference it will be crucial to identify key issues of importance to maintain the political relevance of the MCPFE.
- The multi-stakeholder dialogue constituted an important element, but it would be useful to further develop this element to make the dialogue more dynamic.
- The programme of the conference was very tight. It could be considered to allocate more time for discussions when planning for conferences in the future.

4. Implementation of the commitments of the Warsaw Conference – Work Programme

The discussion of the Work Programme (WP) was based on three documents; (1) a draft MCPFE Work Programme, (2) a proposal for an overall approach for a review of the MCPFE, both developed by the General Coordinating Committee (GCC), and (3) a draft terms of reference for an MCPFE working group on exploring the potential added value of and possible options for a legally binding agreement on forests in the pan-European region, prepared by Austria in cooperation with a group of MCPFE countries.

Ms. Buszko-Briggs gave an introduction to the principles, structure and contents of the Work Programme document.

In the subsequent discussion, the participants of the ELM expressed their general support to the structure, principles and content of the draft document.

The ELM made the following decisions:

- The usefulness of the Work Programme with regard to strengthening sub-regional cooperation should be reflected in the principles.
- There should be one principle added on the need to build upon scientific knowledge and research in the follow-up work.
- The importance of the Work Programme as a tool to contribute to the implementation of global commitments should be stated as a principle.
- The principle that activities of the Work Programme should build upon work carried out to implement previous commitments was also added.

In the following discussion, the participants of the ELM deliberated in detail the activities, leading actors and time frames included in the programme elements of the draft Work Programme.

A number of additional activities were presented in the discussion. It was decided to include only activities of added value at pan-European level in the Work Programme. The ELM decided that additional activities and events of relevance to and supportive to the MCPFE Work Programme should be listed and made visible in relation to the Work Programme.

Programme element: Sustainable Forest Management and Climate Change

The programme element was presented by Ms. Lindstad and Ms. Buszko-Briggs. Mr. Christian K uchli, Switzerland, provided additional information about the workshop on harvested wood products in the context of climate change, proposed as one activity of the programme element. Mr. Tomas Landers, Sweden, informed about their plans for the proposed activity related to European forest biomass featuring climate change. FAO and UNECE informed about their ongoing work on climate change, and confirmed their general interest in collaboration on climate change issues.

Several participants argued that the activities related to SFM and climate change should make a strategic contribution towards the decisions that will be taken in the framework of the UNFCCC in the next two years. It was also a general view among the participants that the MCPFE should contribute to other policy processes related to climate change and energy, notably ongoing work on developing sustainability criteria for bioenergy/biofuel production. In this context the urgency and need for timely action was stressed. In order to ensure a strategic approach, a group of countries met in the evening on the first day and redrafted two of the proposed activities. These activities were agreed by the ELM;

- a workshop on sustainable forest management and climate change – optimising the contribution of the forest sector, to be held in spring 2009. This workshop should bring to the table results of relevant activities and events, and provide a basis for countries to prepare for negotiations in UNFCCC SBSTTA in June 2009 and in proper time before UNFCCC COP 15 in Copenhagen.
- an open-ended ad-hoc working group on sustainability criteria for forest biomass production, including bioenergy. The time frame should be 2008 and 2009, and work should start immediately. Sweden offered to take a leading role. Norway offered to provide support for the activity.

The ELM agreed upon the following activities as proposed in the draft document:

- a workshop on harvested wood products in the context of climate change policies
- an analysis of pan-European challenges in forest adaptation to climate change
- a drafting meeting on the elaboration of pan-European afforestation and reforestation guidelines. Ireland offered to host the drafting meeting.

One new activity was included: a workshop on the assessment of forest fire risk and innovative strategies for fire prevention. The workshop is proposed to be held in 2010. USSE, Cyprus, Greece, Silva Mediterranea and UNECE ToS on Forest Fires offered to be lead actors.

Programme element: Wood Mobilisation and Sound Use of Wood

The programme element was presented by Ms. Lindstad and Ms. Buszko-Briggs. UNECE informed about their work on wood mobilisation, and confirmed their readiness to contribute to this focus area.

The ELM agreed in general upon the proposed activities in the draft document. Nevertheless, participants argued that work on wood mobilisation should be more forward looking and action oriented. Based on a proposal by CEPI, CEPF and UNECE, an additional activity was included under the focus area "Wood mobilisation": Workshop on strategies for increased mobilisation of wood resources from sustainable sources. The workshop is scheduled for 2009. The leading actors will be CEPI, CEPF, UNECE/FAO, COPA-COGENA and EFI.

On the proposed activity regarding exchange of experiences on public procurement policies for timber and code of conduct for legality in timber trade in Europe, no conclusion was drawn. Participants underlined, though, that the MCPFE should make best use of the actions and outcomes of the Timber Trade Action Plan of the EU in any future work on this issue.

Romania proposed to convene an expert meeting on forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG) – progress and lessons learned, and offered to host the meeting in fall 2008. The proposal received considerable support and it was decided to include the activity in the programme. Also EFI and the World Bank offered to take a leading role in this activity.

The World Bank proposed to have the MCPFE as a partner for preparing the planned high-level meeting of ENA FLEG in 2010. The meeting is intended as a follow-up of the ENA FLEG Ministerial Conference which took place in St. Petersburg, Russia, in November 2005. Due to uncertainties with regard to implications for the MCPFE, the proposal did not receive support from the countries. It was therefore suggested by the chair to discuss this further at a future expert level meeting.

Programme element: Multiple Forest Ecosystem Services, including Forests and Water

The programme element was presented by Ms. Bakkebø Fjellstad.

The ELM agreed in general upon the proposed activities in the draft document. However, participants of the ELM were of the view that EU related activities should for formal reasons not be listed as part of the MCPFE Work Programme. It was therefore decided to take out the SFC ad-hoc working group on valuation and compensation methods of non-wood forest goods and services from the table, and to put it into the list of activities supportive to the MCPFE Work Programme.

The ELM participants emphasised that the workshop on water related ecosystem services should consider implications for both forest policies and water policies. Turkey offered to host this workshop in 2009, and UNECE Water Convention was proposed included as an actor.

UNEP offered to be a co-partner for the workshop on pan-European approaches of measures to secure multiple forest services in 2010.

Italy has offered to host the workshop on Social and Cultural Values, planned for spring 2009. The Joint ECE/FAO/ILO Expert Network was added to the leading actors, and a possible role of UNESCO will be considered.

Programme element: Regional-Global Cooperation and Partnership

The programme element was presented by Ms. Buszko-Briggs. Mr. Heikki Granholm, Finland, provided additional information about the preparations for the workshop on forests in the changing environment, as a regional contribution to the UNFF.

The ELM agreed upon the proposed activities in the draft document, with some amendments. Participants emphasised the necessity of providing a timely input from the MCPFE to the eight session of the UNFF. Participants also stressed that the MCPFE should provide input and contribute to the work of other relevant processes at the global level, particularly to the UNCCD, the UNFCCC and the CBD.

The delegates of the meeting welcomed the proposal to organise a regional workshop in the context of the CBD and pan-European 2010 Targets, and pointed out that this workshop should be organised in due time before COP 10 of the CBD. UNEP/PEBLDS, the CBD Secretariate and the UNFF Secretariat offered to be leading actors in the workshop.

Programme element: Cross-Cutting Activities

The programme element, which includes activities within Communication and Outreach and Monitoring and Reporting, was presented by Ms. Dawes and Mr. Sletnes.

The ELM agreed upon the proposed activities on communication and outreach, with some minor amendments. The participants underlined the importance of raising the profile of MCPFE and the need for regularly, continuously and long-term communication.

Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl, leader of the FAO-ECE Forest Communicators Network (FCN), stated that the FCN is available for cooperation with the Liaison Unit work on the MCPFE communication strategy and other work on communication and outreach. Mr. Gschwandtl kindly offered to contribute through consultations and provision of advice, based on the competence and experiences of the network and its members. Mr. Sletnes welcomed this offer and underlined the interest of the Liaison Unit to cooperate with the FCN.

A proposal to include one additional activity titled Contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity (2010) was welcomed by the ELM.

On Monitoring and Reporting, issues related to the next State of Europe's Forests were discussed. The participants agreed that the State of Europe's Forests 2007 was a great achievement, and argued that for the next reporting period more emphasis can be put on topics where information is still unsatisfactory. In particular it was stated a need for improvements of the recommendations for assessing protected forest areas and of the information on forest fragmentation. It was also recommended that the report on "State of Europe's forests", if possible, should be distributed at least a month before the next ministerial conference.

France informed about their plans for a workshop to be convened in Bordeaux, France, in 2009, on cooperation between the MCPFE and Montreal processes on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. France proposed to include the workshop as an activity in the MCPFE work programme, under the title "Workshop on increasing synergies between MCPFE and Montreal C&I processes". After some discussion, it was not clear to all participants what would be the scope of the activity, and there is a need to further consider the involvement of the MCPFE in the workshop.

Strategic Direction of the MCPFE

Mr. Sletnes made a brief introduction to the part of the work programme titled Strategic Direction of the MCPFE, informing that the proposal included three activities; (1) an MCPFE working group on exploring the potential added value of and possible options for a legally binding agreement on forests in the pan-European region, (2) an MCPFE review and (3) consideration of the strategic direction of the MCPFE.

The ELM agreed in general upon the proposed activities in the draft document. It was also agreed that the review and the working group should be run as two parallel processes. Both activities would bring results of benefit to the ELM when considering the strategic direction of

the MCPFE. ELM participants emphasised that the review, with its operational purpose, will be of added value to the working group. It was decided to put the review as the first activity in the table and that any interim results and information from the review process should be brought to the attention of both the ELM and the working group. It was decided to make it clear in the title of the activity that it is an external review.

The ELM deliberated in detail the GCC document on a proposal for an overall approach for a review of the MCPFE. It was proposed that the main focus of the review should also include added value of the MCPFE. It was also proposed to use quantitative indicators when assessing the achievement of goals.

The details and performance (content and methodology) of the review is delegated to the GCC to decide and approve upon. The ELM will be informed about the progress. The ELM requested to start the review process as soon as possible, when the financial arrangements are clarified. Mr. Sletnes informed that the review is subject to extra-budgetary financing and that there is still need for additional budgetary resources. He invited signatory countries and other potential donors to contribute to the budget for the review.

Mr. Gschwandtl, Austria, presented the document on a draft terms of reference for an MCPFE working group on exploring the potential added value of and possible options for a legally binding agreement on forests in the pan-European region. This document was prepared by Austria in cooperation with a group of MCPFE countries. The ELM welcomed the proposal and deliberated in detail the document. With a number of amendments, the document was agreed upon. Greece offered to host the first meeting of the working group, probably in November 2008. Norway offered to host a working group meeting in 2009.

5. Information on status and plans for the European Forest Week

Mr. Christopher Prins, UNECE, provided information on the latest developments in the preparation for the European Forest Week, which will be held 20–24 October 2008. Mr. Prins informed about the Organising Committee and their work, plans for the opening event in Brussels on Monday 20 October and the activities planned for the rest of the week in Rome. He stressed the importance of national events and stated that information and invitations for national events will be sent out soon.

Mr. Alain Chaudron (France) and Mr. Ignacio Seoane (European Commission) provided additional information on the events planned to be held in Brussels. Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl (Leader of the FCN) informed about the work undertaken by the FCN on communication aspects. Mr. Gschwandtl also informed on their plans for producing a forest opera to celebrate the European Forest Week as a national activity in Austria.

6. Exchange of information on upcoming international meetings

Information was exchanged on the following upcoming international meetings:

- CBD COP 9, 19–30 May 2008 in Bonn, Germany. The MCPFE will host a side event.
- UNFCCC SBSTTA 28, 4–13 June 2008 in Bonn, Germany.
- International Dialogue on Financing Sustainable Forest Management, a Country-Led Initiative in support of the UNFF, 8–12 September 2008 in Paramaribo, Suriname.
- UNFF Ad Hoc Expert Group to develop proposals for the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework, 3–7 November 2008 in Vienna, Austria.

- International Model Forest Network Global Forum, 16–20 June 2008 in Hinton, Alberta, Canada.

7. Other matters

A request made by the World Bank to be registered as an observer of the MCPFE was accepted by the ELM.

The participants of the ELM agreed that the next Expert Level Meeting will take place on 12–13 November 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland.

8. Closure of the meeting

Speaking also on behalf of Mr. Sletnes, Mr. Borkowski thanked the participants for their active and constructive participation in the meeting. He noted with appreciation that the ELM had succeeded in agreeing on the MCPFE Work Programme. He then closed the meeting.