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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

## Thirty-fourth Session

Rome, Italy, 14-17 May 2024

### Report on the outcomes of the debate of the Joint Session of the 42nd European Forestry Commission (EFC) and the 81st UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI)

#### Executive Summary

The FAO Council, at its 151st Session in March 2015, as well as the FAO Conference at its 39th Session in June 2015, in reviewing the document *Assessment of FAO Governance Reforms (C 2015/26 Rev.1)*, endorsed the suggestion “that the priorities identified by the regional technical commissions on forests and fisheries could be included as an integral part of the Regional Conferences’ reports to Council with regard to priorities for the work of the Organization in the region.” The 42nd Session of the European Forestry Commission (EFC) was held jointly with the 81st Session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry in San Marino, from 20 to 23 November 2023. This paper provides a secretarial summary of EFC-related matters. The [full report](https://unece.org/forestry-timber/documents/2023/12/reports/report-joint-session) from the joint session is available on the UNECE website at <https://unece.org/forestry-timber/documents/2023/12/reports/report-joint-session>

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## I. Introduction

1. The 42nd Session of the European Forestry Commission (EFC) was held jointly with the 81st Session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and the 7th European Forest Week in San Marino, from 20 to 23 November 2023.
2. The session was held in person, and it was attended by more than 120 participants from 33 countries (25 EFC member countries plus the European Union), two intergovernmental organizations, one intergovernmental process, several non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local entities, academia and the media.
3. The joint session discussed and assessed policy and technical issues relevant to forestry in the region, in particular: the implications of the Global Biodiversity Framework for forests in the region; global and regional policy developments and their regional implications; the Global Forest Resources Assessment; forest economies and markets; the contribution of forests and forest products to a circular bioeconomy; a review of the integrated programme of work 2022–2025 of COFFI and EFC; FAO activities in the region; the EFC external review; forest biodiversity mainstreaming; integrated fire management; and FAO governance matters.

## II. Summary Report

### A) EFC and COFFI Joint Matters

#### **Biodiversity - implications of the Global Biodiversity Framework for forests in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe**

4. The Commission and the Committee:
  - Highlighted that biodiversity is an integral part of sustainable forest management and forest landscape restoration and thus a key component of the Integrated Programme of Work.

#### **Global and regional policy context**

5. The Commission and the Committee requested that FAO and UNECE, within their mandates:
  - Continue supporting member States in the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as they relate to forests, and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030;
  - Update member States and other stakeholders on the forest-related global and regional policy developments, to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 implementation and review process.

#### **Progress in preparation for the 2025 cycle of the Global Forest Resources Assessment and Joint pan-European data collection on forests and sustainable forest management**

6. The Commission and the Committee:
  - Encouraged member States to continue collaborating with ECE, FAO and partner institutions to achieve synergies in data collection, analysis and management, to reduce duplication of efforts and to support the implementation of the ECE/FAO/Forest Europe data collection on forests and sustainable forest management.

#### **Initiation of a mid-term review of the Integrated Programme of Work – Roadmap for the review process**

7. The Commission and the Committee:
  - Based on the recommendation by the Joint Working Party, decided to undertake a review of the 2022-2025 Integrated Programme of Work through one (or two if necessary) hybrid workshop(s). In preparation for the workshop(s), inputs will be sought from all relevant

stakeholders. Pending availability of funding, an external evaluator will be involved in the preparation of the relevant documentation for the workshop(s);

- After the workshop(s), the secretariat, in cooperation with the Joint Bureau, will prepare a proposal for the Integrated Programme of Work for 2026-2029 to be considered by the Joint Working Party at its 2025 session and subsequently submitted to the UNECE/FAO Joint session of the Committee and the Commission in 2025 for adoption.

### **The contribution of forests and forest products to a circular bioeconomy**

8. The Commission and the Committee requested the UNECE/FAO Joint Section to:

- continue the work on circular bioeconomy through targeted knowledge-sharing and capacity-building (including events and activities) upon availability of funds.

### **B) EFC Matters**

9. The Commission:

- Recommended FAO to: (a) Strengthen the integration of landscape approaches in operational forestry work in the region, as well as into existing and future REU Regional Initiatives, considering the multifunctional roles of forests; (b) Integrate poverty considerations into the design and formulation of projects, in particular large projects such as GEF and GCF projects, applying approaches such as poverty measurement, poverty profiles, poverty mapping and poverty-based targeting; (c) Continue to support natural resource management including forests through the harmonization and strengthening of national policy, financing, incentives, taxation and governance frameworks and measures, including regulations, standards and monitoring for forest management interventions and practices, and support capacity development in this regard; (d) Continue supporting countries and other stakeholders, including the private sector, to promote coordinated action enhancing the sustainable production and consumption of non-wood forest products (NWFP), including capacity-building related to the collection and dissemination of statistics on NWFP; and (e) Continue to support the Forest Invasive Species Network for Europe and Central Asia (REUFIS) and its activities, in particular in organizing topical trainings on emerging invasive species (paragraph 125, a-e).
- Invited Members to (a) Review and consider the findings of the external review; and (b) Recommend Executive Committee (EC) of EFC to consider recommendations provided and proposed improving the efficiency, relevance, and effectiveness of EFC governance (paragraph 136, a-b).
- Invited FAO to: (a) Continue promoting and leading a common approach by all member Nations in the region regarding Integrated Fire Management; (b) Strengthen its efforts on developing the Global Fire Management Hub to provide stronger support on the development of regional and national capacities, including through partnership with those in the European region, and, in particular, take advantage of the experience, skills and systems that already exist (paragraph 144, a-b).
- Invited FAO to: (a) Further develop and implement the programme on forest biodiversity mainstreaming; (b) Provide technical support to Member States for the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework; (c) Further strengthen its cross-sectoral work through supporting the process of mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies and practices in forestry, agroforestry, agroecology and in agricultural production landscapes, considering forest ownership and specific country contexts; (d) Continue developing innovative approaches to manage human and wildlife conflicts (HWCs); share relevant country case studies on sustainable use and management of wildlife, including in dissemination of key knowledge products and tools on the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme (paragraph 150, a-d).

- Sent a message to the Europe Regional Conference on the application of biodiversity mainstreaming into the integrated landscape management and land use systems such as food production, land restoration/rehabilitation, and enhanced nutrition, and food security (paragraph 151).
- Thanked FAO for the report on global processes and initiatives and welcomed with appreciation the information provided on developments and activities in regard to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, the eighteenth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the 2025 edition of the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment, the upcoming State of the World's Forests Report 2024, the XV World Forestry Congress and the Youth Call for Action, and the second World Forum on Urban Forests; (b) Took note and welcomed the theme for the International Day of Forests 2024 on “Forests and Innovation”; (c) Requested FAO to intensify its participation in the implementation of “the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions”, announced by the United Nations General Assembly at the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan (paragraph 161, a-c).
- Encouraged Members to: (a) Continue to actively support the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) as the main instruments in forestry for linking the global and regional levels under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31; (b) Develop recommendations for the Regional Conference for Europe, for the Committee on Forestry (COFO) agenda and the programme priorities for the work of FAO in forestry; (c) Take note of the process to develop a new framework document for FAO’s work in forestry between 2024 and 2031 and provide guidance, as deemed appropriate (paragraph 167, a-c);
- Recommended FAO to (a) Ensure that recommendations are presented to the secretariats of COFO and the Regional Conferences (RCs); (b) Share the recommendations of the Commission with other Regional Forestry Commissions (paragraph 168, a-b).
- [...] Elected by acclamation Mr Keith Anderson (Switzerland) as Chair and Mr. Abduvokhid Zakhadullaev (Uzbekistan), Mr Boris Greguška (Slovak Republic) and Ms Elaine Dick (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) as Vice-Chairs to hold office until the end of the forty-third session (paragraph 169).

10. The Commission made recommendations for the agenda of the FAO Committee on Forestry and to the FAO Regional Conference for Europe as listed below:

**Recommendations of the European Forestry Commission for the attention of the FAO Committee on Forestry**

- climate change related to resilience to drought and other disturbances and damages;
- mainstreaming forest biodiversity;
- integrated fire management;
- bioeconomy and value chain development;
- multifunctional forest management planning considering ecosystem services wood and non-wood forest products; and
- occupational health and safety in forestry work.

**Recommendations of the European Forestry Commission for the attention of the Regional Conference for Europe**

- Consider the report of the 42nd Session of the EFC.

- Consider the application of forest biodiversity mainstreaming into the integrated landscape management and land use systems such as food production, land restoration/rehabilitation, and enhanced nutrition and food security.
- Consider agroforestry and agroecology as key tools in agrifood systems.