

INTRODUCTION

The Second Expert Meeting on Harmonizing Forest-related Definitions for Use by Various Stakeholders was jointly organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in collaboration with the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at FAO Headquarters, in Rome, from 11 to 13 September 2002.

The meeting was a follow-up to the first Expert Meeting, organized by the same bodies in Rome from 19 to 23 January 2002, which recommended, *inter alia*, establishing a Task Group; preparing a comprehensive analytical framework; and organizing another expert meeting to review the framework and decide on further action.

Objective

The objectives of the meeting were to (i) recommend options for harmonizing forest-related definitions, (ii) make proposals for the implementation of these options, and (iii) establish a commonly agreed upon future agenda. It was expected to thus contribute towards improving efficiency of processes in different international policies related to forests.

It was clearly stated that harmonization does not mean standardization. Harmonization can include adjustments for improved compatibility and consistency, establishing comparability, linkages and hierarchies between terms, but also documenting differences.

Other Processes

A number of other on-going processes are connected with this meeting, such as:

- the Kotka process related to the improvement of the Global Forest Resources Assessment led by FAO;
- the UNFCCC/SBSTA process to develop definitions for afforestation and reforestation under Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) referring to the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM);
- the IPCC work to develop Good Practice Guidance for Land Use, Land-use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) (task 1);
- the IPCC work on developing definitions for human-induced 'degradation' of forests and 'devegetation' of other vegetation types and methodological options for inventory and reporting on emissions resulting from these activities (task 2);
- the work of the Collaborative Partnerships on Forests' (CPF) Task Force on harmonizing and streamlining forest-related reporting under the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF);

- IUFRO's recent work on forest terminology, e.g. urban forestry, electronic discussion groups on key terms, and terminological awareness;
- UNEP's work on Low Forest Cover
- the plantation typology undertaken by CIFOR, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), World Conservation Union (IUCN) and others.

The background document "Analytical Framework on Forest-related Definitions" was prepared and shared with the participants before the meeting.

The participants (Annex I) included a total of 54 experts, resource people and observers invited by the Director-General of FAO. The experts were selected on the basis of their specialized knowledge and familiarity with the ongoing work on forest-related definitions in various international forums, including UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD and UNFF. Participants served in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their governments or organizations. In addition, resource people from each of the co-sponsoring and collaborating agencies attended the meeting.

The Meeting agenda is shown as Annex II.

Opening Ceremony

The meeting was opened by Mr M. Hosny El-Lakany, Assistant Director-General of the FAO Forestry Department. Mr Geoff Love, Secretary of IPCC; Mr Heinrich Schmutzenhofer, Executive Secretary of IUFRO; Mr Jens Mackensen, from UNEP and Mr Robert Nasi, of CIFOR, made statements for the co-organizing Organizations on the relevance of the Meeting's work to their organizations.

Mr Dennis Tirpak, Secretariat of UNFCCC, gave an account of the current process under the UNFCCC on land use and land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) related activities which would benefit from the results of the meeting.

Organization of Work

The meeting was chaired by Mr Wulf Killmann, Director of the FAO Forest Products Division, and moderated by Mr Markku Simula, Indufor OY. Most of the meeting was conducted in the form of group sessions. Three groups focused their work on the ways and means to harmonize different groups of core and supporting definitions. The first group, which dealt with issues related to definitions of forest and change processes between forest and other land classes, was chaired by Mr Ian Noble and its reporter was Mr Brian Haddon. The second group, which explored definitions of change processes within the forest, focusing its work on forest degradation, was chaired by Mr Jens Mackensen with Mr Robert Nasi acting as reporter. The third group worked on forest management and forest conditions under the leadership of Mr Jürgen Blaser, with Ms

Andrea Tuttle as reporter. The fourth group dealt with the issue of forest classifications and the issue whether differentiated definitions should be applied under various processes and instruments. The group was chaired by Mr Jean-Paul Lanly and its reporter was Ms Eveline Trines. A fifth group was formed to study the definition of Low Forest Cover, and it was chaired by Mr Tage Michaelsen with Mr Allali Abdelkader as reporter.

During the first plenary session, after the introductory remarks by Mr Killmann, Mr Dieter Schoene summarized the latest developments under related international processes including the on-going work by IPCC, UNFCCC, IUFRO, UNEP, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and CIFOR. Mr Peter Holmgren briefed the participants on the results of the Kotka IV meeting held in August 2002 on the further development of the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA). The moderator then presented the highlights of the background paper. The work was broken down into groups and a plenary session was held during the second day to take stock of the progress. The groups interacted through direct contacts during the course of work.

The presentations made in the workshop are reproduced in Annex IV and the reports of Group Work in Annex VI.

CONCLUSIONS

Need and Tools for Harmonization

The Meeting reiterated the need for a common understanding of, and harmonization between, forest-related definitions of core terms used by different international processes and instruments to reduce errors in employing terms; the reporting burden on countries and related costs; and the confusion in communicating with the media and the public at large.

Harmonization in this context means improved comparability, compatibility and consistency between definitions; establishment of linkages; and description of relationships between terms. The process of harmonization involves documentation of similarities and differences between definitions, for which analytical tools can be used.

It was recognized that each international convention or process was context-specific and applied its own definitions of forest-related terms. However, the use of these terms and the way they were defined should be as consistent as possible. As an example, when COP7 of UNFCCC used "degradation" in its mandate to IPCC, it actually intended to focus on a human-induced reduction of carbon stock in the forest, whereas under other processes it was related to any change in the forest condition, leading to a reduced overall capacity to supply goods and services from the forest¹.

The Meeting emphasized the need of accuracy in the definition of terms that were used for different purposes under various processes. Before

adopting new definitions for widely used terms, consistency with their current use in other fora should be considered.

Whilst the Meeting recognized that a comprehensive definition of forests requires the inclusion of social considerations, the group agreed that, for the purposes of this process, it was not appropriate to further incorporate these into the core definition of forest. They should be included instead in the further characterization of forest. This should be explored in the appropriate arenas and through mechanisms such as the international frameworks for criteria & indicators for Sustainable Forest Management.

The comparative analytical framework of forest-related definitions between international processes should be widely disseminated, used and developed. Such a framework, drawing on comparative matrices and set concepts, identifies (i) the presence or absence of various elements or parameters contained in the respective definition (binary concept, e.g. minimum crown cover) and (ii) quantified threshold parameters (e.g. 10%). The framework can be used effectively to compare definitions, thereby improving communication and clarifying the need and feasibility of developing new ones.

It was anticipated that the outputs of this harmonization process would form part of the expected report by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) to the third session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-3) on progress made in fostering a common understanding of concepts, terminology and definitions.

Status of Harmonization

The two expert meetings concluded that differences were minor in the definitions of the terms listed below. The meetings identified ways in which the definitions could be further harmonized or the differences which could be dealt with:

- forest
- forest land
- forested land
- other wooded land
- non-forest
- reforestation
- forest degradation
- forest improvement

The Meeting identified other terms that were used primarily in a regional rather than a global context, and with differing meaning from region to region, such as:

- old-growth forest
- semi-natural forest

Since the current definitions of the terms indicated below had certain inconsistencies, the expert meeting made proposals for new formulations or adaptations. However, it was recognized that some further work may be required to finalize this task through a cooperative effort between the relevant bodies and in cooperation with countries. The terms in question were:

- other land (other than forest and other wooded land)
- afforestation
- deforestation
- planted forest
- forest rehabilitation
- forest restoration
- forest fragmentation
- secondary forest
- trees outside forests; and
- low forest cover

A number of "supporting" terms, referring to the condition or quality of forests would still benefit from an effort towards coining common, broadly accepted definitions. This follow-up work could take place in cooperation with the processes and bodies that have a mandate to, or an interest in, using them. These terms include, *inter alia*:

- forest plantation
- natural forest
- naturalness of forest and other forest conditions
- managed and unmanaged forest
- consideration of quality of forest management and, in particular, sustainable forest management in different contexts.