
Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe

First Bureau Meeting

Joensuu, 5-6 September 2011

Report

1. The first meeting of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe was held on 5-6 September 2011 in Joensuu, Finland.

2. Mr. Jan Heino (Chair), Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl (Austria), Ms. Katerina Ventřubova (Czech Republic), Mr. Jacques Andrieu (France), Mr. Knut Øistad (Norway), Mr. Piotr Paschalis-Jakubowicz (Poland), Mr. Einäri Hämäläinen (Russian Federation), Mr. İsmail Üzmez (Turkey), Ms. Lyubov Polyakova (Ukraine) and Mr. Francisco Javier Adell (Spain) were present.

3. The Secretariat was represented by Mr. Arnaud Brizay (UNECE/FAO), Ms. Małgorzata Buszko-Briggs (Forest Europe Liaison Unit Oslo), Mr. Peter Csoka (FAO), Mr. David Ellul (UNECE/FAO), Ms. Elena Estrada Wilke (Forest Europe Liaison Unit Madrid), Ms. Barbara Ruis (UNEP), Mr. Arne-Ivar Sletnes (Forest Europe Liaison Unit Oslo) and Mr. Ilpo Tikkanen (European Forest Institute)

4. Mr. Pekka Alhojärvi (Finland), Mr. Serdar Yegül (Turkey), and Ms. Maria Jalavisto (EFI) were also present.

1. Opening of the meeting

5. The meeting was opened by the Chair at 14:30 after a brief welcoming speech by Mr. Tikkanen on behalf of the European Forest Institute, main host of the meeting.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

6. The Bureau adopted the provisional agenda without changes.

3. Composition and role of the Bureau

7. The Chair recalled the main elements of the Oslo Ministerial Mandate for Negotiating a Legally Binding Agreement on Forest in Europe, in particular paragraph 20 establishing the Bureau.

8. The Secretariat reported that nominations of Bureau members had been received from all states represented on the Bureau. In two cases, the nomination referred to participation to only the first meeting of the Bureau. The Chair underlined the importance of having a stable composition of the Bureau throughout the process and called on countries to finalize the selection of their Bureau representative as soon as possible.

9. The Bureau members were then asked to introduce themselves and present their views on the working modalities of the Bureau. Bureau members underlined that the Bureau shall have an advisory role providing guidance and direction to the negotiation process of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee.

4. Secretariat arrangements

10. The members of the Secretariat introduced themselves and the work and role of the organizations they represent in the Secretariat. The Forest Europe Liaison Unit Oslo informed that functions are progressively being handed over to the Liaison Unit Madrid ensuring a smooth transition to be concluded by November 2011. FAO reaffirmed its commitment to support the Secretariat through the joint UNECE/FAO section in Geneva as well as through the Forestry Department in Rome. UNEP and EFI also informed the Bureau members that they had responded positively to the invitation to be part of the Secretariat. UNECE/FAO announced that the formal decision allowing its Forestry and Timber Section to service the Secretariat will be taken on 19 September 2011. Meanwhile, the Chair of the UNECE Executive Committee had responded positively to the invitation.

5. Draft roadmap for the negotiation process

11. The Bureau was presented with a draft roadmap outlining the envisaged timeline of the negotiation process until 2013. The Bureau agreed to the concept presented and suggested that the document should focus on the process only, substantive issues related to the negotiations should be discussed in other documents. The Bureau reached broad agreement on a revised version of the roadmap. The Chair recalled that although INC is the body expected to deliberate on the establishment of additional bodies or groups to support negotiations, Bureau members should start assessing the need for intersessional work and consider issues that may need to be addressed thereby.

12. The Chair asked Bureau members and Secretariat organizations to look into the possibility of hosting bureau meetings and INC sessions. FAO informed they are currently assessing the financial implications of an INC meeting in Rome and Austria noted that they would explore options for a meeting at the UN premises in Vienna.

6. Draft agenda of the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee

13. The Bureau considered a proposal for the draft agenda of the first session of the Committee to be held from 21 to 25 November 2011 in Geneva. It was decided that the agenda should be revised for consistency with the changes in the session documents.

7. Preparations for the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee

14. The Bureau discussed preparations for the first session of the Committee and reviewed the list of documents for this session.

15. The Bureau also reviewed the content of the document on Structure, Objectives, Scope and Targets and agreed that the document should not be tabled at INC1 in the absence of a clear mandate to do so, but important elements should be incorporated in other session documents.

16. The Bureau decided to prepare two short documents presenting to INC1 the “Non-paper on a possible Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe”, together with the Oslo Mandate and the Oslo 2020 decision, as a basis for facilitating negotiations and to provide guidance for developing a first draft negotiating text regarding its basic structure, main components and content. It was agreed that this approach would recognize and make best use of the progress made in the years leading to the Oslo Ministerial Conference and allow for discussing issues taken from the roadmap and the document discussed in above paragraph 15.

17. It was agreed that the Secretariat circulate the revised version of the agenda and the draft report of the Bureau meeting, by Wednesday 14 September 2011.

18. Following a discussion on the expected nature of the outcome of the negotiations, it was decided that session documents shall not prejudice any outcome, and shall therefore use the terms LBA or agreement unless parties decide otherwise.

8. Exchange of views on engaging observers and other stakeholders

19. The Bureau discussed modalities for engaging and reaching out to observers and other stakeholders in the negotiation process, according to paragraph 24d of the Oslo Mandate and rules 11.1 to 11.5 of the Rules of Procedure. Bureau members agreed on the importance of involving stakeholders as early as possible. The Bureau stressed the need for stakeholder participation to be active and inclusive, ensuring a wide representation of economic, social and environmental interest groups. A way forward for inviting observer states and organizations to participate in the negotiation process was agreed on and the secretariat was requested to prepare the relevant invitations and notifications.

20. The Chair informed the Bureau of his contacts with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The intention is to organize a wide stakeholder hearing on the possible LBA. It was agreed that the Chair has the mandate to pursue talks with the EESC and inform Bureau members accordingly.

9. Financial issues

21. The Secretariat informed the Bureau about the proposal for a UNECE project and Trust Fund using extrabudgetary resources to support the participation of experts from countries with economies in transition in the negotiation process. Responding to a query regarding support for attending Bureau meetings, the Secretariat replied that normally Bureau members are expected to cover their own costs. However, requests from eligible countries could be considered should sufficient funds be available and earmarked for this purpose. The Bureau then reviewed and approved the proposed financial support guidelines regarding participation in the negotiations.

22. The Secretariat also briefed the Bureau on arrangements to host INC meetings outside Geneva and on related financial implications. UNECE/FAO explained that meeting rooms in Geneva including interpretation booked within the quota allotted to UNECE are available at no additional cost. A session hosted outside Geneva would imply costs for the hosting government or organization for the translation and provision of documents. Discussions are ongoing to determine whether document management in Geneva could provide its services to sessions hosted outside the UNOG premises.

10. Date and venue of the next meeting

23. The Bureau decided to meet prior to INC1 on Sunday, 20 November 2011, with an additional placeholder for consultations immediately after the session is closed on 25 November. The Bureau accepted the kind offer of the Czech Republic to host a Bureau meeting in Prague in 2012.

11. Other matters

24. Replying to a concern raised by a member of the Bureau, the Secretariat explained that United Nations documents can only bear logos of the United Nations and of other organizations in the United Nations system.

12. Closure of the meeting

25. The Chair closed the meeting on 6 September at 16:00.
