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

Bureau Audio Meeting

15th November 2011

Present in Geneva:

Jan Heino, Nominated Chair

Andrey Vasilyev, UNECE

Paola Deda, ECE/FAO

Arnaud Brizay, ECE/FAO

David Ellul, ECE/FAO

Barbara Ruis, UNEP

Connected via teleconference:

Ingwald Gschwandtl, Austria

Jacques Andrieu, France

Knut Oistad, Norway

Piotr Paschalis-Jakubowicz, Poland

Lyubov Polyakova, Ukraine

Peter Csoka, FAO

Malgorzata Buszko-Briggs, LUO

Absent:

Czech Republic, Russian Federation, Turkey, Spain

EFI, LUM

Summary of the meeting

1. During the meeting it was noted that some Bureau and Secretariat members were trying to link up by telephone, however due to unforeseen technical problems at the side of the conference organizer it was not possible for all members to be connected. In addition, some participants got disconnected during the meeting and some could not reconnect.
2. The Chair opened the meeting at 17:40. He apologized for the delay, necessitated by the preceding 46th meeting of the ECE Executive Committee, which had only just finished. The meeting discussed only one agenda item, namely "Clarification concerning the decision of the Executive Committee on the servicing of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe by ECE", and he invited UNECE's Deputy Executive Secretary, Andrey Vasilyev, to give an overview of the discussion that just took place.
3. Mr. Vasilyev thanked the Chair and gave an account of the EXCOM proceedings. He explained that during the first part of the meeting, parties appeared to move towards a solution, but that at its closure, we were "back at square one". He described the meeting as polarized. He stressed that the EXCOM participants were country representatives, and spoke on behalf of their government. The Russian Federation and Switzerland, in particular, made it clear that when they joined the Oslo mandate, it had been their clear understanding that they opted for an INC process that would be held according to UN rules, regulations, and practices. He noted that the USA took a cooperative stance. He continued that the nature of the INC process was the main dividing issue, and that if there was no clarity on this nature, UNECE would not be in a position to service the INC process. He also stressed that UNECE would not agree to start working on the

INC process before the first INC meeting would be officially held; and noted that UNECE will require further confirmation from the UN Legal Services when a possible agreement will be reached.

4. The Chair expressed his disappointment with the non-outcome of the EXCOM meeting and explained that at this juncture he saw no other option than to postpone INC1. It was clear to him that if it would take place, several countries would not attend, including the Russian Federation, Belarus, and Switzerland.

5. Austria stressed that the INC should take place as soon as possible; the Oslo mandate needs to be adhered to, with partners that are in a position to service the process.

6. Poland requested written minutes of the EXCOM meeting; UNECE responded that they would check whether the summary of the discussion could be provided, and would get back on this issue.

7. France indicated the possibility to organize INC1 outside Geneva, with those organizations that are willing to service. The Chair reacted that this option would not be realistic anymore since it became very clear for him that the nature of the INC should first be clarified, before its first session can take place.

8. The Chair, and several Bureau members, stressed that the members of the Bureau should meet face-to-face as soon as possible. The Chair asked for hosting offers; suggested for timing the end of next week; and said that the main agenda item would be to discuss the way forward from this juncture.

9. A discussion ensued between the Chair, some Bureau members, and Mr. Vasilyev, on the issue if an official Bureau meeting could be held. Mr. Vasilyev stressed that it should be a meeting of private individuals, since the Bureau could only be properly established at INC1; Norway and Austria voiced an opposing view. The Chair highlighted that there were risks to proceed with a Bureau meeting in this unclear situation, since the process may lose some countries. Mr. Vasilyev further explained that the emergence of conflicting interpretations of the interpretation of the Oslo mandates by its signatories is at the heart of matter, rather than the servicing issue. Norway urged for a Bureau meeting and argued against further speculation.

10. Bureau members stressed that the confirmed and invited participants should be informed about the postponement of INC1.

11. The Chair agreed to hold a meeting of the members of the Bureau; He further agreed to issue a notification informing of the indefinite postponement of INC1. The Chair closed the meeting at 18:30

Not an official record
