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

Bureau Audio Meeting

22nd December, 2011

Report

1. Opening of the meeting

1. The audio meeting of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe was held on the 22nd of December.
2. The Chair opened the meeting at 9:05 hrs (GMT+1).
3. Mr. Jan Heino (Chair), Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl (Austria), Mr Jacques Andrieu (France), Mr. Piotr Paschalis-Jakubowicz (Poland), Mr. Jose Maria Solano (Spain) and Ms. Lyuba Polyakova (Ukraine) were present. Mr. İsmail Belen (Turkey) and Mr Knut Oistad (Norway) excused their absence. Ms. Katerina Ventřubova (Czech Republic) could not attend but sent her comments by email.
4. The Secretariat was represented by Mr. Ewald Rametsteiner (FAO), Mr. Ilpo Tikkanen (European Forest Institute), and Ms. Ana Belén Noriega and Ms. Elena Estrada Wilke (FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit Madrid).

2. Adoption of the Agenda

5. Before moving on to the agenda, the Chair introduced some comments about the letter he was willing to send to the Deputy Representative of the Russian Federation. He reviewed the content where he reiterates the full readiness to continue with the preparations for the INC1 and stresses the Bureau position to keep on board all the members of the Secretariat that were originally invited.
6. Bureau members expressed their appreciation to the Chair for the letter and asked for its distribution. The Chair answered that he would send it to the Bureau members' distribution list and to those who received the Russian Federation message. The Chair was asked to distribute the letter among the EXCOM members as well.

3. US Statement: Content and Consequences to INC's work

7. The Chair referred to the US letter as the document where the US stated that they would not object to the involvement of the ECE Secretariat in servicing the INC with extra budgetary resources, but that they definitely excluded having the negotiations being carried out under the UN.
8. The Chair summarized and pointed out that it is becoming harder for the UNECE to finally join the process and that the message is very clear about how reluctant the US is to any kind of agreement under the UN.
9. Some of the Bureau members expressed that they were already aware of the US position.

4. US Statement: Potential Political Consequences

10. The position of the Bureau didn't change but the necessity to follow Oslo Mandate was reconfirmed.
11. Mr Ewald Rametsteiner, from FAO, recognized that even though there were still some discussions going on, they could continue to offer their services. There is no change in their ability to service the INC given that US letter only mentioned UNECE.

5. Identify Communications Activities

12. Some Bureau members considered that it would be good idea to answer the letter and recommended not to do anything else. It is more important from FOREST EUROPE's standpoint to prepare the ELM where they will have to make real decisions.
13. Liaison Unit Madrid recalled the comments sent by Ms Kateřina Ventrubova from the Czech Republic, in this regard.
14. Some Bureau members considered that an explanation about why the process has reached this point might be necessary but that there was no need to respond to the US letter. It was noted that the US letter was addressed to all the EXCOM members as a response to the Russian Federation position. The Chair said he would not like to see any single country mentioned on these explanations and pointed out that everyone had already been informed by their own channels.
15. Bureau members thought that it would be helpful to explain that we are not under UN umbrella. CHAIR said that he would send the email to all the EXCOM members, carefully listen to all the reactions to the US statement, and consider some actions before possible foreseen consequences.

16. The Chair also announced that he was about to get in contact with US representatives. He promised that he would report back.

6. State of the art regarding preparations for INC1

17. The need to concentrate on INC1 preparations was stressed. The Chair thanked FAO for their work and explained that he still doesn't know the complete amount of the expenses for the next INC1 meeting to be held in Vienna at the UN premises. It is important to confirm the date before getting a full picture. The meeting could then be launched and documents prepared.
18. Confirmation was not possible because it was a bank holiday in Vienna. Documents for the meeting should be ready after Christmas.
19. Mr Heino proposed a new audio conference at 16:00 hrs on the 9th of January in case it is necessary to deal with issues related to INC 1 documents publication.
20. A question about a possible Bureau meeting on the 13th of February in Madrid, at 16:00 hrs, was posed and accepted.
21. It was underlined the need to inform countries about the process, including date and venue, via email. Everyone should receive an invitation so they are aware that the process is about to be re-launched.

7. Other matters

22. Mr. Solano announced the new government of Spain had been established and that the Ministry name had been changed to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment, and advanced that only a few things would change.

8. Closure of the meeting

23. The Chair closed the meeting at 9:55 hrs (GMT+1) expressing his gratitude to everyone and wishing that the New Year will bring good developments.
