

CONVENTION ON LONG-RANGE TRANSBOUNDARY AIR POLLUTION

International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests

MINUTES

of the nineteenth meeting of the Programme Task Force
held from 24 to 28 May 2003 in Zagreb, Croatia

Item 1: Opening, Adoption of the agenda, adoption of the minutes of the 18th Task Force Meeting

1. The meeting was attended by 72 experts from the following 34 countries: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

2. Also represented were the Working Group on Effects (Mr. Gregor), the European Commission, DG Environment (Mr. Winkler), the ICP on Modelling and Mapping (Mr. Spranger), as well as the ICP on Integrated Monitoring (Mr. Lundin). Furthermore, Mr. Sase from the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET), Mr. Kräuchi from the ENFORS and Mr. Ferretti (IUFRO working group on the Impact of Air Pollution on Forest Ecosystems) were participating. Apologies were received from Mr. Riebau (USDA Forest Service Research) and Mr. Hirvonen (Forest Health and Biodiversity Science Branch, Canadian Forest Service). A list of participants is attached as Annex 1.

3. Mr. Haußmann (Germany), Chairman of the Programme Task Force, opened the meeting, thanked the Government of Croatia for hosting it and welcomed the participants.

4. Mr. Ledinski (President of the Croatian Forests) welcomed the participants and underlined his pleasure that Croatia hosts the meeting. He informed about the long history of forestry and especially natural forests in Croatia and mentioned in particular the National Parks.
5. Mr. Martinic (Assistant of the Minister for Environment) welcomed the participants and gave information on the National Park Plitvica which is under the responsibility of the Minister for Environment.
6. Mr. Pankretic (Minister of Agriculture and Forestry) stressed the political relevance of the work of ICP Forests and underlined the efforts made in order to force European integration of Croatia and particular the participation in international processes. He officially opened the meeting.
7. The Task Force adopted the minutes of its eighteenth meeting held in Lisbon (25 to 29 May, 2002).
8. The Task Force adopted the agenda of the meeting (Annex 2).

Item 2: Report by the Chairman and the Programme Coordinating Centre (PCC)

9. Mr. Haußmann reported briefly on the main activities under discussion within ICP Forests and thanked all countries for their active participation and the progress which was achieved in the last year. In particular he thanked those countries which were organising meetings or taking over other burdens in times of limited budgets and the Forest Intensive Monitoring Coordinating Institute (FIMCI), the Forest Soil Coordinating Centre (FSCC), the Forest Foliar Coordinating Centre (FFCC) as well as the Programme Coordinating Centre (PCC). He stressed that the results and reports produced by ICP Forests are acknowledged also by bodies outside the Convention.

The importance of the close co-operation with other ICPs under the Working Group on Effects (WGE) and with other international organisations (e.g. the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia, EANET and the colleagues from Northern America) was stressed. The contribution to a UNFF report on forest health was mentioned as another example and further improvements of quality aspects were highlighted as a major task of the programme's work. Furthermore, questions concerning the future

co-operation with the European Commission (EC) remain to be solved in near future after the long period of successful co-operation in the past.

10. Mr. Lorenz (Germany), Head of the Programme Co-ordinating Centre (PCC) of ICP Forests, reported on activities of PCC since the eighteenth meeting of the Task Force. He highlighted this year's Executive and Technical Reports on Forest Condition in Europe as well as contributions to the Substantive Report on Trends of the WGE and to the Report "Forest Health and Productivity" by the United Nations Secretary-General to the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). Moreover, he mentioned the co-operation with other ICPs, the editing and circulation of new parts of the manual, the participation in the Centre for European Forest Science (CEFS) under the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission, the participation in the joint USDAFS/ICP Forests workshop on critical loads/levels in November 2002 and in the joint EANET/ICP Forests Workshop on elaboration and development of forest monitoring in East Asia in December 2002 in Seremban, Malaysia. Finally, Mr. Lorenz reported on the organisation and evaluation of the International Cross-calibration Courses in 2001 and 2002. The development of internet access to ICP Forests data was postponed because of the ongoing negotiations with EC. The Task Force considered and approved the report on the activities of PCC.

Item 3: Reports by the Chairman of the Working Group on Effects (WGE) and the European Commission

11. Mr. Gregor (Chairman of the WGE) thanked the organisers for the hospitality and sent greetings on behalf of Mr. Bull of the UNECE secretariat. He thanked ICP Forests for its valuable work and the high quality of its contributions to the WGE activities, making special mention of the contribution of ICP Forests to the "Substantive Report on Air Pollution Effects and their Recorded Trends" and of the active co-operation of ICP Forests with other bodies and organisations inside and outside the Convention. Moreover, Mr. Gregor reported on new activities of the WGE in the fields of heavy metals, ozone related issues and dynamic modelling and stressing the role of the Joint Expert Group on Dynamic Modelling. He underlined the importance of the future work of ICP Forests according to the medium term work plan of the WGE and encouraged ICP Forests to facilitate access to its valuable data

making reference to the guidelines and procedures for data release following the decisions of the WGE in 1998. Finally, he informed of the decision of the EB to facilitate funding of effect oriented activities by third parties.

The Task Force of ICP Forests took note of the report by the Chairman of the WGE, welcomed the elaboration of the Substantive Report on Trends 2004 and supported the contribution by PCC to this report. The final report will be circulated to all ICP Forests bodies.

12. Mr. Volz (Switzerland), informed on results from the Expert Workshop on Empirical Critical Loads for Nitrogen deposition on (Semi-) natural Ecosystems held in Bern, 11-13 November 2002. The proceedings of the workshop will be sent to the participants of the 19th Task Force Meeting.

13. Mr. Winkler (EC) appreciated the work done in the past years by the Expert Panels (EPs), the EU and ICP Forests Co-ordination Centres, the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) and their chairpersons. He informed the Task Force on the state of negotiations of the Regulation "Forest Focus" between the European Parliament, the Commission and the European Council. Mr. Winkler mentioned the infrastructure and the methods, which have been elaborated jointly by EU and ICP Forests, as the basis for the monitoring under Forest Focus. It was also stated that the planned co-operation with ICP Forests is fixed in the Regulation, however the objectives of Forest Focus are wider than those of ICP Forests.

The adoption of the new Regulation by both bodies is not expected before the end of 2003. Currently the implementation rules for Forest Focus are discussed at the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC).

The Task Force took note of the activities of the European Commission on the Forest Focus regulation.

Item 4: Cooperation of ICP Forests with other ICPs of the WGE

14. Mr. Lundin (Sweden), Chairman of ICP Integrated Monitoring (IM), reported on the activities and introduced the structure and major aims of this programme. He focused on research results and ongoing activities in the field of acidification effects with influence from still high nitrogen deposition, heavy metals, the influence of

nitrogen on nutrient turnover and vegetation, climate change and carbon sequestration, and indicators for the biodiversity of ground vegetation. Another focus of the work of ICP IM are hydrological models for the description of hydrological flow and fluxes of elements according to the catchment area oriented approach of ICP IM. Furthermore, he mentioned the co-operation of ICP IM with other ICPs in the fields of dynamic modelling (all ICPs), cause-effect relationships in terrestrial systems (ICP Forests, ICP Vegetation), biodiversity (ICP Forests), and surface waters (ICP Waters). Mr. Lundin also reported on assessments of effects of forest management, on cause-effect relationships, and on fluxes and trends of nitrogen, sulphur and base cations. He mentioned carbon related issues and multi-effects evaluations as important fields of the future work of ICP IM.

15. Mr. Spranger (Germany), Chairman of ICP on Modelling and Mapping (ICP M&M), reported on recent activities in the fields of (i) critical loads of sulphur and nitrogen (eutrophication and acidification) (ii) dynamic modelling and (iii) critical loads of heavy metals. Additionally he informed the Task Force about the revision of the programme's Manual including a submanual on dynamic modelling. Co-operation is planned with ICP Forests and ICP Vegetation on the future application of critical levels of ozone. Further co-operation is planned with EMEP, ICP Integrated Monitoring and ICP Waters on dynamic modelling, and with ICP Vegetation, EMEP and others on land cover and deposition issues. He informed the Task Force about several contributions of ICP M&M to WGE reports.

Item 5: Co-operation of ICP Forests with other International Organisations

16. Mr. Sase (Japan) on behalf of the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET) presented the activities of this programme in the years 2002 and 2003. After an introduction on the structure of the programme he informed the Task Force about international meetings of EANET, efforts in the field of quality assurance, and reports which were prepared by the Network Centre. He presented main results of the joint workshop of ICP Forests and EANET held in Seremban, Malaysia, December 2002. He also presented the Strategy Paper for Future Direction of Soil and Vegetation Monitoring of EANET describing the milestones and specific work plans. The Task Force reiterated the importance of the cooperation between ICP Forests and EANET.

17. Mr. Ferretti (Italy) on behalf of the IUFRO working group "7.04.01 - WG Forest Health Diagnosis, Monitoring and Evaluation" gave an overview on the structure and aims of IUFRO in the field of Forest Health research. He presented results of the 20th IUFRO meeting on 'Long Term Air Pollution Effect on Forest Ecosystems' in Zvolen, Slovak Republic, 30 August – 1 September 2002 and invited the participants to the 21st International Meeting for Specialists in Air pollution Effects on Forest Ecosystems "Forests under Changing Climate, Enhanced UV and Air Pollution" at the University of Oulu, Finland, August 27th – 31st, 2004.

18. Mr. Kräuchi (Switzerland) presented the structure and aims of the ENFORS programme (COST Action E25) with 24 countries being members. ENFORS is a European-wide network for long-term Forest Ecosystem and Landscape Research. He stressed the aim to build up a Network of Excellence and announced the forthcoming symposium in Tours, France, aiming at discussing this idea of a "European Centre of Forest Science".

19. Mr. Lorenz informed the Task Force about the co-operation of ICP Forests with other programmes and institutions, stressing contributions to the web sites of the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS) and of the Network for a European Forest Information System (NEFIS), to the planned Centre for European Forest Science (CEFS) as a Network of Excellence (NoE) under the Sixth Framework Programme of EC, and to Long-term Ecosystem Research (LTER). He mentioned also the observer status of the Chairman of ICP Forests at the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) and the participation by two delegates of ICP Forests in the forthcoming World Forestry Congress in Quebec, Canada.

Item 6: Activities of ICP Forests related to dynamic modelling

20. Mr. Haußmann recalled that dynamic modelling is an important task to improve the understanding of ecosystem processes.

21. Mr. Reinds (The Netherlands) of FIMCI presented a study on dynamic modelling carried out together with Mr. De Vries (The Netherlands) of FIMCI and Mr. Posch of the Coordinating Centre for Effects (CCE) of ICP on Modelling and Mapping (ICP M&M) which is part of the Technical Report on Intensive Monitoring 2003. After

an introduction to the methodology he explained the use of dynamic models designed to determine e.g. the target pollution load which is needed for a particular level of recovery of an ecosystem in a particular period depending on the variation of the starting conditions and scenarios of the influencing factors. The Task Force welcomed the effective co-operation with other ICPs as an important basis of the critical loads work and stressed the high importance of the continuation of the evaluation of the Level II database. Especially in the coming years e.g. the forthcoming review of the Gothenburg protocol will make it necessary to continue this valuable work on monitoring and evaluation. The Task Force emphasised the need to make the presented know-how and other experiences available to all involved scientists as a basis for forthcoming evaluations.

Item 7: Activities of ICP Forests in related to assessments of ozone concentrations in forests

22. Mr. Krause (Germany) reported on the successful test phase 2001 – 2002 implemented by the Working Group on Ambient Air Quality within the Expert Panel on Deposition on ozone injury assessments and air quality measurement by passive samplers (PASAM). The evaluation of first data is part of the Technical Report on Intensive monitoring 2003 and was presented by Ms. Sanz (Spain). Mr. Krause furthermore described the future activities of the Working Group including monitoring the ozone concentrations by passive/active sampling aimed at a more reliable picture of hot spot areas and at finding ways for a combination of information on concentration and injury and/or damage as major tasks. To achieve this goal in a most cost-effective way collaboration with other ICPs and EPs in ICP Forests will be intensified.

23. The Task Force acknowledged the importance of ozone related activities within ICP Forests and encouraged further co-operation with other bodies under the Convention (in particular ICP Vegetation, ICP Modelling and Mapping, EMEP).

The Task Force took note of the results of the test phase 2000 – 2002 and agreed that the approach applied (passive monitoring and visible ozone injury assessment) is feasible also for remote areas with respect to PASAM. Several other results (e.g. gathering of first data of 2001, building of expertise at the National Focal Centres,

setting up web pages with a photo-gallery, set-up of programme infrastructure with validation centres) were highly welcomed. The Task Force also thanked the Working Group on Ambient Air Quality for their valuable work and reinforced the importance of the Validation Centres (WSL, CH, CEAM, SP, Univ.Copenhagen/METLA, DK,SF).

In order to clarify several open questions (comparisons of results obtained by active and passive monitoring in various European regions, comparison of different sampler types, developing relationships between thresholds like AOTx and visible injury data, development of microscopically methods) and to involve more countries, the Task Force agreed to extend the test phase until 2005. All countries were encouraged to participate in this important work.

The Task Force welcomed the organisation of the Intercalibration Course (Lattecaldo/CH and Moggio/I, 25-27 August 2003) as well as the training course on microscopy (Zurich, 14-18 July 2003) and thanked Switzerland and Italy for hosting them.

The Working Group was asked to report to the 20th Task Force progress reached and to update the sub manual based on the experiences made.

24. Mr. Spranger reported on the results of the UNECE workshop on Establishing Ozone Critical in Gothenburg, Sweden, 19-22 November, 2002. The Task Force took note on the outcome of the workshop and of the ongoing discussion on AOTx between EMEP, ICP Vegetation and ICP M&M.

Item 8: Activities of ICP Forests in related to carbon sequestration

25. Mr. De Vries presented the chapter on the "Contribution of N deposition to C sequestration" in the Technical Report on Intensive monitoring 2003. He focused on the methodology and compared the results with other studies described in the literature. The results of the study will also be made known to other groups working on this issue, e.g. the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In the ensuing discussion the importance of the results was underlined and their interpretability was clarified.

Item 9: Activities of ICP Forests in the field of biodiversity

26. Mr. Neville (Ireland), Chairman of the ICP Forests Working Group on Biodiversity, reported on the test phase aiming at scientifically based proposals of monitoring activities in the field of biodiversity and on a feasibility study conducted by Mr. Fischer (Germany) of PCC in collaboration with the European Environmental Agency (EEA). The stand scale approach was selected as useful in case of the ICP Forests' monitoring system.

Furthermore, examples of co-operation with other organisations in Europe working in this field (e.g. IUFRO, JRC) were presented. Mr. Neville ended with an outlook on the possible evaluation of the monitoring data relevant to biodiversity.

During the following discussion several speakers raised doubts if results of Level II data could ever be sufficiently representative at the European level. The importance of a linkage with other groups which work in the field of biodiversity and the integration into international processes (e.g. MCPFE) was underlined.

27. The Task Force, while reiterating the decision at its 18th meeting on the importance of the test phase (2003 – 2005), took note of the results of the 4th Working Group meeting (Saubaudia, Italy). Special mention was again made of the focus of air pollution within the biodiversity work.

The Task Force acknowledged the methods identified by the Working Group for the test phase and recommended countries to join the test phase even on a limited number of plots. The Working Group is invited to assist countries in applying for financial support by drafting common project proposals.

The Task Force also invited its Working Group to develop evaluation strategies and to co-operate closely with international bodies dealing with biodiversity (e.g. Forest Focus scheme, International Working Group on Biodiversity Indicators and Monitoring (IWG BioMIN), MCPFE process).

28. Mr. De Vries presented the chapter on species composition of ground vegetation in the Technical Report on Intensive Monitoring 2003. He stressed in particular methodological differences of the study compared to the respective contribution of FIMCI to the Technical Report on Intensive Monitoring 2002. Some of the outcomes of the actual study confirm decisions which were made by the EP Vegetation

29. The Task Force approved the technical report on intensive monitoring 2003 (Level II) as presented and asked FIMCI to finalise and print the document.

The Task Force, while regretting the termination of the FIMCI contract with EC in summer 2003, expressed its thanks to Mr. Wim De Vries, Mr. Gert-Jan Reinds, Mr. Evert Vel and the FIMCI team for their extraordinary work for the pan-European monitoring programme over many years.

30. Mr. de Vries replied to the words of thanks and suggested some ideas for future work. He mentioned the possibility of future co-operation with NFCs in order to submit proposals for evaluations under the EU Forest Focus scheme.

Item 10: Implementation of the Level II monitoring

31. Mr. Haußmann expressed in the name of the Task Force the high importance of the work which was done by the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) and thanked its Chairman Mr. Landmann (France) for his excellent work.

32. In his response, Mr. Landmann gave a short outlook on problems and possibilities of future co-operation of ICP Forests with the new EU Forest Focus scheme.

33. Mr. Reinds presented the structure and status of the Level II data base. For nearly all approximately 800 plots, both data and Data Accompanying Report Questionnaires (DARQs) are available. Especially availability of data on ground vegetation increased in the recent years. He stressed the importance of quality assurance first during the field assessments and then in the laboratory.

34. Mr. Eichhorn (Germany), Chairman of the EP on Crown Condition Assessments, presented work performed in the field of quality assurance (QA) based on the decisions of the Task Force at its 18th meeting in 2002. Additionally, he presented results of the workshop and the meeting of the EP (3 – 6 February 2003 in Copenhagen, see www.icp-forests.org for the proceedings of the workshop). He introduced the new concept of harmonised and restructured International Cross-calibration Courses (ICCs). The ICCs in 2003 will be hosted by Greece, Estonia, and Germany and will be evaluated by PCC. For 2004 a photo assessment exercise is planned and will be organised by Mr. Durrant (United Kingdom) and Mr. Dobbertin

(Switzerland). In this context Mr. Eichhorn asked for submission of photo guides used during the crown condition assessments in the countries and of already existing photo assessment evaluations to Mr. Durrant in order to enable better preparation of the test phase in 2004. Further issues are the preparation of a test phase on biotic parameters in 2004 by Mr. Roskams (Belgium) and Mr. Nageleisen (France) and the further revision of the manual including the forms.

35. In the ensuing discussion the importance of future ICCs and photo QA was stressed. It was underlined that also national efforts in the field of training and intercalibration are crucial to the overall quality of crown condition data for Europe.

Mr. Winkler on behalf of the DG Env requested to receive future updates of the ICP Forests manual in order to consider respective updates in the EU manual currently being under preparation.

36. The Task Force adopted the updated sub manual on crown condition including improved parts on quality assurance as presented and asked PCC to circulate the new version after editorial finalisation. The Task Force also mandated the Expert Panel to finalise its work on the improvement of the sub manual annex on parameter for crown condition assessment and to present it to the 20th meeting in 2004. In addition the Expert Panel was asked to concentrate its future efforts on the following tasks:

a. Further improvement in QA /QC aspects (including documentation of national methods, methods of International Calibration Courses (ICCs), future implementation of ICCs, use of photos, photo data base, evaluation strategies for photos).

b. Improvement of definitions of optional Level II parameters (Clarification of definitions, deletion of parameters, addition of new parameters showing good scientific results, special focus: assessment of biotic damages),

The Task Force finally mandated the Expert Panel and PCC of ICP Forests to organise in 2003 and 2005 International Calibration Courses according to the attached timetable applying the improved concept and to organise in 2004 a quality assurance exercise using photos.

37. Mr. Szepesi (Hungary) on behalf of Mr. Roskams, Chairman of the Ad hoc Group on biotic agents, gave an overview on the aims and activities in the field of biotic agents. He stressed in particular the guidelines for the assessment of biotic

damage. The guidelines were discussed during the meeting in Helsingør, February 2003. A test phase is foreseen for summer 2003 and the feedback should be sent by the NFCs by autumn 2003. The amended version of the guidelines will be presented for adoption to the Task Force at its 20th meeting in 2004. A training course on Level II parameters including biotic agents is scheduled for summer 2004.

In the ensuing discussion it was underlined that the provision of a photo documentation of biotic damages would be an useful tool for the participating countries.

38. Mrs. Bastrup-Birk (Denmark), presented the progress report of the ICP Forests Ad hoc Working Group Litterfall Assessment within the Expert Panel on Crown Condition Assessment. During the last year forms and a draft manual have been prepared. Presently there are 347 plots in Level II on which litterfall is assessed. The use of the existing data and the sampling methods are described. The draft of the manual will be sent to NFCs after discussion in the core group. At the Task Force meeting in 2004 the sub-manual on sampling and analysis of litter will be presented for adoption.

39. Mr. Raitio (Finland), Chairman of the EP on Foliar Analyses, presented the main outcomes of the 5th ring test and the support by the Forest Foliar Coordinating Centre (FFCC) to some laboratories in order to improve the quality of their foliar analysis. Other tasks had been the preparation of the next ring test, the update of the web page, and his participation in the joint EANET/ICP Forests workshop in Seremban, Malaysia in December 2002. He also presented the results of an Expert Panel meeting held in Prague.

The second part of his presentation pointed on a study on foliar analyses which based on foliar data time series from Austria and Finland and which is part of the Technical Report Level I 2003. He introduced Self Organising Maps (SOM), which is based on Neural Networks, as useful to evaluate trends in the long-term monitoring data set foliage analyses.

40. Mr. Ulrich (France), Chairman of the EP deposition, while absent from the meeting, sent his greetings and drew the attention of the participants to the report "Atmospheric deposition and soil solution - Working Ring Test 2002".

41. Mr. Dobbertin, Chairman of the EP on Growth, informed about the current status of the RECOGNITION project funded by the European Forest Institute.

42. Mr. Preuhler (Germany), Chairman of the EP on Phenology and Meteorology, presented a progress report of the EP's work. Main focus of the work laid upon an update of the sub-manuals on meteorology and phenology, a web presentation on phenology, and the harmonisation of applied techniques. The update of the submanuals will be reported for approval to the TFM 2004 after been sent to the NFCs by end of 2003. He also presented also some results of a test evaluation on phenology data which are part of the Executive Report 2003.

Item 11: Level I activities

43. Mr. Mues (Germany) presented the main results of the current Level I evaluations and the structure of the Technical Report Level I "Forest Condition in Europe – Results of the Large-scale Survey".

The Technical Report „Forest Condition in Europe – Results of the 2002 Large scale survey“ was adopted after a short discussion. The Task Force also agreed to submit crown condition data for the year 2003 to PCC already by 15 November 2003.

44. Mr. van Ranst (Belgium), Chairman of the Expert Panel on Soil, reported on the changes in staff of the FSCC and on main outcomes of the FSCC's and EP's activities. He presented an update of the sub manual on sampling and analysis of soil (Level I and II), the timetable of the next soil condition survey, QA/QC (FSCC conducted 3rd interlaboratory ring test), the EU Soil Strategy and possibilities for a common EU/ICP Forests soil strategy, and the study "loss of representativity using a 32 x 32km Level I Grid".

In the ensuing discussion in particular the future co-operation based on the EU soil strategy and the importance that experts from ICP Forests are actually involved in the EU soil strategy process was stressed.

45. The Task Force took note of the report of the 11th meeting of the Expert Panel on Soil (24 – 26 March 2003, Gent/Belgium).

Following the proposals of the Expert Panel on Soil the Task Force decided:

- a) To adopt the updated 'Submanual on Soil Sampling and Analysis' keeping in mind possible changes in view of future developments, which need to be clarified by other stakeholders (such as the EU Soil Strategy and Forest Focus).
- b) The 2nd soil condition survey is essential to implement the ICP Forests Strategy. In view of the uncertainties related to the agenda of the other stakeholders, the survey will be postponed. The time for the forest soil survey has still to be decided upon in the context of other reporting obligations at national and international level (e.g. Forest Focus, EU Soil Strategy, Kyoto process) and the availability of the necessary funding. However, a time interval of approximately 15 years for a repetition seems to be meaningful.
- c) That in order to ensure the data quality:
 - the next soil ring test should to be organised in 2005.
 - countries are invited to use the samples of the 3rd ringtest as reference material and to re-analyse these samples to check their shortcomings and to improve their performance.
- d) To contact relevant working groups dealing with carbon to investigate the needs for carbon stock assessments and to define proper data requirements.
- e) That the fully implemented 16x16 km level I grid is the most appropriate grid for the repetition of the soil condition survey. Soil sampling should be done in the same plots as the crown condition assessment.
- f) To extend the mandate of the Ad hoc Working Group on Soil Solution to ascertain the continuation of their work.
- g) To support the Forest Soil Co-Ordinating Centre to continue its work (future tasks: e.g. preparation of the 2nd Level I Soil Condition Survey, further elaboration QA/QC programme, organising the 4th ring test soil).

Item 12: Executive Report 2003 and plans for a summary report on national results

46. Mr. Fischer presented the Executive Report on Forest Condition 2003. He stressed the high number of thematic chapters being integrated. He pointed to the possibility for the NFCs to translate the Executive Report into their language by themselves and at their own costs. Anyway, PCC will do the final layout work.

In the ensuing discussion some NFCs made clear that they feel not very comfortable with the translation only into German and French by the European Union. Mr. Winkler argued that non-legal text is only translated to the three languages of the European Commission.

The Executive Report was discussed in detail. The resulting revised version will be prepared for printing.

Mr. Haußmann thanked Mr. Fischer and all participants who were involved in the revision of the Executive report.

The Task Force adopted the Executive Report 2003 as amended for submission to the Working Group on Effects for de-restriction. Any press releases should not be made before 5 September 2003 after the press conference by UNECE in Geneva.

47. The chairman proposed that each National Focal Centre should prepare a summary on the national evaluation results following specific guidelines. The contributions will then be merged by PCC to a common report which would be presented to the 20th Task Force for adoption. The main results could also form the basis for a contribution to the Executive report 2004. The Task Force welcomed this initiative in principle. However a final decision should be only made after the circulation of the guidelines by PCC to all National Focal Centres in early summer 2003.

Item 13: Future cooperation with the EU scheme "Forest Focus"

48. Mr. Haußmann introduced the Task Force to the current status of the negotiations with DG Environment of EC about future co-operation.

49. Mr. Winkler stressed that the document "Memorandum of Common Understanding" is a starting point for negotiations between ICP Forests and DG Environment. Further negotiations are needed to finalise this document at an early stage after the adoption of the Forest Focus Regulation.

50. Mr. Haußmann presented starting points for the discussion of the elements for a future co-operation with the EU.

In the ensuing discussion the wide range of aspects of future co-operation between ICP Forests and the EU were treated. Possible concentrations of both parties' activities on different aspects of the monitoring tasks and a possible outline of the Executive Report 2004 were discussed. Especially the basis of this report, including possible results of national evaluations, was discussed controversially.

The NFCs expressed their concern that ending the cooperation between the two programmes could lead to enormous problems and eventually ineffective double work. The maintenance of the scientific level of the common EU/ICP Forests reports was considered as being of utmost priority. The meeting discussed the possibility of splitting the responsibilities between the two programmes in a sense that ICP Forests would focus on air pollution while the EC would take up new items like biodiversity and carbon sequestration. The latter solution was also seen with concern by most NFCs. Concern was expressed regarding the future of the Expert Panels which were found to be an important and useful tool for harmonisation and exchange between highly experienced scientists. Also the economic aspects of an interruption of the cooperation were pointed out by some NFCs which expressed their concern about the inefficiency of two parallel but not harmonised programmes.

Mr. Winkler underlined that from the side of EC there is a clear statement for a future co-operation with ICP Forests. He left no doubt about the importance of the Expert Panels. He stressed that particularly for this reason EC will support ICP Forests, as foreseen in the draft memorandum of understanding. Mr. Winkler explained that the Forest Focus Regulation of EC has a much broader perspective than ICP Forests, and that the EU-Member States are involved in the decision process by means of their vote in the Standing Forestry Committee.

51. The Task Force expressed its hope that EC and ICP Forests will not endanger the existing infrastructure of the monitoring programme by an interruption of the co-

operation and that both partners will remain interested to share its monitoring activities. Furthermore, the countries expressed their concern that the transition period could lead to a loss of information and knowledge.

ITEM 14: Organisational matters

52. The Task Force took note of the financial statements given by PCC for 2003 (Annex 3). The Task Force agreed on the revised budget of ICP Forests for 2003/2004 (Annex 4).

The Task Force reiterated its invitation to all participating countries to provide their voluntary contributions through the UNECE secretariat as early as possible in the year. Contributions should be made by bank transfer in US dollars as follows:

Bank Name: JPMorgan Chase Bank
Address: International Agencies Banking
1166, Avenue of the Americas, 17th floor
New York, N.Y. 10036-2708, USA
ABA code: 021000021 (Specific for US use)
SWIFT code: CHASUS33
Account Name: UN Geneva General Fund
Account Number: 485-001802

Each contribution must be clearly referenced:

“Credit LUA Trust Fund-ECE/EOA, Allotment account: LUC-25-270”

The Task Force urged countries to clearly state in the transfer documents that the contribution is made towards financing the ICP Forests of UNECE and indicate the year for which it is made.

Alternatively, contributions may also be made by cheque made payable to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, clearly earmarked as indicated above, and addressed to:

Executive Office (Office 333)
Office of the Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for Europe
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10

53. The Task Force expressed its appreciation to the Lead Country, the Co-ordinating Centres and the Expert Panels for their scientific and co-ordinating work and acknowledged their important contributions to the successful implementation of the programme.

The Task Force expressed its gratitude to the host authorities and the Croatian Government for their perfect meeting arrangements and their hospitality, as well as for organising an instructive excursion.

Mr. Gregor congratulated ICP Forests for having held again a perfectly organised meeting and thanked the host country. He also thanked the newly participating countries for their already active role in the programme. He expressed his appreciation of the way ICP Forests is fulfilling its tasks and thanked the EU for the fruitful co-operation in the past years and FIMCI for its important work. Moreover, he expressed the hope of the WGE that the cooperation between ICP Forest and EU will be continued.

54. Mr. Wijk (Sweden) on behalf of the National Board of Forestry invited the Task Force of ICP Forests to hold its 20th annual meeting from 24 – 26 May 2004 in Sweden. The Task Force thanked Sweden for the invitation.