

CONVENTION ON LONG-RANGE TRANSBOUNDARY AIR POLLUTION

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

MINUTES

of the twenty fourth meeting of the Programme Task Force
held from 24 to 28 May 2008 in Larnaca, Cyprus

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda and of the minutes of the 21st Task Force Meeting

1. The meeting was attended by 61 experts from the following 27 countries:
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, and the United States of America.
2. Represented were the Secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Lead Country of ICP Forests (Ms. S. Strich, Germany), the ICP on Integrated Monitoring (Mr. L. Lundin, Sweden), and the European Commission (EC) DG Joint Research Centre (JRC) (Ms. T. Houston-Durrant, Italy). The meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the Programme (Mr. M. Köhl, Germany) and the Head of the Programme Coordinating Centre (PCC) of ICP Forests (Mr. M. Lorenz, Germany). A list of participants is attached as Annex 1.
3. Mr. Köhl opened the Task Force meeting, thanked the Government of Cyprus for hosting the meeting and welcomed the participants.
4. Mr. C. Zanettis, Representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural resource and Environment welcomed the participants on behalf of the Government of Cyprus. Mr. G. Paatichis, Representative of the Cyprus Department of Forests, presented the status and the history of forestry in Cyprus.
5. Mr. Lorenz recalled the adoption of the ICP Forests strategy at the 23rd meeting held in Zvolen, Slovakia (12-16 May 2007). He stressed that a key issue of the present meeting is the implementation of the strategy. The Task Force adopted the minutes of its 23rd meeting and the agenda of the present meeting (Annex 2).

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

6. Mr. Köhl reported on his main activities as Chairman of the Programme since the last Task Force meeting. He mentioned specifically the submission of a project proposal by the Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute (vTI) in Hamburg, Germany, and by 37 Associated Beneficiaries in 24 EU-Member States to EC DG Environment under Regulation "LIFE+".

The proposed project is named “Further Development and Implementation of an EU-level Forest Monitoring System” (FutMon) and is intended to closely cooperate with ICP Forests. Mr. Köhl referred to the discussion of this cooperation under Item 7.

7. Mr. Lorenz reported on the main activities of PCC, in particular with respect to the deliverables submitted to the Working Group on Effects (WGE) under its the medium-term workplan. He made special mention of the Programme Coordinating Group (PCG) meeting hosted by PCC on 8 October 2007 within the Forest Monitoring Week held in Hamburg, Germany. He mentioned also the considerable labour invested into the FutMon proposal by vTI. Other tasks of PCC referred to by Mr. Lorenz included the update of the Manual, the planning and evaluation of International Intercomparison Courses (ICCs) in 2007 as well as data base management, data analyses and publications including peer-reviewed articles in international scientific journals. Mr. Lorenz also reported on the persisting cooperation with the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO), the North American Forestry Commission (NAFC) and the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDAFS). He thanked all participating countries and bodies of the programme for their active participation. The Task Force took note of the progress made by PCC and adopted its report.

Item 3: Report by the Chairman of the Working Group on Effects (WGE) and by the UNECE Secretariat

8. Mr. M. Johansson (Switzerland) of the UNECE secretariat, on behalf of the Chairman of WGE, reported on major achievements of the bodies under the WGE. He stressed the obligations of the ICPs towards the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP). He made special mention of the new reporting guidelines of WGE and of the “outreach” activities of CLRTAP towards other countries. The Task Force took note of these activities and postponed its discussion to Item 6.

Item 4: Reports by other ICPs

9. Mr. L. Lundin (Sweden), Chairman of ICP Integrated Monitoring, presented the programme’s recent activities. The main priorities of the programme are currently heavy metal budgets and critical loads; budgets, trends and acidification recovery related to sulphur, nitrogen and base cations; site specific dynamic modelling; nutrient nitrogen loads and effects; and ground vegetation lichens and biodiversity indicators. In this respect Mr. Lundin highlighted cooperations of the programme with ICP Forests, GTOS, ALTER-Net, AMAP, LTER Europe, LIFE Watch, EUROLIMPACS, BRIM and SCANNET.

Item 5: Results and Reports of ICP Forests in 2008

10. Mr. M. Lorenz introduced the draft technical and executive versions of the 2008 Forest Condition Report referring to individual chapters contributed by different authors. He presented the main results in the fields of crown condition, of deposition of sulphur and nitrogen, as well as of critical loads for acidity and nitrogen. Mr. A. Christou (Cyprus) presented a contribution on Brutia pine forests in the Mediterranean Basin. Mr. M. Schaub (Switzerland) reported on recent findings on ozone concentration, exposure and visible injury.

He also presented results achieved by means of the flux approach but concluded that limited data availability is still a problem.

11. In the ensuing discussion the Task Force acknowledged the work of the authors and made several proposals regarding future data analysis and reporting. Mr. A. Bytnerowicz (United States of America) referred to the limited availability of ozone data and suggested that ozone and ozone induced injury be assessed by a larger number of countries. Mr. Johansson proposed calculations of total instead of throughfall and bulk deposition. Mr. N. Kräuchi and Mr. Schaub stressed the need for acknowledgements of data contributions by countries in publications. They also suggested that authors' names should be assigned to the respective chapters of the Technical Report. Mr. Lorenz announced the drafting of a data access and publication policy by PCC. The Task Force adopted the 2008 Forest Condition Report as amended.

Item 6: Obligations towards WGE and CLRTAP

12. Mr. Lorenz presented the draft 2009 Workplan for Effects-oriented Activities. As activities of ICP Forests in 2009 under the related Medium-term Workplan he proposed to analyse relationships between deposition and tree growth besides the spatial and temporal trends in crown condition and deposition. Mr. M. Dobbertin (Switzerland) confirmed that he could provide the contribution on tree growth. The Task Force agreed to these proposals.

13. Referring to the report by the UNECE Secretariat (Item 3) Mr. Lorenz reported on the involvement of countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) in ICP Forests as a contribution to the outreach activities of CLRTAP. Referring to the Reporting Guidelines of WGE he stated that ICP Forests already assesses the parameters required to be assessed by the guidelines. The Task Force had no objections against the guidelines, understanding that its monitoring and reporting activities are already in line with it.

Item 7: Implementation of the strategy of ICP Forests

14. Mr. Lorenz recalled the adoption of the strategy of ICP Forests for the years 2007 to 2015 by the Task Force at its 23rd meeting held in May 2007 in Zvolen, Slovakia, stressing the need for financial support of forest monitoring by the countries and of the further development of methods and standards by the Expert Panels. In this context Mr. Lorenz presented the FutMon project on the further development of forest monitoring. The project proposal foresees basically large-scale forest monitoring on Level I plots coinciding largely with National Forest Inventory (NFI) plots as well as more intensive monitoring on a reduced set of Level II plots in EU-Member States in close cooperation with ICP Forests from 2009 to 2013. The additional monitoring methods and standards required for this project will be developed by the Expert Panels of ICP Forests. The database management is planned to be conducted by vTI.

15. Mr. M. Lorenz stressed the tremendous synergies expected from a cooperation between ICP Forests and FutMon. In case that FutMon will be granted, forest monitoring in EU-Member States could continue to be conducted according to the ICP Forests Manual under EC cofinancing. Level I and Level II monitoring data would officially be submitted by the National Focal Centres (NFCs) of ICP Forests and by the Associated Beneficiaries of FutMon to a single joint data base at vTI .

16. The Task Force agreed to the cooperation with FutMon including the revision of the forest monitoring designs at Levels I and II.

17. Mr. B. Petriccione (Italy) presented another project proposal under LIFE+ called “Forest Biodiversity Assessment across Europe: Towards an integrated system for biodiversity monitoring” (FACTS). FACTS aims at the detection of changes in forest biodiversity at all scales and at the explanation of cause-effect relationships between stressors and biodiversity parameters. There will be a close cooperation with ICP Forests and FutMon including database management by vTI.

Item 8: Forest monitoring and database management

18. The Chairpersons of the Expert Panels of ICP Forests presented their status reports and specified their planned contributions to FutMon.

19. On behalf of the Chairman of the Expert Panel on Crown Condition, Mr. P. Roskams (Belgium) reported on International Cross-comparison Courses (ICCs), on the status of the forest damage assessment as well as on the plans under FutMon. The Task Force agreed to the plans of the Expert Panel.

20. The Task Force agreed to the integration of the ad hoc Working Group on Soil Solution into the Expert Panel on Soil, the latter being renamed into Expert Panel on Soil and Soil Solution. The Task Force thanked the resigning Chairman Mr. Eric Van Ranst (Belgium), thanked for his engagement and agreed that the Expert Panel will be chaired by Mr. B. De Vos (Belgium) and will be co-chaired by Mr. J. Derome (Finland). Based on the results of a meeting of the Expert Panel on Soil and Soil Solution, Mr. De Vos proposed a new structure of the Expert Panel. The Forest Soil Coordinating Centre (FSCC) will continue to support the Chair and will organise the interlaboratory comparisons proposed for the FutMon project. The Task Force also agreed to the installment of five expert groups with the Panel which will, however, not be added to the official organisation chart of ICP Forests.

21. Mr. P. Rautio (Finland), Chairman of the Expert Panel on Foliage and Litterfall, reported on the progress of the Expert Panel. The Task Force welcomed the preparations for the sampling and chemical analysis of litterfall within the FutMon project.

22. The Task Force agreed to the activities of the Expert Panel on Forest Growth planned for FutMon and FACTS as described by its Chairman Mr. M. Dobbertin (Switzerland).

23. The Chairman of Expert Panel on Deposition, Mr. N. Clarke (Norway), presented an update of the Sub-Manual on Deposition. The Task Force adopted the Sub-Manual and agreed that Mr. D. Zlindra (Slovenia) will. The Chairperson of the Working Group on Ambient Air Quality, Ms. Maria Sanz (Spain) is temporarily working at the UNFCCC secretariat in Bonn, Germany. The Task Force agreed that during her mission the Working Group will be led by Mr. M. Schaub (Switzerland).

24. Mr. S. Raspe (Germany), Chairman of the Expert Panel on Meteorology and Phenology, described meteorological measurements, phenological observations as well as the measuring and modelling of water budgets planned under FutMon. The Task Force welcomed the plans of the Expert Panel.

25. On behalf of the Chairman of the Expert Panel on Biodiversity and Ground Vegetation, Mr. Petriccione reported on the activities of the Expert Panel in relation to the FACTS project (see Item 7). The Task Force expressed its concern regarding the enduring absence of the Chairman from the Expert Panel. PCC and Mr. Petriccione assured to propose a solution at the 25th Task Force Meeting in 2009.

26. Mr. M. Ferretti (Italy), Chairman of the Quality Assurance Committee, reported on results of a meeting of the Committee held besides the Task Force Meeting. He presented a Discussion Paper on the implementation of the mandate of the Committee. He referred to the quality assurance (QA) methods to be applied in future, to the integration of QA approaches into the Manual, to the elaboration of QA indicators, to training and intercomparison as well as to the elaboration of a Quality Assurance Plan. The Task Force agreed to the plans of the Committee.

27. The Chairman of the Working Group on Quality in Laboratories, Mr. N. König (Germany), presented the results of the last two meetings held in Eger (Hungary) and in Florence (Italy). He mentioned as future steps the preparation of ring tests as well as the further development of the Quality Check Paper and its integration into the Manual and announced the two forthcoming meetings. The Task Force welcomed the plans of the Working Group.

28. Mr. Lorenz reiterated that the management of the Level I and Level II data will be conducted by PCC from 2009 on and that data should therefore be submitted to vTI both under ICP Forests and FutMon. Ms. Houston-Durrant reported on the status of the Level II data base at JRC. After the ensuing discussion on data release to third parties, Mr. Lorenz announced to propose a procedure for data release at the 25th Task Force Meeting.

29. Ms. B. McAfee (Canada) and Mr. A. Bytnerowicz (United States of America) reported on the latest developments of forest monitoring in their countries.

Item 9: Cooperation with international organisations

30. Mr. Lorenz reported on a COST workshop on future monitoring and research needs organised by PCC and the NFC of Turkey on 11-13 March 2008 in Istanbul, Turkey. He mentioned also the ongoing cooperation with IUFRO and the NFCs of the USA and Canada in the field of critical loads assessment.

31. Mr. Petriccione presented the draft of a strategic note on a potential cooperation with LTER-Europe for submission by ICP Forests to the WGE. Based on the available information, the Task Force found a decision premature and invited LTER-Europe to present a more specific proposal to the Task Force at its 25th Meeting in 2009.

Item 10: Organisational issues

32. The Task Force took note of the list of activities and tasks of ICP Forests (Annex 3).

33. 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. As the WGE had been ordered by UN Treasury not to put any banking information on its web sites

or send it via email, any updated information on accounts for the voluntary contributions will be sent via postal mail to the National Focal Centres.

34. The Task Force took note of the financial statements given by PCC for 2006 (Annex 4) and agreed on the revised budget of ICP Forests for 2008/2009 (Annex 5).

Item 11: Other business

35. Ms. N. Lukina (Russia) invited ICP Forests to hold its 25th Task Force Meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia, on 23-27 May 2009. The Task Force thanked Russia for the invitation.

36. Mr. M. Lorenz on behalf of the Task Force thanked the National Forest Centre and the Government of Cyprus for their perfect meeting arrangements and for the hospitality, as well as for having organised an excellent excursion, and closed the meeting.