Minutes of the Programme Coordinating Group (PCG) Meeting, 8 October 2010 in Rome, Italy

Opening

The meeting was attended by 18 experts from 11 countries. The list of participants is attached as Annex 1-1. The meeting was hosted by the National Forest Service of the Italian Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry Policies (CONECOFOR). It was opened and chaired by Mr. Martin Lorenz. Mr. Lorenz thanked Italy for having organized the meeting and thanked the Members of the PCG for their continuous support. He recalled that the PCG had been established for preparing strategic decisions by the Task Force of ICP Forests and for developing interdisciplinary data analyses. In this context he highlighted the following two aims of the meeting:

1. Preparation of a decision by the Task Force regarding a basic monitoring approach which would be feasible even without EU co-financing (Item 1 of the Agenda);
2. Development of ideas regarding future analyses of ICP Forests' data and evaluation of existing national and international studies relying on data of ICP Forests (Item 2 of the Agenda).

The Agenda was adopted (Annex 1-2).

Item 1 Future monitoring by ICP Forests

Reports from related projects

Mr. Lorenz reported that the revised FutMon Proposal had been submitted by vTI to the LIFE Unit of EC DG Env on 28 September 2010. The proposal will be evaluated by ASTRALE and the LIFE Unit without a date for the decision having been announced. Mr. Lorenz recalled that - if the proposal will be granted - the Associated Beneficiaries would continue their monitoring until 30 June 2011 on about 225 IM1 (Level II) plots. He also reported that vTI will have to prepare

an extraordinary Progress Report (i. e. a follow-up to the Inception Report) for submission to ASTRALE and the LIFE Unit by 10 October 2010;
a financial audit visit by three delegates of Moore Stephens on 1-5 November 2010;
a project visit by five delegates of the LIFE Unit, JRC and ASTRALE on 1-2 December 2010. The project visit will include an additional financial audit.

Mr. Enrico Pompei and Mr. Marco Ferretti reported on the progress of the ENVeurope project. The PCG took note of the ongoing network harmonization, of the long-term data series, as well as of several common plots with ICP Forests.

Mr. Richard Fischer reported on the outcome of the COST FP0903 conference (5 – 6 October 2010 in Rome), specifically on contacts and information exchange with other existing transnational European forest monitoring and research networks. At the conference, the need of a secured monitoring and research infrastructure was expressed by the participants. Such a system should be based on (i) a smaller number of highly instrumented "supersites", each of them covering all ecosystem compartments, including experimental approaches and aiming at insight to processes and fluxes (energy, water, carbon, biodiversity…) and (ii) a larger number of linked monitoring sites (i.e. ICP Forests Level II plots) in order to cover ecological gradients and to provide data with higher spatial representation. The research Framework Programme of the EU was seen as an appropriate funding mechanism for such an integrated monitoring system.

LTER Europe (European Long-Term Ecosystem Research Network; www.lter-europe.net) is currently setting up a data base for long-term ecological research sites, including forest sites. Based on information received from the NFCs, 35 Level II sites are already registered. PCC will encourage ICP Forests NFCs to get into contact with their national LTER Focal point and explore possibilities for closer collaboration and possibly the registration of Level II plots as LTER sites.

Mr. Marcus Schaub reported on the finalization of the EUCLAP project proposal. The proposal includes database management by vTI. The PCG welcomed the synergies to be expected from an implementation of the project.

Lobbying

Mr. Lorenz reported on recent lobbying for future forest monitoring. He mentioned his participation in a Monitoring Workshop held by the Spanish EU Presidency on 6-7 April 2010 in Valsain, Spain, a Policy Brief distributed by the Chairman and PCC of ICP Forests among the NFCs and Ministries for submission to politicians, the participation of Ministries in the public consultation on the Green paper by EC, and his article in The Parliament Magazine's Regional Review (see Annex 1-3).

Also with regard to lobbying, Mr. Fischer reported on contributions by ICP Forests to the forthcoming report by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Forest Europe). ICP Forests is the main data provider for forest health and vitality indicators in the 2011 report "State of Europe's Forests". Data on defoliation and deposition have already been submitted to the UNECE Timber Committee. FSCC will contribute information on European forest soil condition. In order to enable contributions of the ICP Forests in the field of biotic and abiotic damage, PCC will due to the temporary absence of Mr. Peter Roskams commission a qualified private consultant (Mr. Stefan Meining) with a descriptive evaluation of the current Level I damage data.

Mr. Nils König reported on his contact with the office of a German Green Party EU Parliamentarian, Ms. Rebecca Harms. The office could be of assistance in establishing contacts with the members of the relevant Environment Committee of the European Parliament. The PCG decided that this contact be prepared by a small ad hoc group consisting of

> Martin Lorenz, Nils König, Johannes Eichhorn, Bruno De Vos, and Annemarie Bastrup-Birk (as well as Enrico Pompei, Pasi Rautio, and Marco Ferretti for backstopping upon demand).

The group will elaborate a message which will afterwards be presented to the Environment Committee by delegates still to be selected. The message shall primarily identify the information needs and present monitoring by ICP Forests as the solution:

Information needs of e. g. EC, MCPFE, UNECE (see also Green Paper by EC)
Resulting need for long-term forest monitoring
- at the large-scale (spatial and temporal trends)
- at the ecosystem scale (cause-effect relationships)

Results to be expected from ICP Forests in cooperation with NFIs

As a first step, PCC will

circulate a short paper summarizing main arguments for a policy relevant forest monitoring system based on ecosystem services (product, message, vision) among the members of the PCG for discussion
distribute the paper among the Ministries (incl. SFC delegates) and NFCs of ICP Forests with the request
- for feedback and support
- to inform their representatives in Brussels

produce a roadmap for the lobbying

Monitoring in 2011 and 2012

The PCG agreed to develop a proposal for approval by the Task Force how to implement the strategy of ICP Forests in 2011 and 2012 based on national budgets. In this respect PCC will inquire among the participating countries their priorities and possibilities. The proposal will describe

The maintenance of the monitoring at Level I and II with reduced intensity by the NFCs
The maintenance of the coordination, database management, data analyses and reporting by PCC in cooperation with the PCG and the Task Force
The acquisition of future co-financing of forest monitoring and flanking projects

In this context the PCG expressed the urgent need to continue the full FutMon/ICP Forests data base service. PCC will consider its own possibilities including the option of asking the Lead Country and the Task Force for additional financial support.

PCC will check the possibilities and depending on the results will start to prepare the political floor for a new LIFE+ proposal. The next LIFE+ call will be published in February 2011.

Item 2 Future data analyses

Scientific analyses of the monitoring data are becoming increasingly important. The PCG discussed the installation of an additional group under the PCG for the initiation and coordination of such evaluations. Experts interested in participating in such a group are asked get in contact with Marco Ferretti. A list of possible future evaluations is attached as Annex 1-4. Mr. Fischer informed on the following ongoing activities:

The Forest Condition Executive Report 2011 will focus specifically on climate change issues. NFCs are encouraged to inform PCC on respective policy relevant national evaluations, that might be included in the forthcoming Executive Report.
The PCG discussed the need to install a dedicated Carbon Group within the ICP Forests. PCC will commission the German Leibniz-Zentrum für Agrarlandschaftsforschung (Mr Hubert Jochheim) to conduct a study on BIOME-BGC modelling based on Level II data. Results of

this study might be presented at the forthcoming PCG and Task Force Meetings and could stimulate the further development of carbon related evaluations.
PCC (Susanne Iost) is currently continuing the evaluation of soil solution data focusing specifically on effects of critical limit exceedances.
Supported by the COST FP0903 action the publication of forest ecosystem monitoring methods in a scientific book is foreseen. Editors will be Marco Ferretti and Richard Fischer. Authors of the updated ICP Forests Manual are invited to become authors of single chapters.
In order to support the elaboration of an ICP Forests Manual part on epiphytic lichen assessment PCC will commission the University of Genova (Mr Paolo Giordani) to further elaborate on existing ForestBIOTA data. This will as well include evaluations on critical nitrogen loads for lichen communities.

In this context Mr. Fischer mentioned that first experiences with the newly published Intellectual Property Policy of ICP Forests show that the administration of the process at PCC is very complex and time consuming.

Item 3 Any other business

The PCG invited the NFCs and Experts of the programme that have not registered for the Memorial Seminar for John Derome (30 November in Rovaniemi, Finland) to re-consider a possible participation.

The next meeting of the PCG will take place in Vienna on 8-9 February 2011

Closing

Mr. Lorenz thanked CONECOFOR for the hospitality and for having provided excellent meeting facilities and closed the meeting.

Annex 1-1:

Participants

1. Vicent Calatayud
2. Alessandro Campanaro
3. Roberto Canullo
4. Nathalie Cools
5. Marco Ferretti
6. Richard Fischer
7. Paloma Garcia
8. Morten Ingerslev
9. Nils König
10. Martin Lorenz
11. Andy Moffat
12. Markus Neumann
13. Pat Neville
14. Enrico Pompei
15. Stephan Raspe
16. Pasi Rautio
17. Marcus Schaub
18. Daniel Zlindra

Annex 1-2

Draft AGENDA
for the Programme Coordinating Group Meeting on
8 October 2010, Rome, Italy

9.00 hrs	Opening and welcome	CONECOFOR vTI
Item 1:	Information update on ongoing projects, project proposals linked to ICP Forests. Strategy development for the future operation of ICP Forests,	
	FutMon prolongation (10 min)	M. Lorenz
	ENVeurope (10 min)	E. Pompei, M. Ferretti
	COST FP0903 (10 min)	R. Fischer
	EUCLAP (10 min)	M. Schaub
	others? questions, discussion	
	Rationale: The proposal for FutMon prolongation has been submitted to EC. The outcome of this process is open. A number of other initiatives are ongoing or are planned. The needed long-term co-financing needed for the implementation of the restructured system is, however, not in sight. How does ICP Forests react? Enforced policy dialogue? Increased cooperation with others? Guaranteed national commitments?	Chair: M. Lorenz
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch	
Item 2:	Ongoing and planned evaluations, publications - Round table -	Chair: R. Fischer
	Rationale: Evaluations based on the new data base and the new Intellectual Property Policy of ICP Forests are of increasing importance. PCC will inform on ongoing data requests and own evaluations. Expert Panels are asked to inform briefly on their ongoing or planned evaluations. A suggestion for a scientific publication of the monitoring methods based on the revised manual will be presented.	
Item 3:	Any other business	
15.30	Closing	

Forest Monitoring in Europe Further Developed

The Parliament and the Council of the European Union postulate pan-European forest monitoring as a basis for environment and forest policies. This could be reached easily by adjusting an existing forest monitoring system towards meeting specific information needs of the European Union (EU). The existence of this well-developed system, however, is now jeopardized.

Forest monitoring provides policy relevant information

Forest monitoring in Europe has been conducted for 25 years according to harmonised methods and standards by the International Cooperative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests (ICP Forests) of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). ICP Forests monitors the development of forest health at the European-wide scale. This includes annual assessments of tree crown condition and the occurrence of insects, fungi, and other damage types on a network of about 6000 monitoring plots. On most of these plots soil condition and the nutritional status of the trees have also been assessed. For studies of cause-effect relationships, a particularly intensive monitoring has been pursued on additional 860 plots. It addresses crown condition, foliar chemistry, soil condition, tree growth and the species diversity of the ground vegetation on 700-800 plots, as well as atmospheric deposition on 558 plots and meteorological parameters on 235 plots. Moreover, on a smaller number of plots, stand structure, epiphytic lichens, soil solution chemistry, ambient air quality, tree phenology and litterfall are assessed. Data are collected by 40 countries of Europe including 26 EU-Member States (MS). Canada and the United States of America are also participating. This renders ICP Forests the largest uniform forest monitoring programme of the world.

The results of ICP Forests form the basis for policy contributions at the international, regional and national level. At the international level ICP Forests provides information to

- the scientific basis of the development and reviews of the effectiveness of clean air policies by CLRTAP under UNECE;
- the report on the state of forests in Europe by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE);
- the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
- the UN-FAO Forest Resources Assessments (FRA).

Forest monitoring is further developed under LIFE+

The MS have allocated considerable financial resources to forest monitoring and unanimously support its continuation. Because of its relevance to forest and environmental policies, forest monitoring in the MS has been generously co-financed by the European Commission (EC) from its beginning on. Never would forest monitoring have become so successful without the support by EC.

Most MS are now further developing forest monitoring towards meeting the information needs of EC in the fields of climate change, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity. This is achieved by means of a project named "Further Development and Implementation of an EU-level Forest Monitoring System" (FutMon). FutMon and ICP Forests are complementary to each other and are coordinated by the Institute for World Forestry in Hamburg, Germany. FutMon was granted for co-financing by EC in the years 2009 and 2010 under Regulation LIFE+. The further development consists mainly in

- merging large-scale monitoring plots with plots of the national forest inventories in order to create synergies between the two surveys;
- reduction of the number of intensive monitoring plots in the MS to 300, in favour of a simultaneous increase in the number of surveys per plot;
- improvement of data quality assurance and data base management systems.

Becoming operational end 2010, the revised system will provide more information per plot and therefore lead to more conclusive results. First results of FutMon reveal

- the spatial and temporal variation of forest health on the European-wide scale;
- changes in the diversity of ground vegetation species due to atmospheric deposition;
- increased forest growth due to atmospheric nitrogen deposition;
- positive effects of air pollution control policies.

Ongoing studies will lead to results on relationships between climatic factors, air pollution, forest health, forest growth, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity. These studies will also comprise risk assessments for the forests in Europe under the given impact of climate change and air pollution.

Forest monitoring may not be continued

The MS had planned the implementation of the revised forest monitoring system for the years 2011 to 2013. For this implementation, however, no co-financing under LIFE+ will be available. This means that for two years EC and 38 project partners in 23 MS invested considerable funds and labour into the further development of a system which will possibly not be used. Even the existence of forest monitoring in Europe could be jeopardised. Given the postulations of forest monitoring made by EC e. g. in the Forest Action Plan (Key Action 8), Regulation LIFE+, and the Green Paper SEC (2010) 163final, efforts should be made to save forest monitoring as the basis for forest policy information. The postulations by EC could best be realised based on the forest monitoring system which has been established for many years in nearly all EU-Member States. The coordinators of that system are striving for a stakeholder dialogue on further monitoring activities.

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Annex 1-4

Possible future evaluations

1. Ecosystem vitality, disturbances and resilience

1.1 Tree vitality in Central Europe, special focus on Fagus sylvatica
1.2 Abiotic and biotic agents
1.3 Tree vitality in Boreal and high elevation areas, special focus on Picea abies
1.4 Mediterranean aspects of forest vitality

2. Ozone related evaluations

2.1 Estimates of hourly ozone concentration for risk analyses and ozone–flux modelling
2.2 Ozone flux modelling
2.3 Ozone risk assessment, Poplar clone

3. Forest nutrition and critical loads and limits

3.1 Effects of environmental change and forest management on forest nutrition
3.2 Calculation of critical soil solution element concentrations and ratios and related tree response
3.3 Critical loads and dynamic modelling
3.4 Calculation of total deposition

4. Climate change related evaluations

4.1 Spatial interpolation of meteorological data
4.2 Water Budget Models
4.3 Impacts of air pollution and climatic factors on forest growth and above ground carbon sequestration
4.4 Carbon flux modeling at test core sites

5. Biodiversity related evaluations

5.1 Ground vegetation and its response to deposition and critical load exceedance
5.2 Impact of anthropogenic drivers on epiphytic lichen composition and diversity
5.3 Relations between biodiversity key factors on intensive monitoring plots and the large scale
5.4 Classification and evaluation of the state of conservation of the large scale plots