

3rd Informal inter-agency meeting on indicators to monitor progress towards SFM and forest-related SDG indicators

FAO Headquarters

20. July 2016, 08:30-11:15, Canada Room

Draft meeting minutes

Chair and Moderator: Eva Müller, supported by Ewald Rametsteiner

Participants:

- **UNFF:** Tomasz Juszcak
- **ITTO:** Takeshi Goto
- **Montreal Process:** Aaron Cavieres, Simon Bridge
- **IUFRO:** Alexander Buck
- **World Bank PROFOR:** Werner Kornexl
- **UNFCCC:** Jenny Wong
- **OFAC/COMIFAC:** Charles Doumenge, Quentin Jungers
- **UNECE:** Roman Michalak,
- **FOREST EUROPE:** Rastislav Raši,
- **FAO:** Eva Müller, Ewald Rametsteiner, Thais Juvenal, Anssi Pekkarinen, Dorian Navarro, Lars Marklund, Anni Vuohelainen, Verena Adler (consultant)
- **Observer:** Emma Hatcher, Director International Forest Policy Section, Australian Government

1. Welcome and Introduction by the chair

Ms. Eva Müller, Director of the Forest Economic, Policy and Products Division of FAO's Forestry Department welcomed the attendees to the meeting and gave a brief history of these meetings. The informal inter-agency meetings were initiated during the WFC 2015 and continued in late April 2016 at UNFF, with a view to collaborate amongst agencies and bodies concerned on further developing indicators for SFM and contribute to the development and fine-tuning of a proposal on SDG15.2, led by FAO as the custodian agency and in collaboration with a range of bodies.

The objectives of this 3rd informal inter-agency meeting were to discuss the next steps in view of the information available aiming at technical input to the SDG indicator (IAEG-SDG¹), UNFF (AHEG² and follow-up) and FAO Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) review and preparation processes.

Following Ms. Müller introduction, Mr. Rametsteiner took over to chair the meeting, and suggested to conduct the meeting under the same approach and format as the earlier inter-agency meetings on the topic, i.e. that this be an informal meeting focusing on technical level discussions.

¹ Inter-Agency Expert Group

² Ad-Hoc Expert Group, second meeting

With regard to the proposed agenda (*see Annex 1*), Ms. Thais Juvenal requested that the agenda Item 4 would be treated before item 3 because of time constraints and the item discussed in the plenary of the ongoing COFO23/WFW5.

2. Short update on recent developments

- **Ottawa workshop on strengthening collaboration on C&I (Bridge)**

Mr. Simon Bridge, Natural Resources Canada, on behalf of the Montreal Process, updated on the Ottawa workshop on strengthening collaboration on C&I. The workshop brought together 35 experts from 16 countries on May 1-3, 2016 in Ottawa to (1) strengthen relationships between experts in C&I processes and other forest related organizations and fora that promote implementation of SFM and that track environmental change and report on sustainable development related to the forests, (2) explore possibilities to use C&I to address SFM issues within the context of the different forest related fora and organizations and to (3) propose concrete actions would advance common interests and lead to continuous improvement and enhance collaboration. The workshop used, as its starting point, the “roadmap” on “Mobilizing the full potential of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management in policy and practice: the way forward”, which was developed through broad global consultation with stakeholders and experts using criterion and indicators (C&I) and presented at the World Forestry Congress 2015. The results are available under the “Ottawa Collaborative Action Plan” (*see separate flyer presenting World Forestry Congress roadmap and Ottawa six-point Action Plan*).

Effort was focused on identifying actions that could be completed in 2-3 years and that could be effectively coordinated by those involved without creating formal, institutionalized networks and secretariats. Mr. Bridge highlighted, that substantial progress has been made in just two months since the workshop, including an outline for a journal article on the evolution and impact of C&I over the past 25 years, a workplan and global network of some 300 indicator experts as basis to build a community of practice to share knowledge and build national capacity, as well as further work on developing a core set of forest indicators and concepts to integrate C&I into inter-sectoral decision-making.

- **UNFF Strategic Plan and AHEG2 preparation (Juszczak)**

In continuation, Mr. Tomasz Juszczak updated on the preparation for the second meeting of the intergovernmental ad hoc expert group (AHEG2) and of UNFF12. AHEG is tasked to develop proposals on the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) Strategic Plan for 2017-2030. This should, amongst others, incorporate the Global Objectives on Forests and the forest-related aspects of the post-2015 development agenda. The meeting will take place from 24-28 October in Bangkok, Thailand. The expert group is expected to develop and submit its proposals for consideration by the UNFF Working Group that will meet from 16 to 20 January 2017 in NY, immediately after which the adoption of the Strategic Plan is also envisaged. By end of February the UNFF Secretariat is expected to have developed a proposal for a cycle and

a format for national reporting and the enhancement of voluntary monitoring, assessment and reporting under the IAF, to be discussed at UNFF12 in May 2017.

- **IAEG-SDG update, incl. preparation of IAEG4 (Navarro)**

Mr. Dorian Navarro informed, that the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) agreed with the global indicator framework proposed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) at its meeting in March 2016, noting that the indicators are "subject to further technical refinement."

At the 3rd meeting of the IAEG-SDGs in spring 2016, the IAEG decided on the establishment of a tier system for indicators, classifying indicators regarding methodological and data availability aspects. The meeting also discussed further work for the methodological review of indicators and global reporting mechanisms, including identifying proposed entities as "custodian agencies" which are inter alia responsible for compiling data for global reporting on individual indicators. One third of all SDG indicators are still at Tier III level, meaning that "an internationally agreed methodology has not yet been developed". This includes SDG indicator 15.2.1 on "progress towards sustainable forest management". FAO was identified as 'custodian' UN agency for 15.2.1.

FAO as custodian agency is to submit a detailed work plan to IAEG-SDGs on how to develop the Tier III SDG 15.2.1 indicator. These initial work plans will be reviewed by the Secretariat by September 15th, in preparation to IAEG-SDG4 to be held in the autumn of 2016, finalizing the Tier System. The plan foresees limited revisions of selected indicators to be undertaken in 2017. A broader review of indicators is foreseen in 2020 and again in 2025. FAO is working to upgrade as many Tier III indicators as possible in the next few months in order to be able to report on them for the 2017 SDG progress report.

In the discussion it was clarified that current SDG indicators form a global core set which can be complemented with thematic or national indicators – at the same time however, countries are encouraged to align their national monitoring system with the SDGs indicators in order to reduce their own reporting burden..

4. SDG 15.2 Indicator "Monitoring progress towards SFM"– fine-tuning of sub-components

Ms. Thais Juvenal updated about the task ahead of fine-tuning the methodology SDG indicator 15.2.1 "progress towards SFM". With regard to metadata on the indicator, an "index of sustainable forest management" with four sub-components was proposed by IAEG, based on a proposal elaborated by FAO in collaboration with bodies involved in the informal inter-agency meetings. The four sub-components proposed were

1. Annual average percent change in forest area over most recent available 5 year period
2. Annual average percent change in stock of carbon in above ground biomass over most recent available 5 year period

3. Share of forest area whose primary designated function is biodiversity conservation, most recent period
4. Share of forest area under a forest management plan, of which forest area certified under an independent forest management certification scheme, most recent period

Ms. Juvenal reiterated that strong country ownership is crucial for the proposed indicators. Countries need visible and understandable indicators, consulted with countries.

Given that the aggregation method of the four sub-components has not been used or tested, the indicator was classified as Tier III. As agreed at the 2nd meeting of the group, the proposal on aggregation of sub-components SDG15.2 is to be replaced with a proposal for reporting on sub-components (dashboard or similar). FAO also took up work to test specifications of sub-components with existing country data and lead fine-tuning of wording and specifications of individual sub-components.

A simulation paper “*Test of SDG 15.2.1 sub indicator options, Indicators at global level, based on FRA data*” was provided to show what would be possible to extract with information from the FRA (Annex 3). From the original subcomponents:

1. Annual average percent change in forest area over most recent available 5 year period (see “Change of forest area” in Annex 2) is similar to SDG indicator 15.1.1. In order to avoid repetition, the proposal is to use the rate of change of forest area rather than absolute change.
2. Annual average percent change in stock of carbon in above ground biomass over most recent available 5 year period (see “Above ground biomass stock” in Annex 2). It is suggested to use biomass stock by hectare, instead of absolute stock.
3. “Share of forest area whose primary designated function is biodiversity conservation, most recent period”: it is suggested to use “Forest area within protected areas”, using IUCN classes. Annex 2 shows respective data, based on previous FRAs.
4. Share of forest area under a forest management plan, of which forest area certified under an independent forest management certification scheme, most recent period”: both values are shown in Annex 2. “Forest under are SFM plans certified by independent organisations” as sub-category under this sub-component, raises a number of questions (see below).

Mr. Marklund complemented the presentation by explaining that using change vs. rates of change provide different results. A change rate of (loss of) forest area would probably show that the rate of loss of forest area decreases over time (i.e. show a positive trend in the view of many) – while change of forest area would still be negative (seen as negative by many). The same applies for biomass stock (total biomass stock will be negative as loss of forest area).

During the discussion, the absence of a sub-component addressing socio-economic aspects was noted. However, no adequate indicator seem to exist where reliable data is available (contribution to GDP is deemed to be too weak a measure of sustainability). On the issue of forest certification, a range of questions were raised, including its market-driven nature, the provision of data by private entities, and its use as a sub-category.

Ms Juvenal noted at current the principal aim is to provide a metadata proposal and work plan that would allow IAEG to re-classify the SDG 15.2.1 indicator from Tier III to Tier I, i.e.

keeping changes to the sub-components small. As individual sub-components can be classified as Tier I, it is hoped that dropping the proposal for aggregation of subcomponents and using a dashboard or similar approach to show changes in individual sub-components will allow IAEG to re-classify the indicator to Tier I. Further refinement thereafter is possible, as work on further developing indicators will continue. Ms. Juvenal concluded the discussion with the request to the participants to go through the distributed table “*Test of SDG 15.2.1 sub indicator options, Indicators at global level, based on FRA data*” (Annex 2) and look at the proposed changes and provide feedback back to her.

3. Collaborative Partnership on Forest retreat discussion on indicators and possible Organization-led Initiative (OLI)

Mr. Rametsteiner made a short introduction on the recent Collaborative Partnership on Forest retreat discussion on indicators, monitoring and reporting, and the proposal for an Organization-led Initiative (OLI) in support of UNFF introduced by ITTO.

The overarching goal of a possible OLI would be to enable an open, informal, transparent and informed discussion on a consistent set of global forest indicators in support of implementation of the emerging IAF strategic plan for the period 2017–2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and subsequent streamlined monitoring, assessment and reporting, including proposed cycles and format for national reporting in the context of UNFF as well as the Global Forest Resources Assessment.

FAO is prepared to take the lead in the preparation of the OLI proposals to be presented to the consideration of the UNFF. The project on “*Strengthening C&I for sustainable forest management and their use*” funded by Germany could continue to provide support, including financial support to a number of participants from developing countries to the meeting. A non-cost extension until 31.12. 2016 (the project formally comes to an end at the end of July 2016) was submitted to the donor but not yet decided. Further funds would be required to ensure broad participation. Moreover, a meeting on the question is scheduled between the head of the UNFF secretariat and FAO to clarify the interest and potential added value and possible timing of a potential OLI, to take place on 21 July 2016 (i.e. the day after this meeting). Different optional pathways arise from this situation, depending on the outcome of the meeting between UNFF and FAO, and the decision of Germany on the non-cost extension of the C&I project.

In the following discussion, all participants expressed their support for an OLI or a similar expert meeting aiming to bring political and technical experts together on issues related to different goals and targets (SDGS, IAF Strategic Plan and other) and the related potential for using consistent indicators and streamlining related monitoring and reporting (UNFF, FRA and other). Several experts present indicated possible support by their organizations to such an OLI or expert meeting. The added value of such a meeting was seen as high, even if not held in the format of an OLI, as the results of the technical discussion would feed back into the political discussion. The proposed venue and date for the OLI could be 28/29 November 2016 in Rome. The draft concept note would need to be updated and shared.

5. FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment – update and plans

The update on FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment started with the news that Mr. Anssi Pekkarinen has been appointed to be the new Leader for the FRA Team.

Mr. Pekkarinen informed that a second edition of the FRA2015 report was launched at COFO, which includes adequate references to the SDG's, which were adopted the same month as FRA2015 was launched in September 2015. He also informed that the review of the FRA2015 is commencing with a view to start preparing the next FRA. A respective questionnaire will be sent out soon. A future FRA is envisaged to build on the experiences and expand on the "Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire" and the "Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire" used in the past, and aim to streamline and provide information and access to data in a demand-oriented way. In this context, a global OLI event or expert meeting in November would be a good opportunity to explore ways to address existing and emerging information needs and reporting requirements at global levels of relevance to a future FRA, including SDGs and reporting in the context of the IAF Strategic Plan 2017-2030.

At COFO FAO also presented the results of a sample based assessment of dryland on which FAO has partnered with Google, using Google Earth and Earth Engine, based on earth engine tools and images 200.00 points. Further integration of remote sensing and other sources of data, including national forest inventories and further enhancing consistency of data will remain an important area of work.

A priority of FAO's work on forest resources assessment is national level capacity building. FAO is supporting countries including through OpenForis, a suite of open-source specialized software tools to support multi-purpose forest inventories. This has been further developed to facilitate not only flexible and efficient data collection, but also analysis and reporting, thereby establishing closer links between collection of data in national forest assessments and the use of data in decision making, including in national forest programmes. The tool is being used in 30+ countries, mainly for remote sensing and bio physiological data but could easily be used for socio economic data. In general it was observed that many times for FRA the entry point is the Ministry of Forestry, but much information might be with the national statistical offices. It would be important to in other ministries to improve information sharing of information and bring in support to national ministries for capacity building of countries as countries are evolving on different speed with complex institutional situations.

6. AOB and closing

No other business was discussed and the following *follow-up actions and next steps* were summarised:

- Ms. Thais Juvenal had requested feed-back on proposed changes of the subcomponents indicators for SDG 15.2., and will send around a revised proposal incorporating that feedback.
- There was broad support for an OLI or similar expert meeting, pending on the decision of the FAO/UNFF bilateral meeting and the German Government on the no-cost extension of

the “C&I Project”. FAO will take the lead and draft a concept note to be shared with the CPF.

- Should no additional funding for an OLI be obtained and the no-cost extension from German Government not be granted, the topic would need to be considered in the context of the work of CPF, possibly in an upcoming CPF meeting/retreat
- To continue to share work plans and timelines of different relevant processes (UNFF, FAO FRA2020, CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD, regional C&I processes, other) and encourage discussions on forest and SDG indicators in a wider context of experts.

Closing the meeting at 11:00, Mr. Rametsteiner thanked the participants for their active and constructive contributions, looking forward to continuing the successful collaboration.

Annex 1: Agenda of the meeting

3rd informal inter-agency meeting on indicators to monitor progress towards SFM and forest-related SDG indicators

20. July 2016

FAO, Rome, Italy

Canada Room, Building A, 3rd Floor, Room 357

The meeting will start at 08:30

**Please note that the meeting is scheduled to end at 10:00 (start of formal COFO session).
The room is available until 11:30 for further informal discussion**

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Welcome and introduction

2. Short update on recent developments (10 minutes)

- Ottawa workshop on strengthening collaboration on C&I (Bridge)
- UNFF Strategic Plan and AHEG2 preparation (Sobral/Juszczak)
- IAEG-SDG update, incl. preparation of IAEG4 (Navarro/Juvenal)

3. Collaborative Partnership on Forest retreat discussion on indicators and possible OLI (25 min)

- Short presentation of proposal on “Organization-led Initiative” on global forest indicators in the context of UNFF and SDGs and results of CPF discussion (Csoka/Rametsteiner)
- Short discussion and recommendations on next steps

4. SDG 15.2 Indicator “Monitoring progress towards SFM” – fine-tuning of sub-components (25 min)

- Short presentation of fine-tuned SDG15.2 sub-components (Juvenal)
- Short discussion and recommendations on next steps

5. FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment – update and plans (25 min)

- Short presentation of status on FRA2015 report and preparations for future FRAs (Pekkarinen)
- Short discussion and recommendations on next steps

6. AOB and closing

Please note that several participants will need to leave the meeting at 10:00 at the latest to attend the regular COFO session. Both presentations and discussions under each agenda item need to be very concise. The meeting room is available for further Informal and bilateral discussions until 11:30

Annex 2:

Test of SDG 15.2.1 sub indicator options										
Indicators at global level, based on FRA data										
Indicator	Indicator value				Annual change			Annual change rate (%)		
	2000	2005	2010	2015	00-05	05-10	10-15	00-05	05-10	10-15
Change of forest area (1000 ha)	4,055,602	4,032,743	4,015,673	3,999,134	-4,572	-3,414	-3,308	-0.11%	-0.08%	-0.08%
Rate of annual forest area net change (%), last 5-yr period	-0.18%	-0.11%	-0.08%	-0.08%				-8.63%	-5.58%	-0.55%
Above-ground biomass stock (million t)	425,461	421,717	419,599	419,139	-749	-424	-92	-0.18%	-0.10%	-0.02%
Above-ground biomass stock (ton/ha)	128.4	127.9	127.6	128.1	-0.11	-0.06	0.08	-0.08%	-0.04%	0.07%
Forest area primarily designated for conservation of biodiversity (1000 ha)	333,983	375,372	408,481	427,238	8,278	6,622	3,751	2.36%	1.70%	0.90%
Forest area within protected areas (1000 ha)	406,085	467,811	502,844	517,559	12,345	7,007	2,943	2.87%	1.45%	0.58%
Forest area with forest management plan (1000 ha)	1,403,340	1,487,698	1,560,504		16,872	14,561		1.17%	0.96%	
Forest area with independent international certification (1000 ha)	17,773	168,055	288,564	441,609	30,056	24,102	38,261	56.73%	11.42%	11.22%
Annual change rate calculated using the formula for compound interest rate										
Data on forest area with forest management plan from FRA 2010										
Data on forest certification, latest year corresponds to 2014										
A negative change in the change rate is good when the initial value is negative (rate of forest loss is going down)										
A positive rate of annual forest area net change should always be considered good, even if the rate is decreasing as long as it is positive										
Forest area within protected areas is higher than area designated for conservation of biodiversity. Trends are similar										
Biomass stock values based only on countries that reported for all four years, so another set of countries than forest area										