**6th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management**

**16 – 18 May 2017, Sopron, Hungary**

**DRAFT MEETING REPORT**

**Opening of the meeting**

Mr. Harald Egerer, on behalf of UN Environment Vienna Programme Office – Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants of the Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management (WG Forest) and “”Workshop on balancing bioenergy production and sustainable forest management in Mountain Areas” (PA2 Workshop) in Sopron, Hungary. He thanked then to the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary, Sopron University and EUSDR Priority Area 2 –Sustainable Energy (PA2) for supporting the organization of and hosting the meeting.

The Participants were also welcomed by Mr. László Szalay, Vice-Dean of the Forestry Faculty of Sopron University that generously hosted the meeting.

**Towards Carpathian Inventory of Virgin Forests:**

One of the main objective of the WG Forest meeting was further discussion on the inventory of virgin forest in the Carpathians that should be finalised by the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in October 10 -12, in Lillafüred, Hungary.

Mr. Egerer gave a short overview of the Carpathian Convention activities related to forestry and undertaken steps towards implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management and its Strategic Action Plan, with specific focus on creation of the inventory of virgin forest in the Carpathians. In this respect, the Secretariat has continued close cooperation with European Environmental Agency (EEA) that is currently analysing and placing data on virgin forest received from the Parties based on the

table[[1]](#footnote-1) for collecting information in this regard, which was elaborated at the previous WG Meeting (Brasov, Romania, September 2016).

Following, Ms. Ana Martin, representative of EEA and related European Topic Centre, University of Malaga, presented the current progress on creation of the inventory[[2]](#footnote-2), at the same time informing about gaps and concerns identified while working on data received for the Parties. It should be mentioned that not all of the Parties provided the official information about virgin forest in their countries[[3]](#footnote-3). Therefore, it was agreed that EEA will include into the inventory/map data provided by the stakeholders working on this subject including universities, non-governmental organizations other relevant institutions. After finalization of the inventory, it will be submitted to the Parties for a validation process.

After presenting an overview of information collected from the Parties, the meeting participants had an opportunity to comment on it and provide their feedback. It was stressed that some information are still missing, therefore more consultation with experts from relevant countries will be required. In addition, in some countries the Carpathian definition of virgin forest will need to be considered in broader context. Due to the fact that the Criteria and Indicators for Identifying Virgin Forest in the Carpathian is not a legally binding document, some exceptions are possible.

The meeting participants suggested that after finalizing the inventory of virgin forest, the WG Forest should focus on possible monitoring with potential use of remote sensing.

The further progress on the topic of the inventory will be presented at the 8th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC) in Modra, Czech Republic on 14 – 16 June.

Please see below the proposal made by Ukraine concerning identification of virgin forests:

1. When carrying out identification work of virgin forests, it is necessary to ensure objective results that are confirmed by reliable indicators in accordance with the criteria and indicators approved under the Carpathian Convention.
2. On the sites of the virgin forests, there should be trees whose parameters are no less than determined by researches for old-aged trees in Carpathian region.
3. It is advisable to ensure:

- Organization of the work of the special commission (preferably at the international level) to make formal decisions on the ownership of the site to virgin forests;

- Mandatory allocation of virgin forest areas in forest management documents;

- The establishment of the form and content of the document on virgin forest territory and the mechanisms for its approval.

**Towards harmonized criteria and indicators for identifying natural forests:**

Discussion on natural forests in the Carpathians during the meeting helped to understand that identification and mapping of natural forest will be much more difficult than in case of virgin forests. The most important step in order to make a progress in this respect is to identified a threshold of naturalness of the forests. However, due to the complexity of natural forests and different protection

status in the Carpathian countries, it requires more consultation than initially expected. The Secretariat will continue exploring this subject with experts working in the field on forest naturalness and then will consult with the WG Forest possible further process.

Mr. Francesco Sabatini, Humboldt University of Berlin, presented shortly the problem of ambiguous use of forest-related definitions in various international processes and existing levels of forest naturalness based on the hierarchy of definitions proposed by Mr. Erik Buchwald[[4]](#footnote-4).

**Presentations[[5]](#footnote-5)**

Ms. Katarzyna Staszyńska, Jagiellonian University, presented a project on forest change detection and monitoring using passive and active remote sensing data (RS4FOR). One of the objective of this project is to assess forest cover conversion and modification in a test area, the Polish Carpathians, with a particular focus on species composition, aboveground tree biomass and forest health change.

Then, a round of scientific lectures took place that included a presentation on climate change and forest dynamics in the Carpathians done by Mr. Tomáš Hlásny from the Czech University of Life Science in Prague, a presentation on water balance of the forests delivered by Mr. Zoltán Gribovszki from the University of Sopron, and a presentation on GIS-based infrastructure to assess species and provenance suitability delivered by Mr. Ervin Rasztovits from the Hungarian Forest Research Institute.

Next two presentations on the recent trends of forest health in Hungary by Mr. Csóka from the Hungarian Forest Research Institute and a presentation of a project EO4SEE - the pathfinder of operational satellite monitoring for the region of the Black Sea and Central Europe by Mr. Turos, from Topologic Consulting, were delivered on the second day of the WG Forest meeting.

**Discussion on the national reporting on the implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management**

The Secretariat informed the meeting participants about the idea of creating a comprehensive national report on implementation of the Carpathian Convention, which will include reporting on the progress in implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management and its Strategic Action Plan. The structure will be consulted with WG Forest and then CCIC.

**Terms of the Reference for WG Forest – update**

Terms of Reference for the WG Forest will be circulated to the Working Group after the meeting for a possible comments and inputs. Then the ToRs will be submitted to the CCIC for its consideration and possible submission to the Conference of the Parties.

**Future Challenges and activities of the WG Forest**

As mentioned, the current achievements and further progress on the topic of the inventory of virgin forest and the way forward for the harmonized criteria and indicators for identifying natural forests will be presented at the 8th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC) in Modra, Czech Republic on 14 – 16 June. The Implementation Committee is expected to advice on the further steps in this regard.

WG Forest shall define climate change related activities in line with the with the Article 14 of the Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management and the Objective 11 of the related Strategic Action Plan. Ideally, a project on forest and climate change matters should be initiated and submitted for an appropriate funding.

**Closure of the WG Forest**

Mr. Egerer, closed the WG Forest meeting thanking all the participants for their active contribution to the meeting discussion, at the same time inviting for the second part of the meeting, the PA2 Workshop on balancing bioenergy production and sustainable forest management in mountain area.

1. The table is available on the [Carpathian Convention website](http://www.carpathianconvention.org/eventdetailwg-forests/events/fifth-meeting-of-the-wg-on-sustainable-forest-management.html) together with the Meeting Report from the previous WG Forest meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This presentation, as well as all the other presentations delivered during the meeting are available at the [Carpathian Convention website/ Meetings](http://www.carpathianconvention.org/eventdetailwg-forests/events/sixth-meeting-of-the-wg-on-sustainable-forest-management.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Received information can be access on the [Carpathian Convention website](http://www.carpathianconvention.org/forests.html)/Activities/Forest/Inventory of virgin forest in the Carpathians [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [Link](https://forestsandco.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/buchwald_2002_definitions.pdf) to the article [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. All the presentations delivered during the WG Forest meeting and PA2 Workshop are available on the [Carpathian Convention website.](http://www.carpathianconvention.org/eventdetailwg-forests/events/sixth-meeting-of-the-wg-on-sustainable-forest-management.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)