



SEMINAR ON STRENGTHENING SCIENCE-POLICY INTERFACE WROCLAW, POLAND 26 APRIL 2006

REPORT

13 June 2006

1. Introduction

The Seminar on “Strengthening Science-Policy Interface” was held on 26 April 2006 in Wroclaw, Poland, as part of the work programme of the MCPFE (Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe). It was organized jointly by the European Forest Institute (EFI), the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and the United Nations University with the support of the MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw.

The seminar was attended by 33 participants, including policy makers, scientists and stakeholders. It was moderated by Mr. Arne Ivar Sletnes (Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Norway) and Mr. Peter Mayer (IUFRO Executive Director). Ms. Bożena Kornatowska (Communication & Organization, MCPFE Liaison Unit Vienna) and Mr. Alexander Buck (IUFRO Deputy Executive Director) served as rapporteurs of the seminar.

The seminar aimed to provide a platform for a dialogue between the policy makers and science community on how to strengthen the knowledge base in support of Pan-European forest policy deliberations, formulation, implementation and monitoring processes. The specific aims of the seminar were to:

- a) review the state-of-art, recent developments and experiences gained in working at the science-policy interface in terms of contributions provided by scientific organizations as well as the ongoing policy processes;
- b) discuss and identify emerging research needs in support of the implementation of MCPFE commitments;
- c) elaborate and discuss further actions, needs and mechanisms to strengthen science-policy interface in order to address the identified research needs and to contribute to the preparatory process for the Warsaw Summit.

2. Opening of the seminar

Mr. Arne Ivar Sletnes (moderator of the morning session) welcomed the participants and opened the seminar. In his introductory remarks, Mr. Sletnes underlined the vital role played by the scientific community in the implementation of MCPFE commitments so far. At the same time, he stressed that there was significant potential to further strengthen and improve the science-policy interface in the MCPFE.

Mr. Sletnes then outlined the structure of the seminar. During the morning session, a number of presentations would be given to set the scene for the discussion and to approach the seminar topic from different perspectives. In the afternoon session the participants would then be invited to enter a general discussion and to provide input to the MCPFE Expert Level Meeting, to be held from 9 to 10 October 2006 in Warsaw, Poland.

3. Presentations (“Setting the Scene”)

Strengthening Science-Policy Interface – from planning to actions

In his introductory presentation, Mr. Risto Päivinen (Director, EFI) highlighted the potential for enhancing the contribution of science to policy and decision making in the MCPFE. He pointed out that in the Vienna Declaration¹ the ministers responsible for forests in Europe had expressed their commitment to take forest related decisions based on science. Up to now scientific input had been provided to the MCPFE mostly on an ad hoc basis. Mr. Päivinen therefore advocated a more systematic approach to science-policy interaction at the pan-European level. To this end, he suggested the adoption of a research agenda on the occasion of the ministerial conferences. The time in-between two ministerial conferences could then be used to carry out research on the issues identified in the research agenda so that research results would be readily available for the subsequent ministerial conference. Mr. Päivinen proposed that a document outlining this approach in more detail could be prepared for the September MCPFE Expert Level Meeting.

Strengthening Science-Policy Interface – from planning to actions

Mr. Konstantin von Teuffel (Director, Forest Research Institute Baden-Württemberg, Germany) gave an overview of the institutional structures and programmes for forest research in Germany and described developments and experiences gained in science-policy interaction at the national and regional (sub-national) levels. According to Mr. von Teuffel, the thematic focus of forest-related national research programmes in Germany shifted from research on forest decline (1980s) and forest ecosystem research (1990s) towards applied research (1999-2003) and, most recently, management oriented research (2004-2008). Within these broader research programmes, research projects were developed in a dialogue between the responsible ministry and the Forest Research Institute. Furthermore, practitioners in the field served as a source of research ideas. Mr. von Teuffel stressed the need to strengthen the dialogue with political decision makers in order to overcome

¹ Vienna Living Forest Summit Declaration “European Forests – Common Benefits, Shared Responsibilities“ adopted at the Fourth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (28-30 April 2003, Vienna, Austria).

fragmentation of research activities and to achieve a better coordination between the EU, national and regional levels.

The Forest-based Technology Platform as a Tool for Comprehensive Approaches

Mr. Yves Birot (Chairman of the FTP Scientific Council) presented the Forest-based Sector Technology Platform (FTP) as a new tool within the 7th EU R&D Framework Programme allowing for a comprehensive approach to research in a private/public partnership. The Platform aimed at building a more knowledge-based, customer focused and innovation-oriented forest-based industry, while at the same time developing the economic and social benefits of the sector. For this purpose, "Vision 2030" had been launched, and a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) had been developed as a consensus-based long-term framework jointly by the forest-based industry, forest owners, research and public bodies. The SRA document was structured into 26 Research Areas that are considered to be priority domains for the development of research programmes and projects in the coming years. Mr. Birot informed the participants that the FTP was currently entering the implementation phase. He pointed out that it would now be crucial to coordinate the SRA with national agendas, develop funding schemes, create networks and consortia, and connect the SRA with existing research efforts. A kick-off meeting for the implementation phase of the SRA would be held on 2-3 May 2006 in Admont, Austria.

Pan-European Perspectives on the Science-Policy Interface

Ms. Bożena Kornatowska addressed the seminar on behalf of the MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw. She noted that the scientific community had played a significant role in the preparation of ministerial conferences and in the implementation of MCPFE commitments. She recalled the commitment expressed by the ministers responsible for forests in Europe at the 4th Ministerial Conference to take forest-related decisions based on science, and to support and strengthen research. At this same conference, the scientific community had stressed the importance of science, research and capacity building for a knowledge-based, innovative forest policy formulation and successful implementation. Consequently, a number of actions for implementation by science organizations were included in the MCPFE Work Programme. These have contributed to strengthening the science-policy interface in the MCPFE. Additionally, Ms. Kornatowska underlined the need to enhance the utilization of existing research results and to undertake further research directed towards the topics addressed at ministerial conferences. Better communication between scientists, managers and policy makers was therefore crucial.

Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface in Practice: the FOPER Approach

Mr. Tomi Tuomasjukka (Project Coordinator, EFI) presented the project "Forest Policy and Economics Education Research" (FOPER) which aims at strengthening the capacity of forest policy and economics education, training and research in the Western Balkans region. He explained that improving the science-policy interface in the South Eastern European region is one of three basic components of the FOPER project. The focus of the activities related to the science-policy interface in FOPER is on providing applicable answers to current forest policy problems, including lessons learned and best practices. Instruments used by FOPER

for promoting the science-policy interface includes the development of a regional research agenda on forest policy and economics in a process involving all stakeholders (researchers, ministries, forest enterprises, NGOs, parliamentarians, etc.). Mr. Tuomasjukka also communicated that an international seminar on national forest programmes as a tool for strengthening the science-policy interface would be convened in the framework of FOPER tentatively on 7-8 December 2006.

3. General Discussion

Mr. Peter Mayer (moderator of the afternoon session) reiterated the task of the seminar to prepare an input to the MCPFE Expert Level Meeting in September 2006. He explained that the general discussion would be initiated by statements of representatives of the co-organizing scientific organizations². Recalling the objectives of the meeting Mr. Mayer suggested the following structure for the general discussion: firstly, emerging research needs in support of MCPFE could be identified; secondly, further actions, needs and mechanisms to strengthen science-policy interface could be considered. This approach was welcomed by the participants.

Statements by science panelists

Mr. Ilpo Tikkanen (Programme Manager, EFI) gave a brief overview of the results of a survey on the relevance of European forest research that had been carried out by EFI in the year 2005. The survey had confirmed the need to increase coherence between scientific knowledge and policy needs in Europe. The survey results indicate that two thirds of the research issues identified by the MCPFE would require analytical tools on socio-economic and policy issues. At the same time, only about 8-10% of researchers in Europe have specialized on socio-economics and policy analysis, reflecting the limited capacity in this field. The survey had also indicated that national level research was of highest importance in implementing MCPFE-related research, while the European level was better suited to targeting research towards MCPFE and EU priorities. The relevance challenge therefore was to make results of existing scientific knowledge more easily available, while also putting in place conditions and mechanisms for identifying and addressing future priorities.

In his statement, Mr. Jarkko Koskela (EUFORGEN Coordinator, IPGRI) underlined that IPGRI has been contributing to the MCPFE process since 1994 through the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN), established to implement Strasbourg Resolution 2 (Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources). More recently, IPGRI organized, together with IUFRO, the workshop on "Climate change and forest genetic diversity: Implications for sustainable forest management in Europe" (15-16 March 2006, Paris, France). He also mentioned that a new interdisciplinary project called "EVOLTREE" was launched in April 2006 with the objective to identify and study genes of adaptive significance in order to evaluate the contribution they make to the evolution of tree species and their adaptation to climate change. EVOLTREE is coordinated by INRA, France, and involves 25

² The representatives of the IIASA and UNU had communicated their regrets for not being able to attend the seminar.

research groups from 15 European countries, including IPGRI. The outputs of EVOLTREE are expected to have relevance to the MCPFE process as well. The Institute is also well positioned to provide advice on various policy and legal issues concerning the management of forest genetic resources to the MCPFE process.

Mr. Peter Mayer (IUFRO Executive Director) pointed out that a good proportion of the collaborative scientific activities of the global IUFRO network was of relevance to policy and decision makers in Europe. He communicated that the results of a survey carried out among IUFRO members globally on future research priorities showed a high degree of convergence with the issues identified at the preceding MCPFE Round Table Meeting. In this context, Mr. Mayer informed the participants that the 45th IUFRO Board Meeting in May 2006 was expected to approve new IUFRO Task Forces, among others, on water and forests, biotechnology, and forest law enforcement, governance and trade.

Emerging research needs in support of MCPFE

Comments made by participants on emerging research needs in support of MCPFE focused on possible forest policy issues to be addressed by the European Ministers at the forthcoming Fifth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. There was a general opinion that the MCPFE Round Table Meeting (RTM), held in Wroclaw on 24-25 April 2006, just prior to the Seminar on Strengthening Science-Policy Interface had provided important thematic guidance also for the scientific community on emerging research and information needs.

The policy issues identified at the RTM include: forests and water; wood, biomass and energy; non wood goods and forest services, including the economic valuation of environmental services; forest law enforcement, governance and trade, as well as adaptation of forest trees and forest management to climate change. While different political weight was given to these issues in the RTM discussion, it was pointed out that many of these issues were cross-cutting in nature and would hence require science collaboration and knowledge transfer across sectors.

In the discussion, a number of additional issues were indicated by the participants that could be taken up by the scientific community. In the field of forest policy, research of particular interest relates to institutional frameworks and representation of interests (e.g. national forest programmes); forest law enforcement, governance and trade; property rights issues and compensation mechanisms regarding the provision of non-wood goods and environmental services.

Emphasis was also given in the discussion to social and cultural issues. It was pointed out that the scientific community should develop a better understanding of the needs, aspirations and operating circumstances of forest entrepreneurs and contractors. Also, aspects of rural livelihood should be studied in more detail.

Furthermore, the role of forest research for improving forest management and promoting innovation, technology and best practices was underlined. In this context, it was stated that

more scientific evidence was needed on forest biodiversity considerations in practical on-the-ground forestry. Also, landscape-level approaches to sustainable forest management and forest policy making should be studied in more detail by the scientific community.

Several participants also referred to the quality of monitoring, assessment and reporting on sustainable forest management in Europe and advocated a stronger linkage with research. For example, it was noted that the further development of the pan-European Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) would require additional scientific knowledge.

As a result of the discussion, the following major emerging research needs in support of the MCPFE were identified:

- forests and water
- wood, biomass and energy
- adaptation of forest trees and forest management to climate change
- wood and non-wood goods and services, including environmental services
- landscape-level approaches to SFM and forest policy
- forest policy and institutional frameworks
- social and cultural issues
- forest biodiversity
- quality of monitoring, assessment and reporting on SFM / indicators for SFM
- cross-cutting issues: communication and knowledge transfer, including cross-sectoral approaches

Further actions, needs and mechanisms to strengthen science-policy interface

The discussion about further actions, needs and mechanisms to strengthen the science-policy interface focused on developing a more structured approach to the collaboration between policy makers and scientists in the MCPFE:

Several participants stated that, due to the limited time available, the preparation of the next Ministerial Conference would require primarily the assessment and dissemination of existing scientific information so that issues could be prioritized and translated into MCPFE Resolutions. This would include scientific information on newly emerging issues, such as those discussed at the RTM, but also information on issues arising from the implementation of earlier MCPFE commitments. It was felt that a comprehensive body of scientific knowledge was available already, but was not fully utilized. Given the cross-sectoral nature of emerging key issues, such as water, bio-energy or climate change, another challenge would be to connect research from different scientific disciplines.

Participants shared the view that available scientific information should be presented in a way so that it can be easily understood by policy and decision makers as well as stakeholders. The Strategic Research Agenda developed by FTP, and the policy brief prepared by the IUFRO Special Project "World Forests, Society and Environment" were cited as positive examples in this context. At the same time, it was acknowledged that research

synthesis and effective communication require resources and specialized skills that may not always be readily available to scientists.

Regardless of the need to synthesize and disseminate existing information, it was acknowledged in the discussion that the scientific community would also have a role in providing foresight on emerging issues for subsequent Ministerial Conferences and in generating additional scientific information. In other words, science could play a stronger role in “setting the stage” for future Ministerial Conferences.

Consequently, the question arose how to develop a more systematic science-policy interaction and generate related resources while at the same time maintaining the flexibility of the MCPFE processes. In this context, the participants considered the potential benefits of drawing up a strategic research agenda for consideration at the next Ministerial Conference. Such a strategic research agenda could be based on the RTM discussion and could include a preliminary list of topics for the time after the Warsaw Conference.

Diverging views were expressed by the participants on a proposal to establish a task force consisting of a limited number of scientists and a representative of the MCPFE General Coordinating Committee (GCC) to prepare the strategic research agenda. Reference was also made to the positive experiences gained with the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) that had been established by the MCPFE in the preparation of the 3rd Ministerial Conference in Lisbon in 1998. All participants agreed that the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue initiated at the 4th Ministerial Conference in Vienna constituted a useful mechanism that should be maintained also at future Ministerial Conferences.

Finally, it was noted that linkages should also be established between science-policy related activities in the MCPFE and other on-going initiatives on science and technology, such as the FTP, relevant COST Actions, etc.

The discussion on further actions, needs and mechanisms to strengthen science-policy interface led to the following conclusions:

- Assess and effectively communicate available scientific information as a basis for policy decisions at the Warsaw Conference, including emerging issues and issues arising from the implementation of existing MCPFE commitments;
- Provide thematic foresight with a view to the Oslo Conference;
- Connect research from different scientific disciplines;
- Consider the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Group or a task force consisting of representatives of science organizations and the GCC;
- Establish links with relevant on-going initiatives on science and technology.

4. Conclusions and next steps

The discussion at the seminar confirmed that there was a considerable potential to further strengthen the link between science and policy making in the MCPFE. Science could play a stronger role in both providing existing scientific information for on-going MCPFE activities and emerging policy issues, and in providing foresight and carrying out research on future

priorities. Therefore, a more structured approach to the science-policy interface in the MCPFE should be developed.

As a result of the discussion, it was proposed by the moderator to prepare an “options paper” for presentation at the MCPFE Expert Level Meeting to be held in October 2006 in Warsaw, Poland. The options paper should be prepared jointly by EFI, IUFRO, IPGRI, IIASA and UNU and will be based on the conclusions of the seminar regarding contents and modalities.

Based on the outcomes of the seminar discussion, this paper would outline different options on how to structure the science-policy interface in the MCPFE, and give related resource indications. The proposal was unanimously accepted and welcomed by the participants.

Additional information about the seminar is available at www.efi.fi.