



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
Directorate D. Sustainability and income support
D.4. Environment, climate change, forestry and bio-economy

Brussels,
agri.ddg2.d.4(2018)7337688

63rd meeting of the Inter-Service Group on Forestry

Wednesday, 15 November 2018 from 10h00 to 12h00

AGRI ROOM L130 – floor 11/S1

Present: 27 representatives from 9 Directorates-General (AGRI, CLIMA, DEVCO, ECHO, ENER, ENV, GROW, RTD, TRADE)

(List of participants annexed)

Chair: [REDACTED] (HoU AGRI.D.4) and [REDACTED] (Deputy HoU AGRI.D.4)

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda adopted.

2. REPORT ON THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU FOREST STRATEGY

DG AGRI informed the members of the ISG that the interservice consultation had been finalised as follows: 8 DGs gave a positive response and 8 DGs provided a positive reply with comments. The response of JRC came after the deadline. Most of the comments would be integrated in the text, constrained by the allowed length of the report.

The report, once adopted (expected early December 2018) is to be discussed in the Council, and in the Parliament, during the joint AGRI-ENVI-ITRE meeting (14 January 2019). GROW asked for including the reference to skills blueprint in the text instead of in a footnote, and indicated that they would provide a reference for footnote 20.

3. DEFORESTATION ACTION PLAN

DG ENV presented the steps towards the publication of the Deforestation Action Plan in April 2019. Political validation of the Cabinet is expected soon. The initiative will be co-led by ENV, AGRI and DEVCO, in association with all relevant DGs, which will receive an official letter for nomination of experts. ISG-Forestry will monitor the process. The

timeline will be determined by the need for a public feedback period on the roadmap (3 weeks) and an open public consultation questionnaire (8 weeks). The first draft is expected mid-February.

DG's raised questions about the scope, content, and the status of the action plan after publication. ENV clarified that the action plan will focus mainly on deforestation outside the EU. DG's were asked to provide input on the definition and drivers of deforestation. It was not clear yet if the document will contain specific targets. The main purpose of the document will be to present a clear, concise message from the EU as a whole. DGs were invited to provide comments on the roadmap before the 21st of November.

4. FLEGT VPA

DG DEVCO announced that the VPA with Guyana will be initialled in Brussels on the 23rd of November. The VPA was a requirement of the MoU on climate change signed between Guyana and Norway. The MoU foresees a financial envelop of around [REDACTED]. The most significant achievement of the VPA so far are: 1) enhanced transparency and consultation process, 2) recognition of Amerindians rights on forest and 3) improvement of the regulatory framework (Forest Act, implementation regulations).

SG asked about the state-of-play regarding the FLEGT Work plan 2018-2022. DEVCO informed that the FLEGT Work plan was finalised 1st quarter of 2018, agreed by DEVCO and ENV and validated by EU MS at the FLEGT Ad Hoc Expert Group of April 2018. Currently, the FLEGT Work plan has no official status, but the Commission and the EU MS are *de facto* implementing it.

5. UNFF EU VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION

ENV informed the ISG that the AT Presidency circulated on the Delegates Portal a draft EU submission to the UNFF14. This will be discussed in the Council Working Party on Forestry on 16 November 2018. Some first comments from the COM side on the draft submission could include grouping the best practices on EU (and MS) level separately, to better show how they contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). More information could be added addressing the report on the implementation of the EU Forest strategy when adopted. DGs were invited to give input on the draft submission. Furthermore, the initiative on deforestation could be announced as EU voluntary contribution during UNFF14.

6. UPDATE BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST

DG ENV informed the ISG about the state of play of the execution of ECJ judgement in case C-441/17, declaring PL to be in breach of the Birds and Habitats Directives in relation to management of the Białowieża Forest Natura 2000 site.

7. AOB

Guidance on the cascading of woody biomass: (GROW) the interservice consultation is completed and the staff working document will be published soon. It was well-received by the stakeholders.

Meeting Standing Forestry Committee: (AGRI) on the 14th of December, the SFC will meet. Topics that will be discussed are: report on the progress of the implementation of the forest strategy; annual work plan 2019; Response to bark beetle outbreaks.

EC Forest conference (spring 2019): DG AGRI will organise a 1.5 day international forest conference in Spring 2019, building on the review of the EU Forest Strategy and to stress the importance of the sector for rural development (jobs and growth) , climate action and ecosystem services provision. DG AGRI will keep informed the members of the ISG about the organisation and programme of the event..

Publication "sustainable forestry and the EU": 15 years ago several different DGs prepared an EU publication about actions related to the protection, sustainable management of forests and competitiveness of the forest sector. DG AGRI will circulate this publication and ask other DGs if they would be interested in preparing a similar publication with updated information about ongoing actions and initiatives.

ITTO: (ENV) The ITTO has been dormant for a few years. Since two years, there is a new executive director reshuffling the organisation. During the last Council, two main issues were discussed: governance structure; and fund raising. The next Council will be in December 2019 in Lomé (Togo).

Forest Europe: DG AGRI reported back on the Round Table Meeting held in September 2018 informally discussed options for resuming negotiations on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests at pan-European level. The next Expert Level Meeting on 5/6 December would discuss a draft Ministerial Decision on resuming negotiations under certain conditions.

UNEA: preparations for the next UNEA have started. The main focus will be on sustainable production. There are attempts to put forests on the agenda and there is an option for a resolution on deforestation.

Forest Academy in Finland: DG AGRI asked about participation of DGs, and announced it would be attending the event.

[REDACTED]