



## CPF GLOBAL FOREST EXPERT PANELS

### VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE EXPERT PANEL ON FORESTS AND POVERTY

(15-17 APRIL 2020)

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING

*23 April 2020*

The Global Forest Expert Panel (GFEP) on Forests and Poverty convened for the third time from 15-17 April 2020, virtually using the Zoom platform. Due to the extraordinary situation and restrictions worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to hold the 3<sup>rd</sup> Expert Panel meeting physically in Vienna, Austria, as planned initially. As a result, the GFEP team at IUFRO HQ prepared for a 3-day virtual meeting on the original dates, lasting for three hours each day. Twenty-six participants, including twenty Panel Members and the GFEP team, attended the meeting. Not only was this the first-ever virtual Panel Meeting in the frame of the GFEP initiative, but it also turned out to be a successful meeting in terms of the outcomes, with full participation of the Panel on all three days. It set a good example of how bigger virtual meetings of scientists across different time zones can work out very well. The meeting was co-moderated by the GFEP Coordinator Christoph Wildburger and the Scientific Chair of the assessment, Daniel C. Miller. A full list of participants is annexed to the minutes.

### **1) Opening of the Meeting**

*Document: Draft Agenda (GFEP FP – virtual Panel Meeting)*

Christoph Wildburger, GFEP Coordinator, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants on behalf of the GFEP initiative and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO). He thanked everyone for being available for this meeting in these unprecedented and turbulent times. He briefly explained the procedure for the virtual meetings and the schedule for the meeting days.

He then gave the floor to Daniel C. Miller, the Scientific Chair of the Expert Panel, who delivered his kind opening remarks as the co-moderator of the meeting.

One of the GFEP Project Managers, Andre Purret, then introduced the technical aspects and arrangements related to the software used for the virtual meeting.

## **2) Overview of the General Peer Review Comments and Emerging Challenges**

Stephanie Mansourian, in her capacity as the GFEP Editor, gave an overview of the double-blind peer and expert review process. She mentioned that in total 11 scientists and experts were involved in the review process. A minimum of 6 reviewers looked at each chapter, while 4 reviewers were tasked to review the full draft report. She noted that the reviewers would be acknowledged namely in the published assessment report.

She then went briefly over the general review comments across the draft report, noting that some suggestions were more challenging to address. All Coordinating Lead Authors (CLAs) were tasked to respond to all review comments. Based on the assessment by the author teams, not all comments would have to be addressed in the final text, and that these responses to the review comments are necessary for transparency reasons but would not be shared publicly.

Following the overview by the GFEP Editor, the participants discussed the general review comments. The group discussed the connectedness and sequence of chapters, and brainstormed around a clearer storyline throughout the report. It was decided to have subsequent meetings between specific chapter groups, in order to streamline those chapters and include better linkages and alignment of the content. Among others, the discussion touched upon issues such as text boxes, typology, and aligning definitions of key terms.

## **3) Overview of the General Peer Review Comments and Discussion by Chapters**

The Coordinating Lead Authors (CLAs) of each chapter were then asked to present the review comments received for their chapter and facilitate a related discussion in the broader group.

One by one, each CLA presented the main issues and comments raised for their chapter. As one of the overarching comments, some reviewers suggested linking up the report with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Options to cover this global issue in the report included the suggestions of referring to it in the foreword, introductions chapter and perhaps also in the chapter on “Alleviating Poverty, Sustaining Forests: Assessing the Implications of Global Changes”. The decision on the format for addressing the COVID-19 (e.g. a paragraph, box or a more substantial section) was left to the newly created sub-group of interested authors.

Throughout the presentations and the discussions, the following issues, among others, were highlighted: clarification of terms and definitions in the chapters; conceptual framing of poverty and the consistency of related terminology throughout chapters; lack of coherence and ensuring clearer inter-linkages between chapters of the report; lack of discussion on the overall well-being of people; heterogeneity of forest-poverty links and its different aspects; issue of overgeneralization in some chapters; availability of scientific evidence on some topics.

## **4) General Discussion on Peer Review Comments, Emerging Issues and Related Implications for Chapters**

The discussions on this agenda item were embedded in the previous agenda item and thus discussed within the group in the context of the chapter-based review comments.

## 5) Revised Schedule and Related Procedures for the Finalization of the Assessment

GFEP Coordinator Christoph Wildburger facilitated the discussion on the timeline of the assessment and related deadlines. Many Panel Members had earlier on raised their concern due to the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 situation. Many meeting participants underscored that they were under considerable time constraints in the current situation and the measures that had been taken by their individual governments and institutions.

The GFEP Coordinator explained the original schedule of the assessment and its launch, originally planned at a side event during the Biodiversity Summit of the UN General Assembly on 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2020 in New York. He informed that there were currently two possible scenarios: a) in case the launch of the report remained to be held in September, the editing process would need to start in mid-May (Plan A); b) in case the launch would be postponed, and for example facilitated virtually on 17<sup>th</sup> of October (the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty), the editing, layout design and printing process could be postponed – thus allowing more time to finalize the chapter drafts (Plan B). In case of Plan B, the launch would be directed towards the media and larger public. A more thematic dialogue with the decision-makers could then be targeted at the relevant forest-policy related meetings, e.g. in early 2021 during the conferences of the parties (COPs) to the Rio Conventions (CBD, UNFCCC).

It was noted that it was important to keep the momentum, but also to recognize that flexibility was necessary given the current situation. It was agreed to go for Plan B, extending the final deadline for the chapters to 15 June 2020. The virtual launch could then take place on 17 October 2020. The following revised timeline for the assessment was agreed:

Peer review process of chapters	10 – 31 March 2020
Virtual meeting of the Expert Panel	15 – 17 April 2020
Final revision of the chapters by chapter teams	15 June 2020
Editing of the Assessment Report	June – August 2020
Development and editing of Policy Brief	July – August 2020
Layout of the Assessment Report and Policy Brief	September 2020
Printing the Assessment Report and Policy Brief	October 2020
Virtual Launch – International Day for the Eradication of Poverty	17 October 2020

In the context of the procedure for finalizing the assessment report, the GFEP Coordinator informed the Panel Members that due to the extra costs occurring in relation to additional coordination of chapters as well as the technical infrastructure needed to work from home fully virtually, the GFEP team had decided to make available a financial support to Panel Members to cover these additional expenses. All Panel Members would receive a lump sum refund from IUFRO in due course.

## **6) Discussion on the Drafting of Conclusions Chapter and Key Messages**

During this discussion, facilitated by the Chair, Daniel C. Miller, Panel Members were informed of the procedure and timeline related to the drafting of the Conclusions chapter. Mr Miller explained that the last chapter of the report would be more forward-looking and would also make some recommendations. He had already drafted some initial suggestions for the draft key messages of the report, which were discussed thoroughly within the Panel.

The GFEP Coordinator and the GFEP Editor complemented the discussion by explaining how the procedure for developing the Conclusions chapter was applied in previous GFEP assessments. The CLAs of the current assessment were tasked to provide a bullet point list of the main conclusions from their chapters to the Chair, who would then start the drafting of the Conclusions of the report. Additionally, all Panel Members were asked to contribute also individually by sending one key sentence that could be considered by them as the most important conclusion of this report.

The discussion also included the following issues that are important to keep in mind: this chapter is intended to be policy relevant; should not be normative; explains the impacts of measures taken (or not taken); will be used for a wider audience and communication (e.g. will also be the basis for the Policy Brief); and highlight also the research gaps that have merged during the assessment process.

## **7) Next Steps and Modalities of Work for the Finalization of the Assessment**

During this agenda item, several people from the GFEP and its editing team took the floor.

GFEP Editor Stephanie Mansourian started it off by explaining the editorial process and related deadlines. She emphasized that there would be more communication needed between the editing team and the CLAs, once the editing is under way. She noted that, in case needed, some text might be moved between the chapters. Input from the authors would also be needed when developing the glossary of terms and definitions for the report. Some Panel Members raised their concern regarding the assigned length of chapters, while the GFEP team informed them about the total maximum number of pages possible, and about the option to ask for some extra space for specific chapter, in coordination with the GFEP team.

GFEP Coordinator Christoph Wildburger briefly explained once more the assessment schedule, including the launch and possible follow-up products, such as the report-based Regional Policy Brief on Forests and Poverty for Africa.

GFEP Communications Manager Gerda Wolfrum gave a presentation about communication and PR related activities regarding the assessment and its launch. She introduced the different media channels and platforms for outreach activities and presented a roadmap for communication leading up to the launch event in October 2020. She encouraged the Panel Members to inform IUFRO about their planned outreach activities, as well as to establish links between IUFRO and the communication departments of their institutions.

The Chair Daniel C. Miller then took the floor to inform the participants about an additional possible follow-up product – a special issue of the scientific journal *Forest Policy and Economics*. He had had discussion with the journal’s editor-in-chief, and had also clarified the terms and conditions for such a special issue. He informed them that he would draft a short proposal for the outline and would seek feedback from the Expert Panel, before proceeding with this. It was emphasized that this special issue could be launched only after the official launch of the assessment outcomes.

GFEP Administrative Manager Eva Schimpf informed the participants about the option to become IUFRO member. She explained that IUFRO membership applications could be sent, in addition to the organizations and their separate departments, also by individuals. More information about the application procedure is to be found online on the IUFRO website.

GFEP Project Manager Andre Purret then informed the participants about the options for sharing files and photos via Google Drive that had been set up for this current Expert Panel. He encouraged the Panel Members to make use of the Drive more actively and that all main informative documents could be found there.

## **8) Closing Remarks and Closure of the Meeting**

Daniel C. Miller as the Chair of the assessment thanked all participants for their efforts and hard work. He concluded that despite the ongoing situation with COVID-19, the Panel Members found the time to be available for all the meeting days virtually and in his view, the meeting had turned out to be very successful. He reminded the chapter groups to keep the momentum and start discussing the process for finalizing their chapters right away.

On behalf of IUFRO and the GFEP team, GFEP Coordinator Christoph Wildburger thanked the participants for their continued commitment and looked forward to seeing the final chapters.

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