PROJECT DOCUMENT TEMPLATE
10TH TRANCHE OF THE DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Code and Title	1617V: Accountability systems for sustainable forest management in the Caucasus and Central Asia
Start date	June 2016
End date	December 2019
Budget	501,000 USD
Target countries	Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan
Executing Entity	UNECE-FAO Forestry and Timber Section
Co-operating Entities within the UN system	FAO, UNFF, UNDP, UNEP
Other partners	GIZ (coordination of activities with other on-going projects)

Brief description:

The objective of the project is to strengthen the national capacity of five countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) to develop national criteria and indicators (C&I) and reporting or accountability systems for sustainable forest management (SFM).

Most of the countries in the region are 'low forest cover countries', struggle with degradation of the limited natural resources due to deforestation, illegal logging and extensive grazing. The countries do not regularly monitor the status of forests, and lack a holistic approach to link forests to sustainable development or development towards a green economy. Due to limited monitoring and assessment of the forests including socio-economic aspects, the importance of the forest sector is continuously neglected in policy development.

The majority target countries are not part of international processes on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, and, therefore, their capacities for reporting need to be strengthened starting from national level. The project will provide knowledge, capacity-building, training materials and advisory services for defining the scope and relevance of the information that is needed for the implementation of sustainable forest management at national level to support evidence-based policy making. The project will develop national criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management for beneficiary countries. The criteria and indicators can be used for monitoring the status and trends in the forest sector and eventually monitoring the progress towards sustainable development goals.

The key project stakeholders are government experts from national forest agencies, research institutes, forest related ministries and NGOs. In addition, the key partners include other international organizations or initiatives already operating in the countries (e.g. FAO, GIZ, UNEP, GEF). The implementation of the project will be led by experts from UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.

The project is expected to support the capability of the countries to actively participate in international processes related to forests, and contribute to the sustainable development of the sector towards a green economy. National criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management will serve as a tool to communicate the relevance and importance of forests to environment, economy as well as society at national, regional as well as international level.

2   BACKGROUND

2.1   Context

Forests play an essential role in achieving sustainable development, a green economy and poverty eradication. They are the key land ecosystem ensuring the preservation of biodiversity and they are an important source of renewable materials. Countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus face serious challenges that have hampered a proper reporting on the state of their forests. Data are often not available, measurements and collection of data are difficult and require capacity that is currently missing. Forest policy and decision makers are not always aware of the importance of information for the effective implementation of sustainable forest management (SFM). Forestry officers require training and capacity building in order to be able to collect and process data which would reflect the state and trends of sustainable forest management in their country.

Up until now, efforts at both the global and pan-European levels to assess the sustainability of forest management at the national level have used rather simple methods, and delivered limited results for a number of reasons, including the difficulty of defining sustainability in quantified objective ways and the diversity of country situations which make it difficult to establish comparable norms which can be applied in all countries. In the UNECE region, the role of forests is particularly acute for countries in transition, and especially in the Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA), to address environmental problems like soil erosion, pollution and climate change, which otherwise may impact heavily on communities and their livelihoods. Strengthening the forest sector will enable countries to gain both environmental and economic benefits. To this end, forest sector policies and institutions need to be strengthened. Since 2011, UNECE/FAO with national and international experts has been developing a new method to assess the sustainability of forest management in UNECE member States. The System for Evaluation of the Management of Forests (SEMAFOR) is a tool designed for reporting on the sustainability of forest management in the pan-European region. This method seeks to provide a scientific and transparent system of accountability and will be applied during the project.

The project will help countries to respond to key capacity gaps and overcome these development challenges by providing knowledge, capacity building, training materials and advisory services for: (i) defining the scope and information that is needed and appropriate for the implementation of sustainable forest management at the national level; (ii) reporting relevant data to assess the implementation of sustainable forest management related policies; (iii) developing national SFM C&I and a national reporting/accountability system (national SEMAFOR) based on the data reported; and (iv) reporting accordingly and developing national actions in the case of shortcomings (identified by SEMAFOR).

The target group will be government officials from ministries responsible for forestry and other related institutions. The five project countries will represent either 'low forest cover countries' where forest and land degradation pose serious environmental challenges or 'high forest cover countries' where forests are completely neglected regardless of their potential to provide social, environmental and economic benefits and that have recognized and welcomed the need for capacity building activities on forests.

2.2   Mandates, comparative advantage and link to the Programme Budget

Mandate
The objective of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry is to strengthen the forest sector and its contribution to sustainable development in the UNECE region, through monitoring, analysis, capacity building and the provision of a forum for discussion, taking into account the changing policy environment, notably as regards climate change and bioenergy, according to the terms of reference. The Committee focuses on the sound and legal use of forest products, for raw material or energy, and on forest services.

Comparative advantage
UNECE-FAO Forestry and Timber Section is the inter-agency entity responsible for coordinating international

forest reporting processes in the region (e.g. collaborative forest resources questionnaire, joint wood energy enquiry, forest ownership reporting, etc.), and has long experience in criteria and indicators work within the section. Combined with the network of experts in the team of specialists, no other organization has comparable pool of knowledge or practical working experience on criteria and indicators work, and thus UNECE-FAO has a clear advantage to lead the work. FAO has country offices in most of the project countries and has thus existing networks to operate with related ministries and agencies, which will help to reach out to the relevant experts at national level.

Link to the Programme Budget
The project supports the expected accomplishments (1) improved monitoring and assessment of the forest sector to support sustainable forest and (2) increased national capacity of countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-East Europe in sustainable forest management of the Subprogramme 7 "Forestry and Timber" of the UNECE Strategic Framework 2016-2017.

The project is aligned with the Joint Programme of Work of the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, in particular to Work Area (1) Data, monitoring and assessment; Work Area (2) Policy dialogue and advice; and Work Area 3: Capacity building.

Furthermore, UNECE-FAO Team of Specialists on Sustainable Forest Management will provide support for the project with over 100 experts working on forest monitoring in the region.

This project will contribute to the implementation of DESA's Strategic Framework for the period 2016-2017, in particular Subprogrammes 8 "Sustainable Forest Management". In addition, the project contributes to UNEP Ecosystem Management Programme in the region for the budget period 2016-2017.

2.3   Country demand and target countries

The project will focus on five countries: Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. All these countries have initiated capacity building programmes with UNECE-FAO Forestry and Timber Section within a framework of the UNDA 8th Tranche Project "Sustainable Forest Management for Greener Economies in the Caucasus and Central Asia" (implemented in 2013-2015) and clearly expressed their need in further capacity building on forest monitoring through UNECE meeting' evaluation forms as well as by statements during the 72nd Session of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) in Kazan, Russian Federation, in November 2014. These formal requests for continued capacity building work recorded in the report of the 72nd Session of the UNECE COFFI ECE/TIM/2014/2.

The countries have been selected based on the following criteria:
1. Serious challenges in international reporting: no data or incomplete data provided to international reporting processes;
2. Challenges in national reporting: no forest inventories completed or recent reliable data available at national level;
3. Countries are not part of any active international criteria and indicators processes (except Georgia);
4. No national criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, or the current criteria and indicators are not up to date to respond the needs for monitoring progress towards sustainable development goals and green economy;
5. Illegal logging, forest degradation, land degradation and excessive grazing pose threat to the forests in the countries in the region, but tools to collect reliable information are not available, and the importance of monitoring not acknowledged;
6. Importance of the environmental, economic and social aspects of the forest sector is underestimated by the policymakers due to the lack of information and tools to communicate (such as criteria and indicators);

7. Countries' requests for continued capacity building activities on forestry and green economy.

The project countries participate poorly in international forest reporting processes due to limited national reporting capacities. Proper monitoring tools such as national criteria and indicators do not exist in most project countries, even though international SFM C&I systems have been established over 20 years ago. The target countries struggle for resources with other large sectors such as agriculture, and concrete support is needed to make the forest sector visible to facilitate the relevant policy support and legislative development.

Project activities have been integrated into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2016-2020.

2.4   Link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The project is linked to the SDG 15. "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss" and related targets, in particular:
15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and dry lands, in line with obligations under international agreements;
15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally
15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world;
15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development;
15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.

3   ANALYSIS

3.1   Problem analysis

Countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus face serious challenges that have hampered a proper reporting on the state of their forests. Data is often not available. Measurements and collection of data are difficult and require capacity that is currently missing. Forest policy and decision makers are not always aware of the importance of information for the effective implementation of sustainable forest management. Forestry officers require training and capacity building in order to be able to collect and process data which would speak about the state ad trends of sustainable forest management in their country. This becomes particularly compelling in view of the requirements of the post 2015 agenda goals, and in particular in view of the sustainable development Goal 15.

As most of the project countries are not actively engaged in the work of international criteria and indicators processes, they have not had the possibility to learn from other countries in this respect. The national officers lack capacity to develop monitoring and reporting at national level without external assistance. Most of the countries have discontinued their forest reporting activities since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the skills related to data collection and management have been lost. Some of the countries such as Kazakhstan collect large amounts of detailed data, but the relevance of the data or rational behind the data collection is not clear. This type of data collection processes should be reviewed and analyzed if they could be modified to correspond to the needs for monitoring the development towards sustainable development goals and green economy.

The project countries represent either 'low forest cover countries' where forest and land degradation pose

serious environmental challenges, or 'high forest cover countries' like Georgia, where forests' potential to provide social, environmental and economic benefits is underutilized. Sustainable management of forests is not possible, if the status of the forest resources is not known. These countries have recognized and welcomed the need for capacity building activities on forests.

Some project countries such as Georgia and Kyrgyzstan have initiated the development of national criteria and indicators with other projects, and these countries have the possibility to act as an example to neighboring countries, and identify key indicators.

3.2 Country level problem analysis

Country	Status of affairs	Realistic outcomes
Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan is a low forest cover country, where forests cover 7% of the land area. The area of forests has been relatively stable (lack of accurate information) for the last 15 years (2000-2015). Forests play an important role in protection and prevention of environmental degradation, in particular on land degradation, natural disasters and maintenance of biodiversity. The contribution of forests to the country's economy is minor. Forests (or forest products) are not included at all in Kazakhstan's green economy strategy, which has been recently developed, although forests are a source of renewable energy (firewood) and the use of wood-based products instead of non-renewable products such as plastics or concrete is climate friendly. Currently most forests are classified mainly for protective functions, and the use for other purposes is not allowed. This is in contradiction to reality, where the local population utilizes forests for firewood and grazing. Information of other uses than protection (firewood, grazing, income generation etc.) is not collected. Tools to collect the information (criteria and indicators) either do not exist or are not up to date. Forest programmes are prepared for a short term (less than 10 years), which is not realistic in the case of	Understanding of the multi-functionality of forests increased in the forest agency and related ministry. Building capacity with national officers to identify the needs and challenges for data collection. Building relations to forest agency, other ministries and the national statistical institute to support active participation in international forest reporting processes. Cooperation with relevant offices (like national statistical office) initiated. Development process of national criteria and indicators proposal initiated. Building capacity to connect the forest sector to other sectors at national level, with the help of criteria and indicators, and forest reporting. Visibility of the forest sector increased at national level, when tools (criteria and indicators) become available and their importance understood by forestry officials working at national level. Participation and level of reporting on international forest reporting processes improved during the project.

	forests, since trees grow slowly and planning should target at least 20-25 years forward. Kazakhstan did not, either did not respond to the Global FAO Forest Resources Assessment 2015 and the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry questionnaire. Kazakhstan participated in the UNECE/FAO Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (forest products production and trade for 2013-14).	
Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyzstan is a forest poor country with 7% of land area covered by mountainous forests. Forest area has been stable for the last 15 years. Forests play an important role in protection and prevention of environmental degradation, in particular on land degradation, natural disasters and maintenance of biodiversity. The contribution of forests to the country's economy is minor. Currently most forests are classified mainly for protective functions, and the use for other purposes is not allowed. This is in contradiction to reality, where local population utilizes forests for firewood and grazing. Kyrgyzstan participated in the Global FAO Forest Resources Assessment 2015, but the data quality was insufficient or data was missing. Kyrgyzstan did not respond to Joint Wood Energy Enquiry questionnaire. Kyrgyzstan participated in the UNECE/FAO Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (forest products production and trade for 2013-14). Kyrgyzstan has initiated the national criteria and indicators development	Understanding of the multi-functionality of forests increased in the forest agencies. Identifying the needs (gap analysis) for information at national level, and possibilities to influence policy processes with the help of this information. Kyrgyzstan can proceed to developing interactive reporting on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management (SEMAFOR), and can focus on identifying key indicators with threshold values, if the criteria and indicator development has proceeded as planned. Participation and level of reporting on international forest reporting processes improved during the project.

	process with FAO support (if the development process has started as initially planned for 2015).	
Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan is a low forest cover country, where forests cover 10% of the land area (2015). The area of forests is decreasing (11% in 2000). Forests play an important role in protection and prevention of environmental degradation, in particular on land degradation, natural disasters and maintenance of biodiversity. The contribution of forests to the country's economy is minor. Uzbekistan participated in the Global FAO Forest Resources Assessment 2015, but the data quality was often insufficient or data was missing. Uzbekistan did not respond to Joint Wood Energy Enquiry questionnaire. Uzbekistan did not participate in the UNECE/FAO Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (forest products production and trade for 2013-2014).	Understanding of the multi-functionality of forests increased in the forest agencies. Identifying the needs (gap analysis) for information at national level, and possibilities to influence policy processes with the help of this information. Development process of national criteria and indicators initiated and finalized. Identifying challenges for data collection. Participation and level of reporting on international processed improved during the project.
Armenia	Armenia is a low forest cover country, where forests cover 11% of the land area (2015). The area of forests is decreasing (12% in 2000). Forests play an important role in protection and prevention of environmental degradation, in particular on land degradation, natural disasters and maintenance of biodiversity. The contribution of forests to country's economy is minor. Illegal logging is a challenge, and the trend of deforestation should be changed to afforestation or reforestation. Armenia participated in the Global FAO Forest Resources Assessment 2015, but the data quality was often low or data was missing. They responded to the Joint Wood Energy	Understanding of the multi-functionality of forests increased in the forest agencies. Identifying the needs (gap analysis) for information at national level, and possibilities to influence policy processes with the help of this information. Development process of national criteria and indicators initiated and finalized. Identifying challenges for data collection, or identifying threshold values for key indicators for warning levels (interactive reporting, SEMAFOR development). Countries with more advanced status and mechanisms for forest monitoring will serve as an example.

	Enquiry questionnaire with partial information. Armenia participated in the UNECE/FAO Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (forest products production and trade for 2013-14).	Cooperation with relevant offices (like national statistical offices initiated). Visibility of the forest sector increased at national level, when tools (criteria and indicators) become available and their importance understood by forestry officials working at national level. Understanding of the multi-functionality of forests increased in the forest agency and related ministry. Participation and level of reporting on international processed improved during the project.
Georgia	Georgia is a forest rich country, with 41% of forests covering the total land area. The forest area has remained stable the last 15 years (2000-2015). Forests are mainly dedicated to protective functions, and the contribution of forests to the country's economy is minor. Large forest resources are considered underutilized and they have great potential to contribute to livelihoods and income creation to local population. Currently, there is no information about socio-economic value of forests. Georgia participated in the Global FAO Forest Resources Assessment 2015, but the data quality was insufficient or data was missing. Georgia did not respond to the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry questionnaire. Georgia is the only country of the region participating and regularly reporting to the pan-European Criteria and Indicators process (Forest Europe). Georgia participated in the UNECE/FAO Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire (forest products	Understanding of the multi-functionality of forests increased in the forest agency and related ministry. Identifying challenges for data collection, and identifying threshold values for key indicators for warning levels (SEMAFOR development). Countries such as Turkey or Ukraine may provide useful practical examples for rapid forest sector development. Participation and level of reporting on international processed improved during the project.

	production and trade for 2013-14).				

3.3 Stakeholder analysis and capacity assessment

Table 2 – Stakeholder Analysis

Non UN Stakeholders	Type and level of involvement in the project	Capacity assets	Capacity Gaps	Desired future outcomes	Incentives
National Forest Service	Main stakeholder for workshops and development of national criteria and indicators. Leading the process at national level.	Strong expert understanding of forestry.	Lack of understanding on stakeholder engagement and socio-economic development.	Understand the need and importance of forest monitoring, promote the forest sector with help of monitoring.	Increased capacity to participate in international processes. Increased options to influence. New tools to promote own work.
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Main stakeholder for workshops and supporting the development of national criteria and indicators from policy level. Ensuring the compatibility with other sectors.	Key stakeholders at decision making level.	Lack of understanding on stakeholder engagement and socio-economic development.	Understand the need and importance of forest monitoring for policy making, promote and link the forest sector with other sectoral policies.	More visibility for the sector at national level, increased influence on policies and positive development of the sector at national agenda.
NGOs	Important stakeholder for ensuring the wide acceptance and ownership of the national criteria and indicators. Advisory stakeholder at the development process.	Will provide different view than foresters and provoke discussion.	Do not have concrete possibilities to participate in forest sector development.	Concrete tools provided by the development of forest monitoring.	Possibilities to engage actively to national forest sector development, and influence on the development of tools that support monitoring the development for SDGs.
Academia	Supporting stakeholders for development of criteria and indicators, possibly as reviewers.	Strong scientific understanding. Possibilities to support in topics such as climate change.	May lack understanding of how to connect theory with practice in forest monitoring.	Tools for communicating the status and trends of the forest sector.	Increased possibility to influence forest sector development, opportunity to strengthen relations with other stakeholders.
Private sector	Supporting stakeholders for development of criteria and indicators, possibly as reviewers.	Might have ideas that are not presented by other stakeholder groups.	Needs often neglected in national forest policies.	National criteria and indicators should take into consideration the creation of livelihoods and income with forests.	More visibility and understanding the needs and importance of the private sector as one of the important factors for economic and social

					development.

4 PROJECT STRATEGY: OBJECTIVE, EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS, INDICATORS, MAIN ACTIVITIES

4.1 Project Strategy

The project will strengthen the national capacity of beneficiary countries to develop national accountability system for the sustainable forest management, for example by development of national criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, or identifying key indicators with threshold values, e.g. for monitoring the progress towards SDGs. Only when a proper monitoring, assessment and accountability system is developed, can countries understand their sustainable forest management situation and undertake appropriate corrective action where it is needed.

The project will help all project countries to respond to key capacity gaps and overcome these development challenges by providing knowledge, capacity building, training materials and advisory services to:

- Define the scope and information that is needed and appropriate for the implementation of SFM at the national level;
- Collect relevant data to assess the implementation of sustainable forest management related policies;
- Develop a national accountability system (national criteria and indicators) based on the data collected;
- Report accordingly and developing national actions in the case of shortcomings (identified by the project).

The target group will be government officials from ministries responsible for forestry and other related institutions. The project will primarily develop capacities at a national level. This will be achieved through tailored training workshops based on the content used at a national level. The project activities will be aligned to the regular work of UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section in the countries and will enhance the overall capacity of the countries to participate and contribute to international cooperation.

The project will start with establishing the contacts in the project countries (summer 2016), identifying consultants and preparation of the training material (autumn 2016) by the international consultant on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management starting from international processes and providing examples from national development processes of criteria and indicators. The needs of the countries and status of the national criteria and indicators will be identified along with other on-going projects in the countries.

A regional inception workshop (at the end of 2016) will bring together all beneficiary countries to discuss the status and challenges of national forest monitoring and facilitate learning from international best practices. During the workshop the basic information about Criteria and Indicators for SFM and on the reporting/accounting systems will be provided to the national experts.

National coaching workshops on country situation assessment and analyses will be organized in each project country in 2017, with active involvement and support of several partners at national level (forest agency, forest institute, statistical office, relevant ministries, etc.). The coaching workshops will focus on reporting, identifying the challenges through gap analysis, and developing a work plan for the next steps. This project will not create new data collection for the countries (which is seen as increasing burden by member States); it will build on the existing forest reporting processes that use national data, and build the capacity for the countries to participate in these processes in a meaningful manner. Often the data is available in the countries,

but for various reasons it is not used or provided for reporting. National coaching workshops will be also used to initiate the preparatory work on the development of the national C&I systems. The coaching workshops will be followed by advisory missions, with the objective to build capacity at national level to participate in international forest reporting processes, and to support this work, which is done on voluntary basis by national correspondents.

Based on outcomes of inception period, assessments and recommendation of consultants, and country situation analyses, five countries will be piloted for development of national SFM criteria and indicator proposals. Development of national SFM criteria and indicator proposals will be supported through organization of one national workshop in each project country in 2018. Based on the outcomes of national SFM criteria and indicator development process in the five piloted countries, national forest reporting or accountability system proposals will be developed in at least three countries.

The national workshops (both SFM C&I development and forest reporting or accountability systems) will be supported by advisory missions , in order to review, validate and monitor the progress of the development of national SFM criteria and indicator proposals and national forest reporting or accountability systems in 2017-2019.

The final regional workshop will take place in 2019, bringing all project countries together to share lessons learned and present the results achieved at national level. Publication summarizing the project results will be prepared by summer 2019, and external evaluation of the project carried out by the end of 2019.

The project´s objective, "to strengthen the national capacity of countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia to develop accountability systems for sustainable forest management", will be supported by each project activity. Between the workshops national consultants will be responsible for circulating the proposed criteria and indicators for comments in the country, and the progress will be monitored and supported by UNECE-FAO Forestry and Timber Section regularly. A matrix of milestones in a format of project monitoring table will be provided for the national consultants to enhance the impact of the project, and simplify the monitoring of the progress.

Each project workshop will be evaluated through UNECE evaluation forms in order to keep track of the indicators of achievements (IA 1.2 80% of the trained officials confirm an increased capacity to collect data and measure sustainable forest management). At the end of 2017 it will be possible to assess which of the beneficiary countries have developed national accountability systems (IA 2.1), and at the end of 2018 it will be possible to assess how many of the remaining countries have accomplished the target.

4.2 Logical Framework

Table 3 – Logical Framework

Intervention logic	Indicators	Means of verification
Objective To strengthen the national capacity of countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia to develop accountability system for sustainable forest management.		
EA1 Enhanced national knowledge (policy makers, national government experts, other stakeholders) of the existing international best practice for sustainable forest measurement, monitoring and reporting.	**IA 1.1** 5 countries conducted gap analysis on sustainable forest measurement, monitoring and reporting at national level.	• Gap analysis will be developed during the project workshops and recorded in project documentation.
	IA 1.2 80% of trained officials confirmed an increased knowledge of the existing international best practice for sustainable forest measurement, monitoring and reporting.	• An evaluation form at the end of each project workshop.
A1.1 One regional inception workshop (3+1 days). The workshop will introduce the project to the country participants who will be expected to support project activities in their respective countries. The workshop will focus on data collection and analysis, and introduce international criteria and indicators processes, and examples from national criteria and indicator development experience from other countries in the region. The options to SEMAFOR development. Participants will be nominated by relevant ministries. Followed up by one-day field trip to demonstrate how the forest monitoring works at the country level, from measurements to elaboration of data, or implementation of the best forest monitoring policies. The purpose of the field trip is to demonstrate forest measurement and monitoring, and to facilitate knowledge exchange between the participant countries. The field trip will take place in a research institute or operative forest agency of the host country.		
A1.2 Five coaching workshops/sessions for national officers responsible for relevant areas such as forest inventory, management, biodiversity, private sector development, forest fire prevention, forest plantations etc. FAO country offices and relevant on-going international reporting processes (UNFF, FAO, UNECE or UNEP) and projects (e.g. by GIZ or GEF) will be invited to take part in these meetings. The purpose of the workshops is to look into details of each country situation on forest reporting, the status and scope of national criteria and indicators (if they exist already) as well as to provide up-to-date information about international forest-related reporting processes (best practice). The coaching workshops should take place prior to the national workshops, and target to identify the status, develop a work plan for national criteria and indicators and national forest reporting and select best approach to the national workshops. The outcome of the coaching workshops is a gap analysis on forest reporting (from inventory to data collection and actual reporting), that identifies the major challenges, and formulates practical recommendations to build the work plan for national criteria and indicators.		

A1.3 Five advisory missions (3 days each) to follow-up the work initiated on forest reporting. Taking the next steps according to the work plan developed in coaching workshops, building relations at national level to ensure active communication and involvement of several partners (forest agency, statistical office, relevant ministries). Updating developments on international reporting, and monitoring the status of the countries in international reporting processes. Building capacity at national level to understand the value (economic, environmental and social) of regular participation in international forest reporting processes, and the necessity of highlight and support for this work, which is done on voluntary basis by national correspondents.		

EA.2 Enhanced national capacity to develop national reporting and accountability systems (national SEMAFOR).	**IA 2.1** At least 4 out of 5 countries developed national SFM C&I proposals. At least 3 out of 5 countries have developed national forest management reporting accountability systems.	• Project progress reports from each country will verify the status of development of the national criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and reporting or accountability systems. Reports from regional and national workshops and advisory missions will ensure the availability of necessary information.

A 2.1
Preparation of training modules and training material on defining the scope of the national reporting system, collecting data, and measuring and assessing sustainable forest management as well as a reliable system for the collection of sustainable forest management data, (including current international requirements and standards for data collection, understanding criteria for data sets, setting/improving national data bases).

A 2.2
Five national workshops (3 days each) will be organized for the development of national SFM criteria and indicator proposals in each project country. .The national workshops will be organized by the international consultant and the respective national consultant, who is leading the development process of national criteria and indicators and ensuring that we have a concrete proposal after the project. At each workshop, about 25 participants from relevant ministries, forest agencies and other organizations will be trained on developing a national system of indicators for monitoring SFM (based on international criteria and indicator processes as guiding framework). It is expected that they will contribute to the dissemination of the acquired knowledge at all levels (communicate with train others in their ministries/agencies to support the SEMAFOR development). The objective of the workshops is to initiate development of national accountability systems (national criteria and indicators development), according to the plan and objectives defined in coaching workshops. Trainings will be designed and implemented jointly with the regular staff of Forestry and Timber Section, as well as project consultants.

A 2.3
Five advisory missions (3 days each) to support the development of national SFM criteria and indicators proposals and national reporting or accountability systems for sustainable forest management. The advisory missions will take place in line with the national workshop in each country. The advisory mission targets to monitor and review the progress of the development of proposals for national SFM criteria and indicator and national forest reporting or accountability systems together with experts in the country, preferably those who have been involved in the process since the coaching workshops.

A 2.4

The concluding four day (3+1) regional forest reporting workshop will provide opportunity to share national lessons learned, and formulate recommendations for follow-up at the national and international level. The workshop will gather all project countries together (funded participants), and other countries with advanced forest reporting systems will be invited (self-financed). About 25 participants from relevant ministries, forest agencies and other organizations will be invited. One-day field trip to demonstrate how the forest monitoring works at the country level, from measurements to elaboration of data, or implementation of the best forest monitoring policies. The purpose of the field trip is to demonstrate forest measurement and monitoring, and to facilitate knowledge exchange between the participant countries. The field trip will take place in a research institute or operative forest agency of the host country. The workshop will take place in a different country than the inception workshop, and the field trip will demonstrate forest monitoring system (which is different in each country) to reinforce the learning initiated in the first regional workshop. The Project will further support the beneficiary countries through no cost support from the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and its expert groups (Team of Specialist on Wood Energy, Statistics, Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management and Sustainable Forest Products), additional advisory services and capacity building funded from other sources, including extra-budgetary resources.

A 2.5

Preparation of a publication on the National Reporting on Sustainable Forest Management in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and related recommendations on remedial actions. The publication is targeted to all countries in the UNECE region to showcase progress towards assessing sustainable forest management, and setting the scene of the development of national criteria and indicators in the project countries, including possible key indicators and threshold values for them. The publication will share the outcome of the project and suggest possible follow-up. It will be published in English and in Russian as an electronic and printed version, and distributed through UNECE/FAO communication list (electronic version) and by mail to the project focal points in each country.

4.3 Risks and mitigation actions

Table 4 – Risks and mitigation actions

Risks	Mitigating Actions
Challenging timeframe to receive official permission for work and workshops, including the official support to allow forestry and other officials to participate in the works.	The project manager will ensure well planning of project activities. Activities of the project will be carried out with the time period of three years (June 2016-June 2019), which will allow to focus only on few countries at a time, and require necessary time for communication and preparation of the work, as well as reaching out to all relevant partners such as FAO country offices which may provide substantial help when reaching out in the country.
Poor coordination of international activities at national level. Many international donors are responsible for various projects in the selected countries, and sometimes the coordination of activities is poor at national level.	Strong focus on communication and outreach activities for targeted partners in the region. The project manager will focus on continuous communication and outreach activities within the project countries, especially at the beginning of the project, and well in advance before the national workshops in order to engage other donors and international project that may have synergies with this project.

4.4   Sustainability

The project aims at strengthening sustainable forest management in the target countries, focusing on the national forest reporting system, which is of key importance for ensuring the enabling environment for implementation of sustainable forest management. Results of the project will provide targeted countries with the essential information on the forest related priorities, which will serve as a basis for the creation/development of national forest reporting and monitoring systems.

The project will be implemented in cooperation with other on-going projects in the beneficiary countries, reaching out to relevant international and national partners and ensuring that this project has well targeted activities, which will have wider and longer term influence than the project would have as a stand-alone activity. Emphasis will be put on communication through various channels (meetings organized by the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section as regular part of the programme of work, including workshops and expert level meetings of various Teams of Specialists).

Identification of the forest information needs, and their prioritization in terms of forest policy development, will help countries in developing of the relevant tools to support forest management. The results of the projects will be of key importance for the future planning and optimizing the future national work in this regard.

In particular, additional funding for the project activities is planned through FAO project funding by Germany, details to be agreed with FAO and the donor during 2016. In the long term, upon generation of national skills and knowledge, the countries are expected to maintain their monitoring systems without substantial external funding The Project will further support the beneficiary countries through no cost support from the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and its expert groups (Team of Specialist on Wood Energy, Statistics, Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management and Sustainable Forest Products), additional advisory services and capacity building funded from other sources, including extra-budgetary resources.

5   MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The progress of the project will be reported each year by annual progress reports, and a website for the project will be established to share material and information related to the project regularly.

The evaluation of the project will be conducted by an external evaluator within the last six months of the project (2019). The evaluator will follow a detailed terms of reference prepared during the project and will interview several representatives from each project country. The evaluator will have access to project progress reports, workshop reports as well as evaluation forms which include basic set of workshop evaluation questions in UNECE and are completed by all participants in the workshops. A timeslot for filling the evaluation form is dedicated before closing any workshop and the importance of the feedback of participants is stressed, which will ensure that feedback is continuously collected from stakeholders involved in the project.

6   MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION AGREEMENTS

The UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section will be responsible for leading the project. The project will be implemented through partnerships in the region, drawing on the UNECE and FAO existing regional networks and involving the UN Resident Coordinator system. In addition, UNECE/FAO will liaise with the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) to seek synergies, as well as to reinforce the implementation and monitoring of the UN Forest Instrument and the UNEP work in the region. FAO has country offices in most of the project countries with excellent connections at the ministries and agencies working in the area of forestry. The project will also contribute to the next reporting cycle of FAO global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) report by

supporting reporting process from the region through capacity building.

UNECE is actively engaged into establishment of a new generation of environmental assessment process within the framework of launching Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in the countries of the pan-European region. SEIS is a new approach, which is supposed to link all environmental data and other related information at national, regional and international levels with the use of modern technologies to harmonize, make comparable all existing data and maintain regular environmental assessment process in the pan-European region in a sustainable way.

This project will directly support and contribute to the work of UNFF. The Forum calls upon its Member States to develop adequate monitoring systems for forests, invites international institutions, and organizations to assist in this work, to share data and streamline reporting on forests.

Monitoring and assessment of progress towards SFM and towards implementation of the UN Forest Instrument is among the core functions of the Forum. Section V, paragraph 6, the UN Forest Instrument (General Assembly resolution 62/98 annex) specifically calls upon Member States to develop national sets of Criteria and Indicators (C&I).

The last session of the Forum (UNFF11) adopted Resolution on the International Arrangement on Forests beyond 2015, as contained in the report: E/CN. 18/2015/14, subsequently adopted as ECOSOC resolution: E/RES/2015/33. Accordingly, the Forum shall play an active role in follow-up and review of the forest-related aspects of the post-2015 development agenda. The Resolution took note of ongoing efforts to further streamline and harmonize reporting, reduce reporting burdens and synchronize data collection. The UNFFS is requested to develop, in consultation with member States, Collaborative Partnership for Forests (CPF) and other relevant entities, and C&I processes, a format for national reporting as part of the Strategic Plan of the Forum.

Under umbrella of the DA 10th tranche, and within a similar timeframe the UNFF Secretariat will execute a project: "Monitoring Progress towards Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)". Both projects, although target different countries address similar issues are expected to strengthen capacity of countries to collect data, especially on socio-economic aspects on forests, and measure sustainable forest management. UNECE and UNFFS will collaborate closely, share experience and lessons learned during the course of the project.

Finally the project will also align with some of the objectives of the UNEP work in the region, in particular the GEF project "Global Forest Watch: monitoring forests in near real time" aiming at providing member States with assistance to better manage and conserve forest landscapes through an interactive online forest monitoring system.