

FIFTH FOREST MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

Venue: 'SIRIUS' HOTEL, Prishtina

Date: December 28, 2012

MEETING AGENDA

- 10:00 – 10:10 Welcome speech and adoption of meeting agenda,
Mr. Kushtrim Cukaj, Chairman of Forest Management Board
- 10:10 – 10:20 Adoption of minutes of the Fourth Forest Management Board meeting
- 10:20 – 10:50 Discussions and clarifications about the FMB role and functions
- 10:50 – 11:20 Discussions on recent developments
- Letter of FMB chairman to minister
 - Letter of FMB to president of Kosova
- 11:20 – 11:40 Discussion about the FAO report on Socio-economic aspects of the forestry sector in Kosovo
- 11:40 – 12:00 Presentation of Draft Training Plan for Forest Management Board
- 12:00 – 12:15 AOB
- 12:15 – 12:30 Conclusions and further steps

Participants on the meeting:

Forest Management Board

- Mr. Kushtrim Cukaj, Chairman of the Forest Management Board
- Mr. Arben Çitaku, Member, General Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning
- Mr. Naim Ismajli, Member, President of the Association of the Municipalities in Kosovo
- Mr. Bashkim Gashi, Member, President of the Association of the Private Forest Owners in Kosovo
- Mr. Xhavit Dakaj, Member, General Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

Absent:

- Mr. Kapllan Halimi, Member, General Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development
- Mr. Naim Baftiu, Member, General Secretary of the Ministry of Finance
- Mr. Matti Maatta, Member, EU Representative
- Mr. Brian Fahey, Member, USAID Representative

Coordination Unit, project staff and consultants, observers:

- Mr. Bashkim Thaqi, Advisor to Minister of Agriculture, Forest, and Rural Development
 - Mr. Aleksandar Nikolovski, FAO Chief Technical Advisor, "Support to the Implementation of the Forestry Policy and Strategy in Kosovo", member of the Coordination Unit
 - Ahmet Zejnullahu, Chief of Executive of Kosovo Forest Agency
 - Hysen Abazi, Director of MAFRD/Forest Department
 - Mr. Naser Krasniqi, FAO National Team Leader, "Support to the Implementation of the Forestry Policy and Strategy in Kosovo", member of the Coordination Unit
 - Ms. Vera Muhaxhiri, FAO National Consultant for Institutional and Policy Development "Support to the Implementation of the Forestry Policy and Strategy in Kosovo"
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MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Mr. Kushtrim Cukaj, Chairman of the Forest Management Board (further in the text - FMB) opened the fifth FMB meeting by wishing a welcome to the Board Members and other participants.

Mr. Cukaj presented the agenda of the fifth FMB meeting asking members of the Board to comment or add new topics to the proposed meeting agenda. The Agenda has been approved with no comments.

2. The Chairman of the FMB requested the FMB members to comment and approve the minutes of fourth FMB meeting. The Minutes of the meeting held on December 18th, were adopted unanimously by FMB members present in this meeting.

3 & 4. 1. The Chairman of the Board, Mr. Cukaj, briefed the members present that the reason he initiated the discussion regarding the "role of the FMB" was mainly to further institutionalise the FMB's role and in particular to discuss the issues related to (i) payments to FMB members, (ii) office for FMB and (iii) logistics for FMB. He said that regarding the role of the FMB, it has been stated from the beginning that the FMB has an advising role but this is not confirmed officially. Mr. Cukaj said that besides the willing to discuss the Board issues during this meeting, it is not worth discussing them as the key FMB member, Mr. Halimi, who shall be in charge to provide explanation to particular concerns and take further steps, is not present.

Mr. Gashi stated that the role of FMB is officially set by Prime-minister but there are obstacles the FMB is having in fulfilling its mission and there is no proper support from some government bodies. He shared the same concern with Mr. Cukaj in regard to delayed payments to FMB members.

Mr. Citaku's concern was not related to delayed payments as such, but rather to passive role of the FMB to bring Forest Management issues forward. He, also, mentioned that the role of the FMB is set officially by Prime-minister. Mr. Citaku confirmed the shared opinion with Mr. Cukaj in regard to office space and other related logistics. He said that in his experience other similar Boards set by Government of Kosovo are provided with necessary logistics. He said that Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP) has a meeting room which could be used by the FMB for the regular Board meetings, but there is a need for an official request (further signing a Memorandum of Understanding) to be sent by Ministry of Agriculture, Forest, and Rural Development (MAFRD) to MESP before the meeting room is given to FMB for its Board meeting use. Mr. Citaku confirmed that there is an institutional obligation for each Ministry to support other Ministries in terms of logistics, when applicable.

Mr. Krasniqi on behalf of Coordination Unit supports Mr. Citaku's proposal to use the meeting room in MESP rather than in Hotel Sirius.

Mr. Dakaj confirmed that in regard to payments sooner or later the FMB members will be reimbursed from Government, it just takes some time. In his opinion it is MAFRD's institutional obligation, set by Law, to provide the FMB will logistics. His concern was related to role of the FMB, i.e. what are the competences set for this Board.

Mr. Cukaj again expressed his concern in regard to FMB office. He mentioned the FMB needs to have an office, where Board members meet time to time to discuss separate Forest Management issues and where they can leave the FMB related documents and papers. He also mentioned that there is a need for minimum office equipment such as a computer and printer.

In regard to role of the FMB, Mr. Zejnullahu said that besides clarifying its role, FMB members shall also request for clarification of the Forest related Laws in power, as Law on Forest and Law on National Parks are in contradiction with each other. According to Mr. Zejnullahu this clarification should be done as soon as possible before they will start preparing the Forest Management Plans. He is also in favour of discussing and agreeing forest management issues, including Law amendments, in much detail, in this forum as we have representatives from all key forest sector stakeholders. Mr. Zejnullahu proposed to FMB, in any of coming meetings, to further discuss and clarify the role of municipalities in forest sector. He also informed FMB members present that the Kosovo Forest Agency (KFA), at the beginning of next year, will prepare a report on activities KFA and municipalities has undertaken in terms of forest protection and in case the municipalities has not done their job properly the KFA will seek for possibility to get back the role given to municipalities in regard to forest.

Regarding FMB logistics, Mr. Zejnullahu confirmed that MAFRD can provide the FMB with an office, including necessary equipment.

Mr. Cukaj proposed an extraordinary Board meeting to be held during January 2013 to cover a topic of "Role of the FMB" as well as above mentioned issues.

Mr. Abazi, in regard to FMB logistics, proposed to Chairman to write as soon as possible an request to MAFRD Minister's office to use the empty office (including equipment) being used so far from Twinning Project.

Mr. Thaqi committed himself to request from Minister's office to use the office left form Twinning Project before it will be given to any other project.

4.2. In regard to Letter from FMB sent to President of Kosovo, the Chairman briefed the members present that the letter has been drafted by some of FMB members and besides Mr. Citaku the other FMB members agreed with content of the Letter, which later has been sent to President of Kosovo.

Mr. Citaku appreciated the Letter circulated to all FMB members, including him, and he expressed his disagreement with content of the Letter as, he said, the Government of Kosovo (GoK) has approved the Laws and as FMB is part of GoK there is no reason to react afterwards. Mr. Citaku appreciates the Laws being approved by President of Kosovo and is looking forward these Laws to be implemented as soon as possible. He informed the FMB members that within

MESP the department for managing with “Sharri National Park” exists and is capable to cover its official activities. Mr. Citaku informed the Board members present that MESP will soon establish a department to manage with “Bjeshket e Nemura National Park” and staff will be engaged by other departments within MESP rather than be hired from external sources.

In regard to developing the Forest Management Plans, Mr. Citaku stated that MESP will coordinate this activity only with MAFRD/KFA as the respected municipalities are not anymore competent. He proposes to utilise the FMB meetings to initiate and further develop the inter-ministerial cooperation.

Mr. Zejnullahu stated that according to new Laws on National Parks the MAFRD/KFA is not anymore responsible for two National Parks therefore inter-ministerial cooperation in this respect is not applicable.

Mr. Abazi expressed the concern of private forest owners, whose forest lands are part of national parks, who do not know to whom to direct their requests in future.

Mr. Cukaj expressed his disappointment with the situation created and was afraid he had no “cooked” idea how to overcome this situation. He repeated himself on the importance of not only environmental, but as well as economic and social aspects of forest management.

Mr. Dakaj confirmed that each Ministry has its own Legal Department that could help in terms of legal issues and could be able to explain that the Laws regulating specific issues are above the Laws that regulates the same issue but in general aspect. In other words Laws on specific issues are to be obeyed. Mr. Dakaj informed the Board members present that these legal disputes could be sent first to Legal Department of Prime-minister’s office and in case these disputes will not be solved than they could be sent to Constitutional Court and that the FMB is institutionally legitimate to initiate it.

Mr. Thaçi is happy the dispute to be sent to Constitutional Court and he confirmed that any decision taken by this body shall be in force and followed by relevant ministries involved.

5. Mr. Cukaj has briefly elaborated the Report on Socio-economic aspects of the Forest Sector in Kosovo, prepared by an expert from FAO Support Project. He informed the board members present that he appreciates the information and analysis provided in this report but his concern was that in case the newly approved Laws on National Parks remains unchanged than this report should be revised to include new situation in Forest sector.

Mr. Nikolovski further elaborated the Report and informed the FMB that this report includes preliminary analysis only. He provided the Board members with the summary information on main findings. He also informed Board members that this preliminary analysis will be further studied by upcoming SIDA Support Project that shall provide an outcome on how to efficiently use wood and specifically how forestry sector contributes to rural development.

Mr. Abazi appreciated the report and he informed FMB members that the MAFRD/Forest Department is going to prepare a similar report by municipality.

Mr. Cukaj welcomed the upcoming report from MAFRD/Forest Department as a tool that will help the FMB on its mission.

Mr. Zejnullahu mentioned another issue, which is related to wood importing. He proposed to FMB to request from Government of Kosovo to exclude any duty taxes from wood importing in order to safe in house wood.

Mr. Gashi added that the above proposal would support the wood processing companies as well.

6. Mr. Cukaj introduced the draft paper on Training programme for the FMB members prepared by Coordination Unit of the FMB.

Mr. Krasniqi informed the FMB members present that Miss. Muhaxhiri will soon meet each of FMB members to discuss the training needs.

Mr. Abazi proposed to FMB members and FMB Secretariat to include the MAFRD/Forest Department staff to the training programme although he was conscious that MAFRD/FD staff are not members of FMB.

7. Mr. Cukaj asked FMB members present for any other business to be discussed in this meeting. Since there were no reaction from Board members Mr. Cukaj has concluded the fifth FMB meeting as finished.

Note: The date, time and venue for following FMB meeting will be confirmed later.

Prepared by:
Kushtrim Cukaj, Chairman of the Forest Management Board, &
The Coordination Unit of the FMB

January 15th, 2013