

Advancing the Joint Communications Plan

Montreal Process, Forest Europe, International Tropical Timber Organisation and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Forestry Department



December 02, 2012

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BACKGROUND

1. The **Joint Workshop to Streamline Global Forest Reporting and Strengthen Collaboration among International Criteria and Indicator Processes** (October, 2011, Victoria, Canada) established of an inter-process Communications Sub-Group to explore improved communications on the application of criteria and indicators. Substantial dialogue and agreements were documented in the workshop proceedings. The Proposed Action Plans (Annex G) of the proceedings set forth two areas of particular focus – (2) Improved Communication, and (3) Working Together.

Recommendations from Joint Workshop included:

- improve communication around sustainable forest management;
- continue to work together and improve collaboration;
- establish a joint communications group that will examine ways to improve communication around sustainable forest management (SFM) and explore options for a joint long-term communications strategy; and
- work to establish a joint partnership of criteria and indicator (C&I) processes, “Forest Indicator Partnership”.

The Improved Communication Goal strategy included the following items:

- Short-term objective of using existing success stories and materials;
 - Long-term communication strategy to enhance and refine our story and keep it relevant with current events and issue to:
 - find out who our audience and end-users are;
 - gather existing stories, communication tools to make our stories resonate with important public issues (e.g., climate change);
 - maintain flow of stories (staying relevant); and
 - monitor the impact of improved communications (communications group)
2. The Draft Montreal Process, Forest Europe, International Tropical Timber Organization and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Forestry Department **Joint Communications Plan** was circulated by New Zealand for review and comment. A revised Communication Plan was distributed on 4 July 2012.
 3. Additional discussions on clarifying and implementing the next steps of the Joint Communication Plan were held during the **13th Montreal Process Technical Advisory Committee Meeting** (Suzdal, Russia). Participants in the meeting included members of the Montreal Process, UNECE, and World Bank.
 4. During the **July 18th teleconference** of the C&I processes (Montreal Process, Forest Europe, ITTO) and FAO participants focused on establishing a “next steps agenda” for the Streamlining Forest Based Reporting Workshop to be held in Jacksonville, FL, USA (19-23 August 2012). This workshop had as one of its purposes to “examine ways to improve communication around sustainable forest

management and explore options for a joint long-term strategy” and will hold a concurrent session on “Improved Communications around sustainable forest management”

5. During the **Streamlining Forest Based Reporting Workshop** (August, 2012, Jacksonville, Florida) a breakout group convened to build on the solid foundation of work on improved communications around Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and Criteria and Indicators (C&I) that preceded this workshop.

Using mind-mapping software this breakout group developed a Communication Strategy flow diagram that outlines the thinking and steps in developing communication products.

Agreements and recommendations on next steps for advancing communications around C&I and SFM, as concurred by Workshop participants, include the following:

- Common Objectives of the communications are to (1) Promote Ourselves, (2) Promote the Work, and (3) Highlight problems being solved.
- With the agreement on two main end users – political/policy makers and general audience - collectively decide on common concepts/issues/themes to promote in communication products, and
- Develop a “brand” – creating a unique name and/or image for our end users through communications products with consistent themes that establish a significant and differentiated presence.
 - Need to agree on who is under the brand and the common purpose.
 - Logical brand is the “Forest Indicators Partnership, and general consensus of the workshop was positive toward this name and concept.
- Focus on quick wins. Coordinated short-term communication efforts through 2015.
- Look at working with/within the Collaborative Partnership on Forest task force on communications.

The Jacksonville Workshop breakout group joined in discussion with Luisa Cabello, Communications and Outreach, Forests Europe. Luisa offered valuable insights on our communications approach, including;

- Emphasis on the importance of clear, simple messages that are real, personal stories and avoid getting too technical
- Finding individual stories that portray our own places and countries but have a universal message for a wider audience
- The collective group (the partnership) needs to find out what people want to hear then use the country-level (local) stories to express the messages at the high level (globally)

NEXT STEPS

Discussion Points and Objectives for the **International Workshop and Seminar on Forest-based Reporting** (December, Tokyo, Japan) include:

1. Refine the Short-Term Communications calendar (2 year or less time horizon) focusing on short-term current and topical issues – (e.g. example, REDD+ and SFM working collaboratively, land use, food security). Potential communications opportunities include 2014 IUFRO or next World Forestry Congress
2. Develop a consensus on common concepts/issues/themes to promote in communication products during the Short-term Communications calendar that will result in at least one jointly approved (common) targeted communications product available for each meeting/event and on all websites.
3. Identify the steps and resources required to complete and publish jointly approved communication products as above.
4. Provide a progress report on conversations and potential integrated work with Collaborative Partnership on Forests task force on communications.