

**4th CPF – GFIS Steering
Committee Meeting
October 15, 2007**

MINUTES

Global Forest Information Service - GFIS
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CPF - Global Forest Information Service (GFIS)

4th CPF – GFIS Implementation Group Meeting,

October 05, 2007

FAO, Rome, Italy

MINUTES

Participants:

Peter Mayer, IUFRO

Michael Hailu, CIFOR

Michael Martin, FAO

Peter Csoka, UNFF Secretariat

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

Peter Mayer (IUFRO, chair of the GFIS Steering Committee) welcomed Michael Martin (FAO), Michael Hailu (CIFOR) and Peter Csoka (UNFF Secretariat) to the meeting. The agenda was adopted without changes.

2. Current status of GFIS

Peter M. informed about the technical development, current functionality of GFIS, partnership development, training activities and GFIS project proposals based on a written progress report by Eero Mikkola (GFIS Coordinator) provided to the GFIS Steering Committee (SC) before the meeting. The positive developments and activities were welcomed by the GFIS SC.

Peter M. also informed that about half of the CPF members are currently involved in GFIS to some degree. Nevertheless, the GFIS SC agreed that new activities will be necessary to involve all or at least more CPF members as information providers. In this respect also the GFIS SC members CIFOR and UNFF Secretariat informed about their intention to highlight GFIS on their respective web pages better and to increase the information provision to GFIS.

In a subsequent discussion about the overall goals of GFIS the GFIS SC agreed that the newly developed calendar function provides a very suitable service for promoting GFIS to users. It was requested that in addition to the calendar another service should be developed which provides a platform and working space for all organisations or groups planning a meeting. This should lead to synergies in organizing and to a reduction of overlaps of meetings. Accordingly, the meeting calendar and the meeting planning platform could

become a core function of GFIS. The first group to be targeted to use this function and should be the CPF members.

3. GFIS objectives and milestones

According to an earlier decision of the GFIS SC a SWOT Analysis of GFIS was done with the following results:

Strengths

- Working platform provides legitimacy
- Good standards and tools
- CPF umbrella facilitates work
- Commitments from institutional members of IG and SC
- Strong institutional rooting in IUFRO
- Credible because it is a shared effort (partnership)

Weakness

- Limited domains
- Weakly populated
- Limited contacts with developing country institutions
- Reliance on good will and voluntary contributions – thus development schedule is vulnerable to other organizations demands on IG members
- Potential of CPF not fully utilized
- Compelling feature (“key stone”) that draws people’s attention to GFIS is missing

Opportunities

- Build partnerships with high pay-off potential
- Engage all CPF members
- Target donors for larger projects

Threats

- No long-term resource commitment
- GFIS might be outdated by other developments

All in all the comparison with the previous SWOT analyses done in 2005 demonstrates a clear improvement through the reduction of weaknesses of and threats to GFIS.

In a discussion about the implementation of the objectives for GFIS set by the GFIS SC for the years 2006/07 it was analysed that 2/3 of the objectives and actions have been implemented while 1/3 was only partly or not implemented. Building on the non implemented activities and the discussion about the core functionality of GFIS the GFIS SC formulated the following objectives, actions and actors for the years 2008/09:

- Objective: All CPF members become GFIS partners
 Actions: IUFRO to contact those CPF members that are not a GFIS partners yet individually and encourage joint planning.
 Actor: IUFRO supported by GFIS SC
- Objective: Create more awareness about GFIS in the forest community
 Action: Include information about GFIS in communication means of GFIS SC members and other CPF members
 Actor: GFIS SC members
- Objective: Evaluate the utility and functionality of GFIS based on a user and partners survey at the end of 2008
 Action: Conduct survey and adapt GFIS accordingly
 Actor: GFIS coordination unit and GFIS Implementation Group
- Objective: Increase the involvement of African information providers in GFIS
 Action: Develop projects and conduct training courses
 Actor: GFIS coordination unit and GFIS IG
- Objective: Increase key Asian countries and the respective information providers
 Action: Contact and follow up with 20 potential information providers in key Asian countries
 Actor: GFIS coordinator for Asia and Russia
- Objective: Include a calendar planning function in GFIS
 Action: Implement the calendar planning function until mid 2008
 Actor: GFIS coordination unit

In a discussion on including information about forest finance, the GFIS SC noted high political interest and a potential for GFIS. However, the GFIS SC also agreed that the gateway function has to be maintained and GFIS should not store data as such. The GFIS SC decided to ask the GFIS coordination unit to evaluate the possibilities and implications of adding a domain on forest finance to GFIS in consultation with the GFIS SC.

Another discussion focused on the web2developments. The GFIS SC proposed that the GFIS coordination unit should test these new functionalities and use it when applicable.

4. GFIS development framework

The GFIS SC welcomed the excellent work done by the GFIS coordination unit and the GFIS IG on the GFIS development framework. It adopted the report but will have the possibility to

send any last comments until 31 October 2007 to IUFRO. It was agreed that the development framework should be included on the GFIS website as a reference document but should not be printed.

Based on the development framework the GFIS SC supported the suggestion of the GFIS IG to develop further communication products derived from this document, including a flyer (to be printed and to be available online) for general information and a short strategic plan for approaching donors and other interested supporters of GFIS. All products should be sent to the GFIS SC for review and final approval.

The GFIS SC partners also shared the opinion that increased communication activities about GFIS will be needed to increase the number of information providers. Therefore, all partners agreed to include a GFIS text in their newsletters of their organizations. Furthermore, Michael H. will provide a GFIS text to the Commonwealth Forestry Review and Peter M. will approach ITTO and ask for inclusion of GFIS information into the ITTO newsletter. It was also agreed that Peter M. in cooperation with the GFIS coordination unit will provide a standard text for all GFIS SC partners as a basis for the information to be included in the respective newsletters.

Finally, a brief brainstorming session was held regarding a possible change in name of GFIS to e.g. ForestInfo or Global Forest Net. It was also noted that GFIS might already be a trade mark for many and should therefore not be changed. Nevertheless, the GFIS SC decided to ask the GFIS coordination unit to evaluate the issue.

5. GFIS SC – the future

Based on the Terms of Reference for the GFIS SC and IG (agreed upon by the GFIS SC at its last meeting on October 24-25 2005) it was confirmed that the members of the GFIS SC are IUFRO (chair), CIFOR, FAO and UNFF Secretariat. However, it was also confirmed that the GFIS SC would be open for additional CPF members to join if commitment to contribute to GIS is expressed.

The GFIS SC also reconfirmed that GFIS as CPF-initiative inherently limits the membership of the SC to CPF members. However, there would be a possibility to invite observers to the GFIS SC meetings (e.g. a GFIS donor) if active interest is expressed.

As regards the membership of the Implementation Group the GFIS SC appointed the following partners: CIFOR, FAO, IUFRO, and NBII.

6. Further implementation of GFIS

Peter M. for IUFRO and Michael M. for FAO confirmed the continued support to GFIS at the current level. Peter C. on behalf of the UNFF Secretariat informed about the intention to increase the contribution to GFIS (possibly also technical development support to the GFIS coordination unit). Michael H. on behalf of CIFOR informed that he would leave CIFOR by the end of 2007 and would take on a position at ICRAF starting in 2008. He will aim at bringing ICRAF to the GFIS SC depending on the discussions within ICRAF. As regards CIFOR it is currently unclear who will be Michael's successor. Peter M. was asked to contact CIFOR expressing the hope of the GFIS SC that CIFOR can maintain its current support to GFIS.

Peter M. confirmed IUFRO's responsibility for the continued GFIS partnership development and external funding of GFIS. All other GFIS SC members offered to support IUFRO in cases where their organization might have a better link to a partner or donor. The reports to CPF will also be delivered by IUFRO as chair of the GFIS SC as done previously.

7. Next meeting and other matters

The GFIS SC did not discuss any other matters and decided that the next meeting should be convened in the second half of 2009 at the latest.

8. Closing of the meeting

Peter M. thanked all participants for the constructive spirit and active discussions during the meeting and FAO for kindly hosting the meeting. He then closed the meeting.