Establishment of a Task Force on Green Building

DRAFT Terms of Reference

1- Context

1. As a major component of human-induced environmental impact, construction can make a significant contribution to reducing its environmental footprint through “green building”. Although wood can make a positive contribution\(^1\) to greener building, it seems that wood has not yet taken the role it could in this field, often losing ground to less sustainable materials. It needs a fair comparison.

2. However, up until now green building standards and assessment systems have not been easily comparable and at times have had an inadequate scientific basis. To help provide a neutral framework for further developing building standards, codes and assessment systems, a science-based approach is required.

3. At its last session (11-14 October 2010), the UNECE Timber Committee recommended “that the Executive Secretary of UNECE form a task force on green building to be composed of experts from the Timber Committee, the Housing and Land Management Committee, the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Committee on Sustainable Energy, together with partner organisations. The task force would address the issue of green building in a neutral and scientific way”.

4. Mr. Ján Kubiš, Executive Secretary of UNECE, submitted this recommendation to the Chairs of the Housing and Land Management Committee, the Committee on Sustainable Energy and the Committee on Environmental Policy. Each Committee Chair welcomed the proposal. However, the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy informed that this Committee will consider the recommendation, together with the draft terms of reference of the Task Force, at its special session to be held in Geneva from 24 to 27 May 2011.

2- Composition

5. The Task Force on Green Building is composed of:

- Experts named by the Chairs of the relevant UNECE sectoral committee: 3 experts per committee
  - the Committee on Environmental Policy,
  - the Committee on Sustainable Energy,
  - the Housing and Land Management Committee,
  - the Timber Committee.

\(^1\) Wood use alone does not guarantee the sustainability of the building. Essential knowledge has to be developed for the proper design of buildings with wood, for energy efficiency and durability. In any case, wood must come from sustainably managed and legally harvested forests, meet technical standards and compete on price.
Representative of partner organisations or programmes with a special focus on Green Building such as the Society of Wood Science and Technology and the United Nations Environment Programme Sustainable Building Climate Initiative: 1 representative per organisation or programme.

6. The number of members of the Task Force shall not exceed 20 people.

7. The Task Force shall elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair.

3- Objective and mandate

8. The objective of the Task Force on Green Building is to help provide neutral information for further developing standards, codes and assessment systems regarding building material used throughout the UNECE region. It will adopt a neutral science-based approach.

9. To this end, it shall proceed in 3 phases:

- **Phase 1:** compile and assess existing environmental information related to building materials with a focus on renewable materials, including wood; this information should cover the full life cycle of products (from production of raw material to use, recycling and end-use, including supply chain).
  **Output:** short report (20 pages maximum incl. summary note) giving an overall picture of the subject and quoting references to main studies.

- **Phase 2:** provide a comparative study, based on the best existing knowledge, of the different materials in buildings.
  **Output:** Comparative study report (20 pages maximum incl. summary note).

- **Phase 3:** if the need arises, develop recommendations to develop specific actions for example:
  - Coordinating work on Green Building within UNECE,
  - Identifying opportunities to broaden the consideration of renewable building materials including wood by providing scientific and technical input.
  **Output:** Recommendations to the above mentioned Committees.

10. The task force will collaborate where appropriate with relevant stakeholders such as governments, research institutes, certification and standardization bodies or building companies, which produce, process or use environmental information on building materials.

4- Timeframe

11. The Task Force on Green Building is established for a period which will not exceed 18 months:
   a. 6 months for Phase 1;
   b. 6 months for Phase 2;
   c. If necessary, 6 months for Phase 3.

12. This period could be extended by a joint decision of at least two of the four Bureaux of the relevant UNECE Committees.

5- Reporting procedure

13. The Task Force on Green Building reports to the Bureaux of the relevant UNECE Committees. The Bureaux shall provide guidance in terms of any other actions than completing the aforesaid phase 1 and phase 2.
14. Each Committee shall be kept informed during its session about the progress of the Task Force work, through a report or a presentation by the expert representing the Committee in the Task Force or by the secretariat of this Committee.

6- Secretariat

15. Secretariat to the Task force will be provided by the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber section, which services the Timber Committee, with the support of the secretariats of the 3 other Committees for the drafting of relevant papers, if needed.