

Response from the UNECE Timber Committee to the:

**“QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CONSULTATION PROCESS ON ISSUES
ADDRESSED BY THE AARHUS CONVENTION’S ALMATY GUIDELINES”**

1. Please provide any comments on the Guidelines, in view of your forum’s own processes, activities and particular characteristics.

The UNECE Timber Committee is not in a position to comment on the Guidelines.

2. Does your forum have any formalized rules or procedures concerning access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters? If yes, please provide an overview.

The relevant provisions in the revised Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (E/ECE/1437) adopted by the Commission at its Sixty-first session (21-23 February 2006) state that *“the Commission shall make arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which have been granted consultative status by the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with the principles approved by the Council for this purpose and contained in Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968, parts I and II”* (article 13 of the Revised Terms of Reference). Rule 20 of the Revised Rules of Procedure of the Commission specifies that Subsidiary Bodies shall adopt their own rules of procedure unless otherwise decided by the Commission.

The Timber Committee has not adopted rules of procedures, as such. Under its terms of reference, however, participation by “international and intergovernmental organizations” is formalized. The revised Terms of Reference for the Committee, as approved by the UNECE Executive Committee in October 2006 contain the following wording: *“It should (...) cooperate with other international and intergovernmental organizations active in the sector, and in particular with the FAO and its European Forestry Commission (EFC), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and with the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), in order to ensure complementarity and to avoid duplication, thereby optimizing the use of resources.”*

3. Does your forum have any non-formalized practices concerning access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters? If yes, please provide an overview.

The active participation of civil society in the work of the Timber Committee is a practice of long-standing. Representatives of non-governmental organizations, industry, the academic community and other interest groups, including the environmental community, have been taking part as observers at the annual sessions of the Committee. The representatives of civil society do not have decision-making powers, but can participate in the discussions. Additionally, all official documents of the Timber Committee and reports of its sessions are available to the public on the Committee’s website (<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber>).

4. Are there any current or future work plans of your forum that may affect the extent of or modalities for access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters? If yes, please provide an overview.

No current or future work plans are likely to change the present situation.

5. In particular, what kind of challenges, if any, has your forum encountered with regard to access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (for example, low involvement of civil society, or practical difficulties in managing public participation)? If appropriate, please provide a description underlining those experiences you think could be most useful to consider when reviewing the relevance and practicality of the Almaty guidelines.

No particular challenges are found to exist.