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SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO STABILIZE AFGHANISTAN

High-level representatives of UNECE member countries and partner organizations gathered in Geneva on 18-19 October for the 2010 Economic Forum of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). A key message emerged from the debates: the need for enhanced regional cooperation to address the challenges of long-term stability in Afghanistan.

In his opening remarks, Ján Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, stressed that: "ensuring strong and sustainable development of the economies of the region is a sine qua non for achieving long-term stability. Therefore a regional approach must have a sound economic underpinning". Robert Watkins, Deputy Special envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Resident Coordinator, said: "The situation in Afghanistan does have an impact on security and stability throughout the entire region. By focusing our efforts on economic development, we will contribute greatly to stabilization which will have a knock on effect on addressing those other political issues." In the press conference organized on 18 October 2010, Eklil Ahmad Hakimi, Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, gave an example of regional cooperation projects: TAPI. This 1,800 kilometer-long gas pipeline which will link the Caspian Sea in Turkmenistan to India, through Afghanistan and Pakistan, could create up to 20,000 job opportunities in Afghanistan.

Participants in the Forum emphasized the important role of the United Nations in facilitating the efforts of the international community in promoting peace, stability and economic cooperation in Afghanistan and Central Asia at large. They highlighted that a number of internationally

agreed legal instruments and norms in areas such as transport, energy, environment and others (such as, for example, the UNECE Water Convention) provide an excellent basis for enhanced regional cooperation in Central Asia with the participation of Afghanistan.

The Government of the Russian Federation announced its intention to increase its financial support to SPECA initiatives to support activities that involve Afghanistan and its enhanced participation in regional cooperation in Central Asia. The Government of France also announced that it would extend its support to work related to the UNECE Water Convention involving Afghanistan.

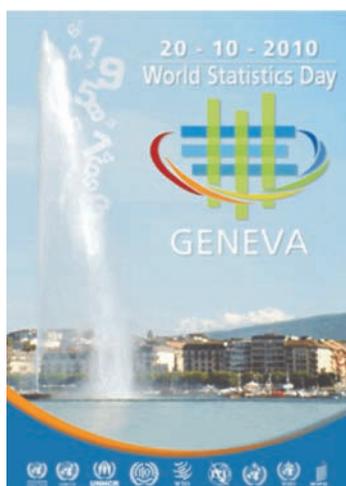
The Government of Afghanistan invited SPECA countries to join the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) and the recently established High Level Core Group of Regional Bodies and take part in activities of common interest.

As a follow-up to the Forum, the Government of Turkmenistan, which took over the SPECA chair, will host, in the first half of 2011, an international meeting on economic cooperation with Afghanistan, to be organized in cooperation with UNECE and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. □



For more information on the Forum, please visit:

<http://www.unece.org/speca/documents/ecf/2010/econfor10.html>



UNECE JOINS CELEBRATIONS OF WORLD STATISTICS DAY GENEVA, 20 OCTOBER 2010

The United Nations General Assembly designated 20 October 2010 as World Statistics Day under the general theme of "Celebrating the many achievements of official statistics" and the core values of service, integrity and professionalism.

Geneva-based international organizations – including ILO, ITU, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNHCR, WHO, WIPO, WMO and WTO – are teaming up with the Permanent Missions, the Swiss authorities, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, academia and media, to celebrate the event.

They jointly organise a conference entitled "Measuring a Globalized World: the Geneva Contribution", to raise public awareness about official statistics and their value, advocate visibility and support for statistical projects, and reinforce ties among the Geneva international organizations engaged in the production of statistics. □

The programme of the conference is available at:

<http://www.unctad.info/en/World-Statistics-Day-Geneva/Media/Agenda-and-presentations/>

Not an official record - For information only

UNECE TIMBER COMMITTEE FORECASTS REBOUND IN WOOD AND PAPER PRODUCTS MARKETS IN 2010 AND 2011



During annual Market Discussions at the UNECE Timber Committee on 11-12 October in Geneva, experts forecast an upturn in wood and paper products markets (consumption, production and trade) in 2010 and 2011 for the UNECE region. Forest products markets are rebounding from a consumption drop of 12% in 2009. The Market Discussions were conducted for the first time together with the Society of Wood Science and Technology and the resulting, officially adopted, Market Statement summarizes the most current market information on forest products market developments.

The forecast improvement is strongest in Europe and Russia. In North America the housing crash in the United States from a peak of 2.2 million housing starts, which was the main cause for the downturn, may have bottomed out in 2009 at less than 500,000. In North America, without this main driver for wood products, all forest products markets, except wood energy, fell in 2009, and were forecast to rise only slightly in 2010. Full recovery of UNECE region forest products markets

will need US housing starts to recover to a more sustainable level of near 1 million. Capacity reductions in the wood processing sector meant that when demand increased in 2010, prices generally rose for roundwood, sawnwood, panels and paper. Unemployment in the forest sector rose during the downturn and currency exchange rate fluctuations have only added to the turmoil.

The dramatic downturn in forest products markets, and the subsequent restructuring of forest-based industries, is a cause of the structural change which has occurred in the forest sector. Another reason is the escalation of wood energy: in 2009 the one major exception to the downturn in markets was wood energy which was buoyed by governments' policies for renewable energy sources. A third factor for the change is the globalization of forest products production and trade. Finally, the increased control of international wood sources in order to ensure legality and sustainability affects timber producers, traders, users and consumers alike. □

The market statement is available at:

http://www.unece.org/press/pr2010/10tim_p13/TimberCommMkt_Statement.pdf

Complete tables of country market forecasts for 2010 and 2011 are available at:

<http://www.unece.org/timber/mis/forecasts.htm>



SEMINAR ON THE UNECE WATER CONVENTION 18-19 OCTOBER, ALMATY

A two-day national seminar on the "UNECE Water Convention and its role in international law" was held on 18-19 October in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to discuss the place of the 1992 UNECE Water Convention in facilitating the transboundary water cooperation of Kazakhstan and the promotion of cooperation over shared water resources in the Central Asian region.

A Party to the Water Convention since 2001, Kazakhstan is largely dependent on transboundary waters. In an averagely water rich year, transboundary rivers bring around 44 per cent of the total volume of water resources available in the country. This places transboundary water cooperation high on Kazakhstan's agenda and calls for its active role in promoting cooperation over shared water resources in the whole Central Asian region, where the challenges of climate change and the expected increase in water use due to demographic trends and economic development is a challenging background for developing long-term solutions for cooperation over shared waters.

Representatives of the secretariats of the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification also participated in the meeting, in order to strengthen synergies in the common work to achieve sustainable management of water resources in the region.

The seminar was organized by UNECE and the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan, with organizational support from the Regional Environmental Center of Central Asia, under a programme financed by the Government of Germany through Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) in the framework of the Berlin Water Process. □

For further information please visit:

http://www.unece.org/env/water/cadialogue/water_seminar_Almaty.htm

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