



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

TIM/2005/1

19 July 2005

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

TIMBER COMMITTEE
Sixty-third session
27-30 September 2005

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE SIXTIETH SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC
COMMISSION FOR EUROPE OF RELEVANCE TO THE COMMITTEE**

(Item 2 of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

This document presents: the results of the sixtieth session of UNECE, which are relevant to the Committee's activities. The Committee is invited to take note of the Commission's conclusions and requests and respond to them as appropriate.

INTRODUCTION

1. This document presents the decisions discussed during the 2005 session of the Economic Commission for Europe which are of relevance to the Committee.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE SIXTIETH SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

A. THE UNECE REFORM

1. The Commission had decided to commission a comprehensive report on the state of the UNECE with the aim of developing recommendations to determine what changes to the role, mandate and functions of the UNECE are necessary in light of the changes in the European institutional architecture since the UNECE was created almost 60 years ago.

2. The report was finalized on 30 June 2005, and the Ad Hoc Informal Meeting of the Commission on 14 July agreed that the report would serve as a basis for the negotiating process leading to reform measures to be adopted by UNECE States. The methods of work to ensure an efficient and transparent negotiating process were discussed. The Committee will be briefed orally at its session on further developments.

3. The part of the report on The State of the UNECE referring to the Timber Sub-programme is set out in the annex.

B. PROPOSED UN PROGRAMME BUDGET, 2006-2007 BIENNIUM

4. The Commission was informed that the 2006-2007 budget submission was still awaiting the final decision of the Secretary General and the General Assembly and reiterated the importance of the full implementation of the recommendations on the Programme Budget Narratives (E/ECE/1430/Add.1).

C. UN STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (BIENNIUM PROGRAMME PLAN)

5. The Commission also adopted the recommendations of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW) concerning programme planning processes (E/ECE/1423/Add.1).

6. Implementing the recommendations of the GEPW concerning programme planning processes will require action from the Committee. In accordance with these recommendations, the Committee needs to discuss and provide its input to the draft biennial programme plan for 2008-2009. The biennial programme plan 2008-2009 will set out the subprogramme's objective, strategy, expected accomplishments and related indicators of achievement. It will provide a strategic framework for the activities of the Subprogramme on Timber in 2008-2009.

D. ACHIEVING THE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED DEVELOPMENT GOALS, INCLUDING THOSE CONTAINED IN THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION, AS WELL AS IMPLEMENTING THE OUTCOMES OF THE MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS

7. In September 2005, the General Assembly will meet at the level of Heads of States for a review of the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration. As part of the preparatory process for this Summit, the theme of the high-level segment of the substantive session of ECOSOC in June 2005 will be: «Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations

conferences and summits». Like the other regional commissions, the UNECE is providing a regional contribution to this process.

8. Member States underlined the importance of the internationally agreed development goals in the UNECE region and support was expressed for the activities of the UNECE that contribute to the achievement of these goals at the sub-regional and regional levels.

9. The Timber Committee programme, which monitors Forest Resources in the region, contributes directly to the Millennium Development Goals on sustainable forest management. Furthermore the work of the team of specialists on Role of women in forestry supports the UNECE Beijing +10 Review which recommended mainstreaming gender into economic policies as a key area requiring further efforts by member States. The Commission expressed the view that the UNECE should continue to mainstream gender into its work.

E. TOWARDS AN E-STRATEGY FOR THE UNECE

10. Delegations acknowledged the usefulness of the information and communications technologies (ICT) linking ICT know-how with activities of the sub-programmes and as a means of increasing the efficiency of UNECE activities, enhancing the secretariat capacity to serve and communicate with member States, other partners and the general public.

11. UNECE activities at the sectoral level should be demand driven with the Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) responding to the needs of member States. In this respect, ICT should not be considered as a goal in itself but rather each PSB should determine which ICT applications were most suitable for their activities. As a communications tool, some delegations pointed out that additional efforts should be made to have the timely posting of documents on the UNECE website in the three working languages (English, French and Russian). They noted that for some countries improving the multilingual character of the UNECE website would greatly facilitate the dissemination of parliamentary documentation.

12. The Timber Committee makes extensive use of information technologies to disseminate its work, publications, documents, databases, and has developed the Internet and e-mail list-servers.

F. THE WORK OF THE UNECE – ACHIEVEMENTS, CONSTRAINTS AND PERSPECTIVES

13. The Commission discussed various activities coming from the work of all relevant PSBs and their subsidiary bodies. The Commission attached high value to the work of the PSBs. It stressed the importance of the UNECE continuing to produce tangible and concrete results in keeping with the challenges and priorities of its member States. The Commission noted the description of the resource constraints faced in implementing the programme of work, and expressed its appreciation for the efforts to cope with these. In responding to resource constraints the Commission asked the Executive Secretary to work with member States to ensure that resource distribution reflects the priorities set by the Commission.

ANNEX

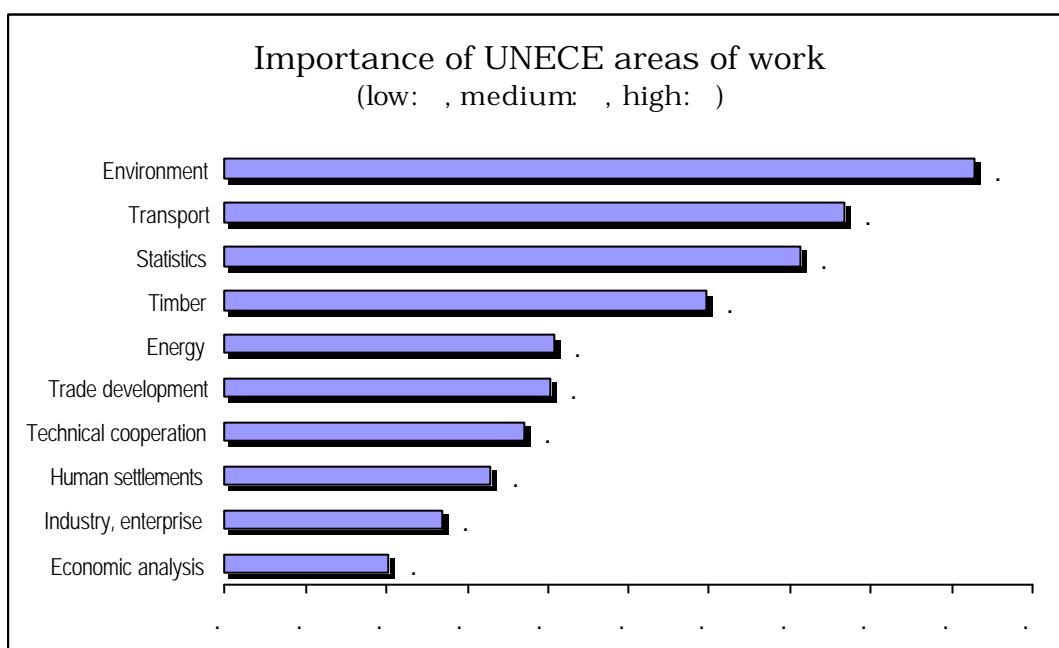
THE STATE OF THE UNECE, EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Member States' Views on UNECE Working Areas

UNECE divisions and sub-programmes

Trade Development and Timber Division, Sub-programme 7: Timber

The evaluation team has thoroughly studied and taken into account the detailed responses that Member States and international partner organizations provided to the questionnaires. The timber Sub-programme, which 38.5 % of answers indicated as a high priority area and 19.2 % as a low priority area. In the scale of 1 to 3, it scored 2.19.



The Timber Sub-programme

One of the unique forms of good cooperation between the UNECE and other UN bodies is its work on timber, which dates back to the 1940's. The UNECE and FAO run the timber activities in Europe jointly, with the consequence that staff paid by FAO can be found in UNECE offices. UNECE has a Timber Committee (TC), which meets annually in Geneva and constitutes a forum for policy debates and discussions on market trends and outlooks. It also reviews implementation of the work programme.

FAO, for its part, has a European Forestry Commission (EFC) which meets every two years, alternately in an HQ location (Geneva or Rome) and a Member Country. It reviews recent developments in policy and institutions and acts as a policy forum. It identifies emerging policy issues in the region for the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO). It also reviews implementation of the work programme.

The Bureaus consist of the officeholders, Chairman and Vice-Chairs, of the TC and the EFC and the Chair of the Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics. The Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics meets annually in Geneva to provide guidance for activities in various work areas. The Secretariat for these activities is in Geneva, and has staff from both UNECE and FAO.

The integrated programme has seven teams: 1) Markets and Marketing; 2) Monitoring Forest Resources for Sustainable Forest Management in UNECE regions; 3) Gender and Forestry; 4) Best Practices in Forest Contracting; 5) Support and Contribution to Sustainable Development of the Forest Sector in South East Europe and in the CIS; 6) Forest Fires; and 7) Forest Communicators Network.

Member country views on the timber sector

Member Countries' views on the Timber Sub-programme were generally positive: 38.5 % judged the Programme to be important for them, while 19.2 % disagreed. This is a particularly positive result in light of the fact that the Timber Sub-programme uses only 2.9 % of the UNECE's core budget, and that its staff consists of only four professionals, one of which is paid by FAO.

In their answers, some Member States wrote that the overlaps and duplication were already minimized due to the fact that FAO – and ILO – were already cooperating with the UNECE timber sector. Attention was also paid to the fact that the EC did not have a mandate on forestry issues. In addition, there were several positive mentions of the UNECE's role in including non-FAO Member States – like Russia – in European timber and forest cooperation. Finally, the publication "European Forest Sector Outlook Studies (EFSOS)" seemed to enjoy the recognition of specialists working on forest and timber issues.

Some Member Countries expressed concerns that areas such as timber and CEFACT were covered by the same division, even though they were deemed to have very little in common and the line ministries in capitals were usually different for these two issues.

The question of closer cooperation and coordination between the UNECE's timber sector and the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) should also be raised. The first Ministerial Conference was held in Strasbourg in 1990, on the initiative of France and Finland. It was attended by 30 European countries, as well as by the EC and several inter-governmental observer organizations. Recognizing the need for cross-border protection of forests in Europe, the participants agreed on six resolutions. These Strasbourg Resolutions specifically focused on technical and scientific cooperation in order to provide the necessary data for common measures concerning European forests.

Close collaboration between the MCPFE and the joint UNECE/FAO timber programme is desirable, not least because it could lead to greater contributions by the political level to the work on UNECE on timber issues. It should be noted that some cooperation between the MCPFE and the joint UNECE/FAO Timber Programme already takes place. In particular, the UNECE has been made responsible for monitoring forest fires in Europe, as well as monitoring assistance to countries in transition.

Findings and recommendations (Timber)

The evaluation team considers that given its resources and personnel, the Timber Sub-programme is doing good work within the UNECE. It also has found its natural partners in other UN organizations, and seems to avoid the duplication of its activities. The team recommends that:

- The Timber Sub-programme should continue in the current framework, in which it benefits from close cooperation with FAO;
- When UNECE divisions are restructured, the right role and place for the Timber Sub-programme can be revisited;
- Cooperation between MCPFE and UNECE should be further developed.