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### Economic Commission for Europe

#### Timber Committee

##### **Sixty-eighth session**

Geneva, 11–14 October 2010

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

##### **Matters arising from the sixty-third session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

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#### **Note by the secretariat**

##### *Summary*

This document provides an overview of developments of relevance to the UNECE/FAO joint timber and forestry programme of work and related matters arising from the most recent session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The sixty-third session of the Commission was held from 30 March to 1 April 2009. The Timber Committee is invited to take the Commission's decisions into account when reviewing its programme of work under agenda item 6.

## **I. Sixty-third session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

1. As requested by the Timber Committee at its sixty-sixth session (ECE/TIM/2008/9), this document provides an overview of the matters arising from the most recent session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and developments since then that have a bearing on the work of the Committee.
2. The sixty-third session of the Commission was held from 30 March to 1 April 2009. As decided in the context of the UNECE reform, Commission sessions are held every two years, while the UNECE Executive Committee meets regularly to monitor more closely and guide the implementation of the UNECE programme of work.
3. The Commission reviewed the decisions relating to the UNECE reform and reiterated its strategic direction. It reiterated the “renewed support of its member States to the work of UNECE, with due account of specific needs of its countries with economies in transition.”
4. At its last session, the Commission noted that the UNECE/FAO programme of work on timber and forestry assigned highest importance to climate-change issues for the strategic period until 2013, supported by a programme based on improved information, policy forums and analysis of the long-term outlook.
5. Since the Commission session in 2009, the Section has developed its climate-change activities as set out in the lines of activities approved by the Committee at its sixty-seventh session (ECE/TIM/2009/7). At its thirty-fifth session, the FAO European Forestry Commission addressed aspects related to climate change adaptation, wood energy promotion, as well as forests and water, another theme that had been considered by the Commission at its sixty-third session. The current Timber Committee session will address climate change through the forest-products angle, reviewing wood energy, carbon markets and climate-change policy in the context of market discussions and the policy forum on building codes and standards.
6. A policy forum or workshop on climate change is planned to be held in 2011 to mark the International Year of Forests. At its next meeting, the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Eastern Europe and Central Asia will consider climate-change adaptation in the context of national policies and strategies. The Forestry and Timber Section has been active in the policy discussion on the green economy. It prepared a discussion paper on the “The Forest Sector in the Green Economy” based on the presentation and discussions at the UNECE/FAO Policy Forum held on 15 October 2009. The Section has also contributed to the forestry chapter of the United Nations Environment Programme “Green Economy” report.

## **II. Implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Reform**

7. During its sixty-third session, the Economic Commission for Europe formally reviewed the decisions relating to the UNECE reform, and expressed satisfaction with its implementation. It emphasized the role of UNECE as “a unique, pan-European platform for all countries to discuss, on an equal footing, issues of importance, such as economic integration, regional cooperation and best practices.” At the same time, it agreed that “further efforts were needed both by member States and the secretariat to promote better

knowledge and recognition of UNECE work, including among United Nations bodies in New York.”

8. The Timber and Forestry Section has begun to promote its work, in regional and global forums. Recent efforts have focused in particular on enhancing outreach to other communities such as energy, water, climate change, biodiversity and land use. For example, on the occasion of World Environment Day in Geneva on 5 June, the Section organized a policy forum on forests and their different functions and values, with representatives of environmental conventions and sectors, to engage in dialogue among experts and brief the general public. The Section is the UNECE focal point for the United Nations system-wide Environmental Management Group (EMG) on biodiversity as well as land use. Its staff also regularly participate in events of the environmental community organized by UNEP, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and others.

9. Preparations for the International Year of Forests have already started, in cooperation with the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) and with the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network. The secretariat has already enhanced its media activities, in particular by increasing the number of press releases and expanding the networks for their distribution. A short video on the pan-European forests and the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section is being prepared and is to be launched on the occasion of the International Year of Forests in early 2011.

10. In the following, the developments with regards to the implementation of the UNECE reform are highlighted for the different areas of the reform recommendations:

(a) Increasing cooperation with the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (now Forest Europe);

(b) Strengthening monitoring and analysis of activities relating to forest policies and institutions;

(c) Enhancing inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral activities, by working with other Committees within UNECE.

#### **A. Cooperation with Forest Europe (Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe)**

11. As encouraged by the work plan on UNECE reform, the Timber Committee is increasingly developing its cooperation with Forest Europe (Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe). Cooperation with Forest Europe is crucial to considering the possible synergies among the forest-related processes in the pan-European region, in view of the possible negotiations towards a legally binding arrangement on forests in Europe.

12. The UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section has long-standing experience in forest monitoring and assessment, market and policies, including the support to Forest Europe process, and could contribute effectively to developing a legally binding agreement. The Section is also leading the process of reporting on sustainable forest management, and the implementation of commitments, for the preparation of the report on the State of Europe's Forests. The Forestry and Timber Section regularly participates in Forest Europe meetings.

13. The Section is also providing support to the Forest Europe process through ad hoc advice on experience gained in the hosting of conventions' secretariats. For instance, UNECE/FAO is jointly organizing a seminar with Forest Europe on 7 September 2010 to

provide an overview of Conventions hosted by the UNECE, as well as other legally binding arrangements. The event will cover key issues such as experiences in:

- (a) The pre-negotiation phase;
- (b) Inclusive, transparent and participatory policymaking in an international legal instrument;
- (c) Effective and efficient compliance, in terms of obligatory reporting mechanisms, expert review processes, consultative process for corrective action, liability and redress, and enforcement.

14. In order to continue to implement decisions of the UNECE reform and work towards a coherent institutional framework for forests in Europe, future synergies will also be explored with the Forest Europe process. This could be achieved by:

- (a) Further joining forces in the organization of policy forums and events, in particular in view of the International Year of Forests;
- (b) Increasing coherence in the delivery of outputs, for instance by making sure that communication strategies under development are consistent and mutually supported. The strategies could eventually be merged into one pan-European communication strategy on forests;
- (c) Exchanging information on processes and meetings relevant to forests in the region and support mutual participation;
- (d) Intensifying exchanges and joint work between the UNECE/FAO secretariat and the Forest Europe Liaison Unit.

## **B. Monitoring and Analysis of Forest Policies and Institutions**

15. As requested by the UNECE reform, the timber and forestry programme has continuously strengthened its activities on monitoring and analyzing policies and institutions. This has comprised strengthening the activities relating to monitoring policies and institutions, notably through:

- (a) Information collection, validation, and dissemination;
- (b) Strengthening more generally the policy dimension of the programme to ensure pertinent policy issues are being addressed and analysed through policy forums, dialogues, analyses, discussion papers etc.

16. The Forestry and Timber Section, together with FAO Headquarters and the FAO Legal Office, has led the process of developing an information repository on forest policies, legislation and institutions, at both regional and global levels, to become the worldwide reference for such information. This database has been online since March 2010 and is available at <http://www.fao.org/forestry/country/18315/en/>. As of October 2010, all data including that from FAO's Forest Resources Assessment 2010, will also be displayed in the database.

17. More generally, the Section has worked on comparing the information provided by countries through different sources, such as the State of Europe's Forests enquiry on qualitative indicators, the Forest Resources Assessment and the national forest programme updates. The Section has also initiated efforts to harmonize future data collection efforts, notably for the next *State of Europe's Forests* report.

18. Capacity-building activities on policies and institutions in eastern European and central Asian countries are also being organized, together with partners in the pan-European

region. Through a Team of Specialists, which is serviced by the FAO Subregional Offices in Budapest and Ankara, in close cooperation with the Section, the programme targets the countries in eastern Europe and central Asia, and facilitates the sharing of experiences and best practices throughout the region.

## **C. Intersectoral activities**

19. At its most recent session, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe reiterated the need for inter-sectoral exchange and coordination. The need for better communication between different “communities” such as forest, water, and energy specialists was emphasized, in order to improve mutual understanding and the knowledge base for action, as well as to avoid perverse incentives and contradictions between sectoral policies. This is particularly important for the future, as most sectors will be greatly affected by climate change, and will strive to develop adequate adaptation strategies. Such strategies should be coordinated on an intersectoral basis, in particular as effects on a single sector, such as water or forests, will greatly impact other sectors. Improving communication and exchange between the different sectoral committees of UNECE has also been one of the reform recommendations.

20. The following are some of the most important intersectoral and cross-sectoral activities<sup>1</sup> under the UNECE/FAO integrated programme of work on timber and forestry. The Committee is invited to take note of these and provide guidance and suggestions for future work.

### **1. Energy**

21. On the basis of its work in forests and energy, there is ongoing cooperation with the UNECE Sustainable Energy Committee. Following the request by the Energy Efficiency 21 (EE21) Steering Committee in May 2008, the Forestry and Timber Section submitted a project proposal on “Modern and sustainable heat and power from woody biomass in South-Eastern Europe” to the EE21 Steering Committee in 2009. The project is aimed at demonstrating the feasibility of converting municipal heat and power systems in the Western Balkans to woody biomass. This would allow using the abundant domestic forest resources in the most efficient and sustainable way. Under this initiative it is proposed to develop detailed project proposals for one or two municipalities in each of the participating countries.

22. The members of the EE21 Steering Committee showed great interest and supported this initiative, and requested continued cooperation between the Sustainable Energy Division and the Forestry and Timber Section for developing this subregional project. This support was reiterated by the Steering Committee at its session on 11 June 2010, with much interest expressed by the countries in the region. However, the project needs funding. The Timber Committee, which has previously reviewed and approved this project, is invited to promote it with potential donors.

### **2. Housing and Land Management**

23. Cooperation with the Committee on Housing and Land Management has been intensified since the European Forest Week, in particular concerning green buildings. In

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<sup>1</sup> Inter-sectoral means where two or possibly more sectors interact with each other. “Cross-sectoral” means where major complex issues cut across many sectors. Given the general complexity of the issues, and the difficulty of defining clearly the boundaries of any one sector, this distinction is difficult to apply in practice.

2011, a Green Building forum is envisaged to compare, on a scientific basis, different systems and approaches for carbon accounting in buildings. More specifically, the forum would be the occasion to present the state of play in terms of applied research on carbon and energy embodied in building materials, existing broad lifecycle approaches and methodologies and main green building rating systems. Ultimately, the forum could discuss whether guidelines could be developed on how to measure embodied carbon during the first stage of a building lifecycle i.e. raw construction materials process and building construction. A concept paper for a forum on measuring the carbon footprint of buildings was developed in May 2010 in cooperation with the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division and the Sustainable Energy Division.

24. It is planned to link this initiative with the Sustainable Buildings and Climate Initiative (SBCI) launched by UNEP in order to promote internationally recognized metrics and protocols for measuring and reporting on how buildings can have an impact during their entire life cycle on energy, water or biodiversity. More specifically, the forum could be linked to the work of the UNEP/SBCI initiative in the field of energy/green house gases emissions and possibly in the field of materials.

25. Thus, in May 2010 the Forestry and Timber Section, together with the Quebec wood exports bureau, attended the annual general meeting of the UNEP/SBCI initiative in order to promote the organization of such a forum in 2011 and to better understand how it could be linked with the UNEP/SBCI programme of work. Good cooperation was established with the UNEP secretariat in this regard. However, the SBCI board of directors deferred the decision concerning the forum, due to its possible link with the place and date of their next general assembly. It could nevertheless be possible to organize such a forum independently from the general assembly, but with participation of the UNEP initiative.

26. The Timber Committee is invited to discuss the way forward and identify interested potential sponsors.

### **3. Trade**

27. Trade in forest products is regularly monitored and analysed, notably in the *Forest Products Annual Market Review*, which is steadily increasing its coverage of trade policy issues. Relevant policy forums at the Committee's sessions have also benefited from the expertise available in the Trade and Timber Division.

28. The year 2010 was marked by the co-organization with the World Trade Organization (WTO) of a workshop on trade measures and timber markets on 23 March 2010. This event was held following the call by the Timber Committee in October 2009 for a "multi-stakeholder workshop in 2010, dedicated to tariff and non-tariff trade barriers and emerging trade regulations on timber". The workshop was a unique opportunity to get a comprehensive overview of the increasingly complex regulatory framework affecting trade of wood and products. More than 100 stakeholders participated from government, industry, trade associations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and academia. It was concluded that regulations affecting the trade of timber products are evolving quickly, and this evolution should be closely monitored because of the impacts on the entire forest sector. This should therefore remain a topic of high interest and relevance for the Timber Committee in the coming months.

### **4. Statistics**

29. Following offers from the Statistical Division, the Forestry and Timber Section requested cooperation with the Statistical Division in several areas. These include co-organizing a capacity-building workshop as a follow-up to the February 2009 Moscow workshop on forest products statistics in the CIS region and technical work for the Joint

Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) and other databases. In addition support for the 2009 JWEE was sought. These proposals have been brought to the attention of the bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians at its June 2010 meeting albeit the Statistical Division suggested cooperation in the area of technical support.

## 5. Environment

30. Everything related to sustainable forest management, the overriding objective of the subprogramme's work, takes into account the environmental dimension as one of the pillars of sustainable development. The Forestry and Timber Section cooperates with the UNECE Environment, Housing and Land Management Division on a number of matters.

### (a) *Cooperation with UNECE Environment Conventions*

31. In connection with the seminar being co-organized with Forest Europe on 7 September 2010, the Forestry and Timber Section is currently collaborating with the secretariats of the following UNECE Conventions:

- (a) Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution;
- (b) Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context;
- (c) Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents;
- (d) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters;
- (e) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

32. Representatives of each secretariat have been invited to share their experiences on the development of an effective legal instrument.

### (b) *Black Carbon*

33. At its thirty-fifth session, the European Forestry Commission noted a knowledge gap regarding the particle emissions from wood energy, in particular when compared with other fuels. It recommended that the Working Group on Black Carbon under the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, in cooperation with the Forestry and Timber Section, consider reviewing this matter.

### (c) *Forests and Water*

34. The Forestry and Timber Section has been cooperating with the secretariat of the UNECE Water Convention, in particular on forests and water and on the benefits of payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes. UNECE has developed recommendations on PES under the Water Convention, based on good practices from different sectors, including forestry. Further work was recommended by the European Forestry Commission at its thirty-fifth session, to raise awareness of the value of forest ecosystems for water supplies, mobilize political support for PES and to enhance institutional capacities for implementing such schemes.

35. Furthermore, the Commission endorsed a recommendation to include the EFC Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds in the Strategic Plan of the Integrated Programme of Work. It recommended that the mandate of the Working Party should be expanded to include issues related to forests and water, following consultation with the Bureaux and the Steering Committee of the Working Party in February 2010.

(d) *Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference*

36. The Forestry and Timber Section took part in a coordination meeting with other divisions of UNECE in preparation for the 2010 Astana Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and to address two main themes “Greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development”; and “Sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems”.

37. The “Environment for Europe” process and its ministerial conferences provide a high-level forum for stakeholders to discuss, decide and join efforts in addressing environmental priorities across the 56 countries of the UNECE region. The process includes organizations of the United Nations system represented in the region, other intergovernmental organizations, regional environment centres, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

38. A number of ideas on how the forest sector could be represented at this conference were discussed and proposed, including:

(a) A country review on forest policies and their integration of environment and climate change-related issues as input into the “greening the economy” agenda, along with a segment on how the forest sector contributes to a green economy;

(b) A session on forests and water to consider the linkages between these two sectors in the context of climate change in particular in central Asia.

39. The Conference might also provide for a possibility to celebrate the International Year of Forests proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

## **D. Recommendations**

**40. The Committee is requested to review, discuss and possibly adopt the following recommendations:**

**1. Continue to intensify cooperation and strengthen synergies with the Forest Europe process, with a view to increasing coherence of work and provide mutual support to the developments of pan-European forest policy and strategy;**

**2. Join forces with other actors in the pan-European region in preparing activities for the International Year of Forests, including ongoing work on communication, towards a joint pan-European forest communication strategy;**

**3. Request the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section to continue to cooperate with relevant UNECE divisions and programmes for the delivery of joint activities and to reach out better to the other sectors;**

**4. Advise the secretariat on the next steps for work on green building and cooperation with UNEP;**

**5. Request the Working Group on Black Carbon under the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution to review the matter of particle emissions from wood fuel in cooperation with the secretariat;**

**6. Request the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy to include in the Conference agenda segments on forest sector policies and forest and water, as well as recognition of the International Year of Forests.**