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Organization**

Timber Committee

**Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party
on Forest Economics and Statistics**

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Food and Agriculture

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**UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section's Activities on
Policies and Cross-Sectoral Issues**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document provides information on the main activities in Work Area 5, **Policy and Cross-Sectoral Issues**. It highlights the topics and issues to be addressed by Working Party, in the many different areas covered by this part of the work programme. The Working Party is invited for the first time to offer guidance on how current and future activities in Work Area 5 (WA5) might be developed beyond the development of the monitoring on forest policies and institutions.

The programme of work for WA5 comprises the following activities:

Programme elements

- I. Contribution to the global dialogue on forests
- II. Monitoring recent developments in forest sector policies, legislation and institutions, including national forest programmes
- III. Analysing developments in forest sector policies, legislation and institutions, including interactions with other sectors
- IV. Implementing sustainable forest management through capacity building for forest policies and institutions
- V. Organizing policy forums on major topical issues
- VI. Exchanging information on improving management of wildland fires
- VII. Improving sectoral and cross-sectoral exchange and communication

I. Contribution to the global dialogue on forests

1. At the pan-European level the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section remains an important partner to the Forest Europe process. The main contribution to the process consists in the coordination of the State of Europe's Forest report, to be issued in June 2011 on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference in Oslo. Synergies with Forest Europe are critical to maintain coherence of the policy direction and activities addressing it at the pan-European level. Currently the Section has also been following the work of the Expert Level Meeting and its drafting group on the possible development of a legally binding agreement for forests in Europe. The Section has responded to the request of the Forest Europe delegates on issues relevant to the servicing of negotiations by UN organizations and staff regularly attends those meetings.

2. The Section is also working to reinforce its ties with the European Forest Institute (EFI), in order to join forces also on scientific and technical work at the pan-European level and establish stronger synergies with all other relevant partners.

At the global level, this year the Section further strengthened its ties and participation in the United Nations Forum on Forest. The Section was asked to chair a panel on Regional and Subregional inputs, which featured successful cases of SFM implementation in different regions of the world and listened to reports from main regional organizations. During the high level segment, the UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary contributed to a Round table on "Forest plus: a cross sectoral and cross institutional approach", where he stressed the importance of a solid pan-European partnership on forests, in order for all regional organizations to deliver as one.

3. Another contribution worth mentioning is the development of an Action Plan for a Green Economy in the Forest Sector to be presented at the joint session of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission in October 2011. The Action Plan is developed through a thorough consultation with main stakeholders in the sector, including members States, the private sector and NGOs. In addition to a questionnaire distributed through the main forest mailing lists, a stakeholders meeting is being organized in Geneva on 10-11 May to discuss the preliminary draft of the Action Plan. The Plan will identify a series of practical actions that could be implemented at the national level to make the pan-European and North American forestry section economically competitive and even more environmentally friendly. The Action Plan will provide a clear definition of what a 'green economy' means for the forest sector in Europe and provide the input of UNECE and FAO to the Rio +20 process. It is also a practical contribution to the debate on greening economies in the context of poverty alleviation and sustainable development, one of the two main topics to be discussed in Rio in 2012.

II. Monitoring recent developments in forest sector policies, legislation and institutions, including national forest programmes

4. This activity is currently undertaken as part of the monitoring work included in the State of Europe's Forests. A systematic review of the policies and institutions in the ECE region has also been undertaken as part of the FRA 2010 assessment. A compilation of all institutions active in the region and addressing forest related matters is under preparation and will be published shortly with the title of "Finding forests: sourcebook on forest institutions and policy instruments"

5. Monitoring and exchanging information on forest policies is also done through the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Policy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. At its last meeting in Istanbul in September 2010, ToS members developed an overview of key forest policy issues and challenges in their countries related to forest policy development and implementation and matched these with success stories. They have committed themselves, supported by UNECE and FAO to follow up and if feasible, develop and implement bi- or multilateral projects addressing priority issues. Once implemented, this will be a contribution to capacity building throughout the region.

III. Analysing developments in forest sector policies, legislation and institutions, including interactions with other sectors

6. Analysis of developments in the forest sector's policies, legislation and institutions will also be part of the upcoming State of Europe's Forest study 2011. The second part of the report will focus on qualitative indicators for sustainable forest management.

7. Collection of qualitative data included two groups of indicators: "Overall policies, institutions & instruments" and "Policies, institutions & instruments per policy area". For more information on the data collection procedure, please see meeting document 3b.1

8. Out of 46 Forest Europe countries, 38 countries submitted national reports on qualitative indicators. These countries represent nearly 97 percent of forest area of the Forest Europe region (excluding the Russian Federation). As compared to the situation in 2007 when the percentage of the covered forest area was 79 percent (excluding the Russian Federation), significant improvement in information availability for the different qualitative indicators can be observed in 2010. A sustainability assessment which includes an evaluation of progress made in forest institutions and instruments since the last reporting will be undertaken in the 2011 report.

9. In the new European Forest Sector Outlook Study to be issued by the end of 2011, policies and institutions will also be assessed in view of their suitability for addressing key climate change, energy and sustainability issues as they affect the forest sector in the future.

IV. Implementing sustainable forest management through capacity building for forest policies and institutions

10. At the moment this activity is limited due to financial constraints and lack of earmarked budgetary resources. However, the Working Party may wish to discuss possible priorities to be addressed by capacity building activities on this subject. A project proposal on woody biomass in southeast Europe has been developed, joint with the energy efficiency 21 project managed by the UNECE Sustainable Energy Division to address capacity building in this area. Unfortunately, no funds have so far been allocated by member States to promote this or similar projects.

V. Organizing policy forums on major topical issues

11. The EFC and TC bureaux at their joint meeting in October 2010 identified Payment for Ecosystem services as an important topic for discussions, in particular as payment for ecosystem schemes in forest are at an initial state of development compared to other sectors such as water, and sharing information amongst interested countries is a priority. The workshop on payments for ecosystem services, with a focus on forests, will take place from 4 to 6 July 2011 in Geneva. The workshop will also provide input to the joint session of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission on payments for forest-related ecosystem services in a green economy along with the Action Plan on Forests and the Green Economy.

VI. Exchanging information on improving management of wildland fires

12. Activities of the Team of Specialist (ToS) on Forest Fire Fires allow an intense exchange of information amongst its members as well as member States. The ToS, in particular through its Chair, has been providing advice to countries experiencing forest fires challenges and a workshop to address cross boundary forest fires is planned to be organized in late 2011. For more information on the activities of the ToS on Forest Fire please refer to the ToS report available at:
<http://timber.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/meetings/20110321/report-tos-fire-2011-01.doc>.

VII. Improving sectoral and cross-sectoral exchange and communication

13. The importance of forest communication has been always highlighted and recognized through the work of the Forest Communicators Network, an UNECE-FAO ToS currently developing a communication strategy for forest in the pan-European region. More information can be found in the report of the Forest Communicators Network at <http://timber.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/meetings/20110321/report-tos-fcn-2011-02.doc>.

14. The team is in particular addressing the need to communicate beyond the forest experts' boundaries, in order to reach out to other communities, such as the more encompassing environmental work, including biodiversity and natural resources management, the energy world, the sustainability of wood products and forest management in Europe.

15. The UNECE-FAO Forestry and Timber Section is also seizing the opportunity offered by the International Year of the Forests to raise awareness on SFM in Europe and the work of UNECE and FAO in this area. The launch of the International Year of the Forests took place on 2 February 2011 at the United Nations headquarters during the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

16. In addition to what has already been mentioned above, various activities are being organized to celebrate the International Year of the Forests (IYF) and to foster the promotion of sustainable forest practices. Activities promoted and organized by UNECE-FAO, include:

- An IYF exhibit in the Palais des Nations to take place from 7 February to 4 March 2011, organized jointly by UNECE, FAO and the US Permanent mission to the UN in Geneva.
- The Regional Forest Information Week, organized jointly by UNECE and FAO, as part of its joint programme of work, to take place from 21 (World Forest Day) to 25 March 2011. The week will feature a series of events, including a workshop on the state of forests in the UNECE region, the annual session of the joint UNECE/FAO Working Party on Forests Economics and Statistics and, as part of the last event, a roundtable on forest information challenges.

17. The IYF will culminate, for the UNECE and FAO Forestry and Timber joint programme, with the joint session of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission to take place on 10-14 October in Antalya, Turkey. The joint session will address, in particular, the issue of forestry in a green economy, for which an action plan is currently under preparation and will be presented at the session (see above).

18. Moreover, a project for a Thesis Award, to be delivered to the best PhD thesis on forestry or forest products in the region, is under consideration. At the time of writing, the project proposal has been approved and welcomed by the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission Bureaux at their last meeting (October 2010) and the president of the panel and the jury have already been identified. It was decided that the prize should be sponsored by the private sector, as a way to better involve the private sector in the Section's activities. The secretariat is currently looking for a project sponsor.

The Working Party is requested to take note of the activities above and provide advice on the following:

- *Priority policy issues to be addressed in 2012, e.g. at Policy For a, workshops and seminars*
- *Opportunities for reaching out to other communities and improving cross-sectoral linkages and interactions*
- *Funding and development of capacity building activities.*