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Vancouver Invitation on Sustainable Forest Products for a Better Future

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

At the initiative of the Government of Canada and with the support of the COFFI Bureau, a document was developed containing the main elements of a message on sustainable forest products for the consideration of the meeting. The Vancouver Invitation is a statement of intent, meant to gain supporters after its approval by COFFI, to create a larger community of like-minded stakeholders in support of sustainable forest products as a key element of a green economy and to achieve relevant SDGs.

The Committee will be invited to consider and approve the Vancouver Invitation.



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1. We, the COFFI member States, invite you to join us in recognizing and promoting the value of sustainably produced wood products as environmentally friendly materials with which to build the future.
2. Through this effort, we wish to spread the word that traditional and innovative wood products and applications, when coupled with sustainable forest management techniques, can provide substantial benefits to the world of the future, socially, economically, and environmentally. And we want to identify the actions we need to take to secure this future.
3. For way too long, the wood products sector has been viewed as a backward facing industry whose environmental impacts are largely negative and whose economic benefits are dwindling as we move into the 21st century. This view is seriously outdated. Instead, we assert that forests, and the forest product sector, have an essential role to play in the future of our planet. In order to serve this role, a commitment on the part of all of us to both sustainable forest management and to continued innovation in the wood products sector is critical.
4. Forests purify the air we breathe, clean the water we drink, store carbon, sustain biodiversity, beautify our communities, and support local economies. When sustainably managed, forests can supply these benefits and a wealth of products. By producing both commodity and innovative products that substantially improve our quality of life, including, wood for homes and tall buildings, books that promote learning, packaging, and textiles that provide comfort, the list continues to grow in often surprising ways.
5. The United Nation's Agenda 2030 has identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to pursue over the coming decades in order to make the world a better place. As one of the largest terrestrial habitats, forests and their sustainable management can have a positive impact on most if not all SDGs. Wood products obtained from timber harvested in sustainably managed forests can also provide substantial benefits. These range from reductions in atmospheric carbon from the substitution of renewable wood for more carbon intensive building materials (SDG 13—Climate Action), to the invigoration of rural economies and communities in forested areas (SDG 8—Decent Work and Economic Growth), to the provision of renewable energy (SDG 7—Affordable and Clean Energy).
6. To further attain these goals, the wood products sector will need to continue to pursue efficient and innovative processing techniques and products (SDG 9—Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and more fully incorporate socially and environmentally responsible practices using circular production chains (SDG 12—Responsible Consumption and Production). Implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halting deforestation, restoring degraded forests and substantially increasing afforestation and reforestation globally (SDG 15 – Life on Land) provide the basis for renewable forest products. To the extent that these objectives can be realized, the wood products sector can serve as a modern and quintessential example of man working with nature to produce benefits for society.
7. Reaching the SDGs will require specific efforts to which we are committed to and we invite others to join, including the following:
 - a) **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)**
 - Increase health and wellness of all ages through increased outdoor activity in the forest;
 - Understand the value of wood buildings in providing affordable housing, and the impact wood buildings can have on health and well-being.

- b) SDG 4 (Quality Education)**
- Communicate to the society at large, and younger generations in particular, the importance of the forestry and forest-based industries, while showcasing their innovative and sustainable character.
 - Increase the knowledge and awareness about the role of forest and wood products in carbon storage.
- c) SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)**
- Educate new audiences about the importance of well-managed forests in improving the availability of clean water.
- d) SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)**
- Promote wood from sustainably managed forests as a source of renewable energy.
 - Create awareness on the advantages of renewable forest products as a substitute for more energy-intensive raw materials.
- e) SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)**
- Undertake actions to improve attractiveness of the sector to tackle widespread workforce aging and loss of skills.
- f) SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure)**
- Pursue efficient and innovative processing techniques and products.
 - Recognize and promote the importance of construction standards that do not unduly discriminate against wood materials.
 - Identify appropriate initiatives that can assist in attracting investment in forests, timber processing and manufacturing sectors.
- g) SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)**
- Build sustainable and resilient cities by leveraging diverse and innovative wood products and sufficient urban forest areas.
 - Undertake actions to ensure a steady supply of sustainably sourced raw materials to the sector, balanced with social and environmental considerations.
 - Ensure that public procurement policies promote the use of sustainably produced wood products, including the promotion of timber in construction.
 - Create a level playing field for wood as a construction material regarding building regulations (e.g. fire safety, earthquakes, etc.) based on robust scientific knowledge
- h) SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)**
- Incorporate socially and environmentally responsible practices in all stages of the production chain.
 - Boost favourable conditions for innovation in wood-based product development.
- i) SDG 13 (Climate Action)**

- Promote substitution of carbon intensive building materials by use of renewable wood in order to reduce atmospheric carbon.
- Foster the implementation of policy measures to encourage use of wood as a building material to help tackle climate change through increased carbon storage.

j) SDG 15 (Life on Land)

- Recognize the contribution of Sustainable Forest Management in all of its important ecological, social and economic dimensions, including the sourcing of raw materials.
- Enhance the achievement of Sustainable Forest Management, including certification
- Promote the procurement of fibre from sustainably managed sources through the use of third party forest certification or other mechanisms as a critical tool in achieving the SDGs listed above.
- Respect indigenous rights across landscapes, and understand the long-term relationships Indigenous people have had with many forested lands.

Vancouver, 8 November 2018 – Committee on Forests and Forest Industries of the UNECE
