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CROSS-SECTORAL ACTIVITIES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS)

DOCUMENT FOR INFORMATION

Note by the secretariat

In addition to providing information, this document has as its objectives to assist delegations in:

- Evaluating the extent of current cross sectoral activities.
- Measuring the degree to which the Committee is supporting global United Nations mandates.
- Determining potential new areas for cross sectoral developments in the programme of work.

Previous Related Documentation: TRADE/2003/15

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I.   SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1.   Sustainable development of trade has been an important policy framework for UNECE trade, industry and enterprise development activities in 2003. The UNECE organized and participated in policy discussions on trade and environment and continued its support for cross-sectoral trade, timber and environment projects. UNECE subsidiary bodies also contributed to the integration of environmental aspects into work on international quality standards and standardization policies.

A. Policy dialogues on sustainable development.

2.   During 2003, the UNECE organized and participated in policy discussions on trade and environment. In July 2003, the UNECE Timber Committee, in cooperation with the CTIED and the FAO, held a Roundtable Meeting on Trade, Environment and Forests *Working Together for Sustainable Development*.

3.   At this occasion, the Representatives of Member States and observers, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, private organizations and other entities involved in the forestry, environment and trade sectors, discussed such issues as:
- Trade liberalization and Forest Products Trade
- Forest-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and Current Policy Debates in WTO
- Forest and Forest Products Certification
- Trade, Rural Poverty and the Environment
- Markets for Forest Environmental Services
- Private Sector Perspectives on the Development of Trade in Forest Products and Services

4.   The UNECE followed up on some of the workshop's discussions, especially in the area of forest certification, in its informal consultations with relevant international organizations, such as the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. The workshop's proceedings were released as a publication by the FAO.

B. UNECE's support for cross-sectoral trade, timber and environment projects.

5.   The Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (CTIED) continued its cooperation with the UNECE committees on timber and on environmental policy in the area of promotion of trade in sustainably managed forest products, namely:
- "Improved Trade Logistics for the Sustainable Use of Biomass" project
- Capacity building project for the sustainable management of trade in the forests and timber sector in Russia and other CIS countries.

(a) UNECE Trade Development and Timber Division Project on "Improved Trade Logistics for the Sustainable Use of Biomass"

6.   Many economies in transition are confronted with major challenges in the economic development of their forest resources. Russia, in particular, faces problems in promoting the sustainable development of what

could be one of its principal renewable export products.

7.   The Trade Development and Timber Division has therefore launched the project, "Improved Trade Logistics for the Sustainable Use of Biomass", through which efficient trade networks for the export of biomass from the Russian Federation to European countries are being developed. Assistance in the field of trade logistics is being provided to facilitate biomass trade flows between the participating countries.

8.   An extensive network of private and public partners has already been established through the UNECE Trade Development and Timber Division project, "Capacity Building to Improve Trade Finance and Investment Prospects for the Russian Timber Sector". The Division's new biomass project is building on these existing contacts.

Objectives

9.   The immediate objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of participants to market their biomass resources in a sustainable way. The long-term objective is to improve the sustainable trade performance of the participating countries through the use UNECE norms, standards and recommendations to benefit both the private and public sectors.

Expected Results

10.   UNECE expects the following results from the project:
   - Contribution to a regional plan for the trade logistics aspects of the sustainable use of biomass;
   - Improved infrastructure and trade logistics for the sustainable use of biomass in the Leningrad Oblast and the Arkhangelsk Oblast, and, more specifically, in the areas of customs cooperation, timber port logistics and the trade logistics chain;
   - Use of its experience with Russia to develop a model for other regions of the CIS.

(b) Capacity building for the sustainable management of trade in the forest and timber sector in Russia and other CIS countries

11.   The UNECE maintained its support for this extra-budgetary project in Russia and other CIS countries on capacity building for the sustainable management of trade in the forest and timber sector. This project includes an important long-term component on all aspects of the development of forest certification in Northwest Russia. More details on this project are reported to the CTIED in document **TRADE/2004/19.**

C. Environmental aspects of international quality standards and standardization policies.

12.   The UNECE integrated the environmental aspects in its work on international quality standards and standardization policies and, more particularly, in the activities of Working Party 7 on Agricultural Quality Standards and of Working Party 6 on Technical Harmonization and Standards Policy.

(a) The UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7)

13.   The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) has participated in a project initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop a Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and will develop promotional material highlighting the importance of a regular consumption of fruit and vegetables for health.

14.   Working Party 7 also continues to contact producer organizations of organic produce to make sure that their interests are taken into account when drafting/ amending standards.

(b) The UNECE Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6)

15.   Two recent developments under the WP.6 relate directly to the sustainable development issues.

16.   First, the Secretary of WP.6, in cooperation with the UNECE Timber Committee, continued its work on certification in the timber industry, which answers the growing demand for "green" products and has led to the development of a new generation of international standards, generic environment management standards (ISO 14000 series) and many national and regional environmental standards, guidelines and certification schemes.

17.   Second, WP.6 is currently working on the implementation of the "International Model for Technical Harmonization", which describes the steps to be followed when harmonization of technical regulations is favored by a number of UN member countries. The Model facilitates the international harmonization of technical regulations, while still taking into account the legitimate concerns of governments in the area of environment, public health and safety, and, thus, represents a practical tool for integrating environmental concerns into international standards and regulations.

II.   GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

18. The paragraphs below summarize the UNECE activities in the areas of Gender and Trade (A) and Women's entrepreneurship (B).

A. Gender and Trade

19.   The UNECE Senior Social Policy Officer took over some of the advisory activities previously performed by the Regional Advisor on Gender and Economy as of 1 March 2003.

20. In 2003 gender mainstreaming activities focused on the following activities:
   - Financing and ICT
   - Identification of gender-specific barriers to entrepreneurship;
   - Awareness-raising, at the policy level, of the need to build women's capacity to use information and communication technologies (ICT) for business development, and development of policy recommendations in this area;
   - Development of policy recommendations and strategic directions for action;
   - Establishment of sub-regional and regional networks;
   - Promotion of role models.

21. As part of mainstreaming gender issues into the ministerial preparatory process for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the Senior Social Policy Officer organized discussions on ICT for women entrepreneurs at the following events in 2002-2003:

   - Second Forum on Women Entrepreneurs, "Financing of women's businesses and access to E-technology", Geneva - March 2003
   - CEI Summit economic Forum, , Round table sessions on "Women Entrepreneurship in a Wider Europe" Warsaw, November 2003**.**
   - Round table session held at the Ministerial Conference of CIS countries (Bishkek, 9-11 September);
   - Side event on "Building a Gender-Sensitive Information Society" at the Pan-European Ministerial Conference (Bucharest, 7-9 November).

22. The side events in Geneva and in Bucharest raised awareness on a number of important issues and will help to mainstream Gender into the WSIS process through:
   - Raising awareness of trends and issues related to gender and ICT that are specific to the region;
   - Establishing a platform for dialogue among governments and other stakeholders;
   - Recommending follow-up actions and activities.

23. On 28-30 January 2004, the Senior Social Policy Officer organized a *Regional Symposium on Mainstreaming Gender into Economic Policies*, which focused on identifying approaches, challenges and entry points for gender-sensitive policies in the economic field based on good practices from individual countries. The main areas of economic policy that were addressed include: (i) access to finance and assets; (ii) women's employability and employment; (iii) gender budgets; and (iv) pension systems. The participants also discussed institutional mechanisms for mainstreaming gender into economic policies as well as regional cooperation among international organizations and NGOs in support of gender mainstreaming in the economic field. The discussion was based on background papers prepared by the UNECE secretariat and by international experts in their respective fields. All papers are available at www.unece.org/oes/gender

24. UNECE further developed its cooperation on gender and trade with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), as well as with sub-regional groupings including the Central European Initiative (CEI), and with professional associations, such as the World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises (WASME) and "Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales" (FCEM).

(b) Women's Entrepreneurship

25. During its March Meeting in 2003, the Team of Specialists on Women's Entrepreneurship agreed to:
- include the organization of a sub-regional Round Table on "Women Entrepreneurs in a Wider Europe" (November 2003, Warsaw) in the work plan for 2003;
- start preparations for sub-regional Forums of Women Entrepreneurs in Turkey and in Central Asia;
- prepare inputs for the UNECE publication "Access to Financing and ICT for Women Entrepreneurs";
- explore the possibility of publishing the profiles from the UNECE Gallery of Excellent Women Entrepreneurs;
- prepare a background paper that would take stock of existing methodologies and data related to women's entrepreneurship by sub-region.

26. In order to implement these objectives, it was agreed to establish a number of task forces, in particular four regional task forces for Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, Central Asia, and the South Caucasus, and two thematic task forces (training, and data and statistics).

27. The TOS contributed to the organization of the Second Forum on Women Entrepreneurs, which was held in March 2003 and was attended by over 250 participants from 38 countries. This event ended with the announcement of awards in six categories to the winners of the "Excellent Women Entrepreneurs of the Year 2002". The Forum was accompanied by an exhibition, informal networking sessions, and a meeting of the Presidents of Women's Business Associations.

28. On the basis of papers presented at the Forum, and inputs from the TOS members, the secretariat is now preparing a second publication on Women Entrepreneurship dedicated to *Best Practices in Financing for Women Entrepreneurs and Access to ICT.*

29. As a part of the Central European Initiative's 6ᵗʰ Summit Economic Forum (19-21 November 2003, Warsaw, Poland), which was organized in cooperation with the Polish Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy, the secretariat organized sessions on "Women Entrepreneurship in a Wider Europe". They discussed strategies and concrete projects for promoting women's entrepreneurship at both national and regional levels during and after the accession process.

30. The Regional Assessment of Data Availability on ICTs and Gender was prepared by the TOS's Task Force on Data and Statistics in collaboration with the UNECE Statistical Division. The replies to the UNECE questionnaire from national statistical offices revealed existing gaps in data availability on ICT and gender within the ECE region and, in particular, a lack of data on women's ICT use.[1]

31. The Task Force on Training and Human Resources prepared an evaluation of women entrepreneurs' training needs, focusing specifically on ECE member countries that are also members of the Central European Initiative. Training courses will be developed on the basis of this evaluation. A special note on this work will be presented to the fifth session of the Working Party.

32. At the fourth meeting in Warsaw, in November 2003, during the CEI Summit Economic Forum, the TOS agreed to:
- organize a sub-regional Forum of Women Entrepreneurs in eastern Europe (Turkey) and in Central Asia,
- Prepare a UNECE publication "Access to financing and ICT for women entrepreneurs".
- Develop training activities, based on the results of TNCA and the experience from the 2002 CEI training course and its follow-up in 2003, in cooperation with CEI and interested governments

33. The Regional Advisor on Gender and Economy has also created a UNECE web page for gender activities, which includes a page on women's entrepreneurship (www.unece.org/operact/entrep/women). It includes an online network of women's business associations with 22 associations from 15 countries, as well as pages on the Forum of Women Entrepreneurs and the Team of Specialists on Women's Entrepreneurship.

34. The mandate of the Team of Specialist on Women Entrepreneurs was renewed during the February 2004 session of its parent body, the Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development (WP.8).

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1 Results of 2003 Questionnaire Inquiry on ICT and Gender Statistics to National Statistical Offices, Human and Sustainable Development Team, UNECE Statistical Division.

III. ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

UneDocs Project

35.   The United Nations electronic trade Documents (UNeDocs) project will develop and implement solutions for efficient trade document systems based on international trade standards and technologies that are accessible to traders from SMEs and developing countries. The project combines existing UNECE standards for paper documents with e-business standards, such as the United Nations Trade Data Element Directory (ISO 7372) and UN/EDIFACT, to define the electronic equivalents for paper documents used in trade. The project provides a migration path from paper-based trading environments to advanced electronic systems. The electronic documents integrate UNECE trade recommendations and are thus an instrument to promote and implement trade standards on a global level.

36.   For the UNECE International Forum on Trade Facilitation in 2003, the project cooperated with leading software providers to demonstrate implementations of a UNeDocs document. These demonstrators are based on Web Services and integrate trade facilitation standards and best practice. It was demonstrated that electronic document solutions can be made accessible to SMEs and transition economies. UNeDocs continues this research and development with the target of providing users of UNeDocs with a wide choice of open and low-cost electronic trade documents. The UNeDocs Web Site (www.UNeDocs.org) was maintained and available services expanded. The project also developed Web Services for important UN recommended code lists which are accessible on the Web Site.

37.   The UNECE also cooperated with the Electronic Post Mark (EPM) project of the Universal Postal Union. EPM provides security and time stamping for electronic documents. This cooperation demonstrated the feasibility and complementarily of EPM signatures in UNeDocs trade documents. The project developed a Web Service for automated validation of UNeDocs trade documents and EPM signatures through Web Services. This Web Service was demonstrated on the WSIS. The project also continued its cooperation with SITPRO, the United Kingdom trade facilitation board. Together with SITPRO the project developed the UNeDocs International Document Set (IDS). The IDS is based on the UNeDocs proof of concept developed in 2002. The solution provides a data model for paper documents aligned to the United Nations Layout Key and an electronic equivalent in XML and UN/EDIFACT syntax.

38.   The UneDocs project team carried out several fact-finding missions to prepare technical assistance projects, based on requests from Governments. However, further progress of the project will depend on the mobilization of external resources to conduct implementations.

Potential Contribution of the Trade Development and Timber Division to the Automation of the TIR Carnet (E-TIR), and Related Support to the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)

39.   The second session of the Informal Ad Hoc Expert Group on the Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure took place in Prague at the end of 2002. The participation of the Trade Development and Timber Division representative in the session highlighted that the eTIR Project draws on key tools for the automation of information exchanges developed within the Trade Development subprograme. For this reason, eTIR is a highly interesting and groundbreaking project that would benefit from cross-sectoral cooperation between the Trade Development and Timber Division and the Transport Division.

40.   The key aspect of the eTIR Project relates to the requirements, opportunities and constraints imposed by the existing paper document (TIR carnet). This paper document is very complex and has a dual function:
    (1) Description and monitoring of the transit process through the countries involved;
    (2) Transmission of the information required by the various Customs offices of the transit
          entities.

41.   Because of this dual function, the automation of the TIR Carnet requires that the transit process first be recorded and described in a systematic and detailed way, using modelling techniques. This will lay the foundation for a longer-term automation of transit procedures. The tools developed by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) with the Unified Modelling Methodology (UMM) are fully appropriate and support this objective.

42.   The second function of the TIR paper document, the transmission of information, requires the computerization of the paper document in a cost-effective and technically feasible manner. Here, the experience gained and the solutions developed in the United Nations electronic trade Documents (UNeDocs) project for digital paper could be valuable for the automation of the TIR paper document.

43.   At the SECIPRO2 meeting in Skopje at the end of 2002, the Trade Development and Timber Division presented its capacity-building project in trade facilitation and electronic business for the non-EU Mediterranean countries. The discussions following the presentation indicated that cross-sectoral technical cooperation between the Trade Development and Timber Division and the Transport Division could support the development of a "Sub-Regional Capacity-Building Project for e-Trade and Transport in South Eastern Europe", based on eTIR and UNeDocs.

44.   The Ad Hoc Expert Group on the Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure, at its third meeting on 1 and 2 September 2003 in Budapest, agreed to use UMM as a basis for its work on the eTIR Project and started filling-in the various parts of the eTIR Project Reference Model. The Expert Group will continue and, possibly, finalize this work in the course of 2004. Representatives of the Trade Development and Timber Division are actively taking part in the work of the Expert Group.

The UN ICT for Development Task Force and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

45.   The Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) (10-12 December 2003) was successfully concluded. It was coordinated by the WSIS Executive Secretariat at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in cooperation with other international organizations. The WSIS process is intended to help stakeholders better understand the global information society, its impact on the international community and the roles of the various partners in its development. The first phase of the WSIS resulted in the adoption of a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action. The second phase will be held in Tunis from 16-18 November 2005 and will focus on development themes and an assessment of progress made. A further Plan of Action may be adopted in Tunis.

46.   The UNECE made a significant contribution to the Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society through the following:
- It actively participated in the UN ICT Task Force and in the High-Level Organizing Committee (HLSOC). It co-organized the Bucharest Regional Preparatory Conference (November 2002) with the Romanian Government and the WSIS Executive Secretariat.
- The UNECE served as lead coordinator of the UN regional commissions, managing their contributions to the WSIS process at both the Second and Third Preparatory Committee sessions (PrepCom-2, PrepCom-3 and its extensions), which took place in Geneva on 17-28 February, 15-26 September, 10-14 November, and 5-6 December 2003.
- Finally, the Commission worked closely with the WSIS Executive Secretariat on the organization of a series of parallel events to the Geneva WSIS, described in document E/ECE/1413, Section III. The UNECE also helped organize and provide secretarial support for the High-Level Roundtable on "ICT as a tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals", which took place on 11 December 2003.

47.   Within the framework established at the February 2004 session of the UNECE, the Trade Development subprogramme of the Committee will continue supporting the WSIS process on the road to the Tunis summit in November 2005 and will support the UN ICT Task Force.

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2   SECIPRO is a network of national PRO Committees in Southeast Europe. A "PRO Committee" is a national body that aims to increase business and investment through the simplification and modernization of PROcedures and information exchange in administration, commerce and transport.