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Countries Commit to TIR Public-Private Partnership

The Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, consisting of the 66 Contracting Parties to the Convention, met in Geneva on 28-29 September under the auspices of the UNECE.

The Committee considered a number of important issues for the well functioning of the Convention. In particular, noting the concerns raised by the International Road Transport Union (IRU) about the future of the TIR system, the Committee clearly expressed its commitment to work with the IRU and its member associations in a true Public-Private Partnership to ensure the sustainability of the TIR system. Furthermore, the Committee adopted two alternative solutions for the financing of the TIR Executive Board and the TIR Secretariat, which was one of the main



concerns raised by the IRU.

“The solutions adopted respond positively to the concerns raised by the IRU and at the same time respect general transparency and accountability requirements of the UN system”, said Mr. José Capel Ferrer, Director, of the UNECE Transport Division, who continued:

“The UNECE secretariat calls on the IRU to respond positively to the solutions presented by the TIR Contracting Parties”.

The IRU has until 15 October 2006 to define its position concerning these solutions. ❖

For more information contact José Capel Ferrer (jose.capel.ferrer@unece.org) or Poul Hansen (poul.hansen@unece.org).

Facts about the TIR Convention

Annually 3 million international transports are carried out utilizing the TIR Convention. More than 35,000 transport operators in the 55 countries, where the TIR system is operational depend on the functioning of the Convention.

This Convention enables cross-border international movement of goods under guarantee through the use of the commonly accepted Customs transit document, the TIR Carnet, with limited intervention by Customs of intermediate transit countries. More information about the TIR Convention is available from: <http://www.unece.org/trans/bcf/tir/welcome.html>.

Governments fight together against illegal logging

Governments are important market players. In the UNECE region the total value of state purchasing often exceeds 15% of the total national GDP. Wood and paper products are highly versatile and are used for various purposes. They are particularly environment friendly products and are often given advantage to other materials. To exclude illegally and/or unsustainably sourced wood and paper products in national purchasing, a few governments have set up public procurement policies, regulations and rules.

The UNECE and FAO held a policy forum on “Public procurement policies for wood and paper products and their impacts on sustainable forest management and timber markets” on 5 October. Different stakeholders from exporters, traders, industry and NGOs presented their viewpoints and discussed the experience of

countries with public procurement schemes in place, in order to encourage sustainable management of forests and discourage illegal producers. Several governments and local authorities in Europe, North America and Japan have adopted or are developing



policies that will ensure that the forest products they buy come from legal and

sustainably managed sources, FAO said at the annual policy forum of the UNECE and FAO.

National and local governments are major consumers of wood and paper products, so their purchasing practices already have a major impact on markets and supply patterns of these products, and many sub-national bodies, notably municipal authorities, are developing similar policies.

“It is encouraging to learn that some governments have already implemented policies that reward sustainable paper and wood production,” said Wulf Killmann, Director of the FAO Forest Products and Economics Division. *“However, if each country were to adopt different approaches, it could create market barriers. Harmonization could help to prevent the formation of trade barriers.”*





cont.

Among the forum's conclusions are:

◆ There is strong political momentum driving the move to public procurement policies for forest products but only a few countries are really applying them in practice.

◆ The "lead countries" are already working together.

◆ There are many difficulties with implementation, including the complexity of assessing certification schemes.

◆ Market players expressed strong concerns about certain aspects of public procurement policies, including the procedures required, the diversity of approaches between countries, the risk of creating unnecessary trade barriers. In particular they felt that the market conditions in which they had to operate are being changed too often.

◆ Public procurement policies cannot solve all problems immediately: expectations should not be too high.

◆ "Legality" is increasingly accepted as minimum standard.

◆ Public procurement policies could make it possible to avoid giving an advantage to

illegal loggers and unfair traders.

◆ Unsustainably or illegally produced wood is reaching markets in the form of value added products, thus circumventing public procurement policies which only cover primary products.

◆ At present only wood products are subjected to public procurement policy requirements on sustainability. This fact, as well as possible excessive transaction costs, risk causing substitution by less environmentally friendly competing materials such as plastic.

◆ Public procurement policies can discriminate against small-scale or community run forest enterprises, and less developed countries.

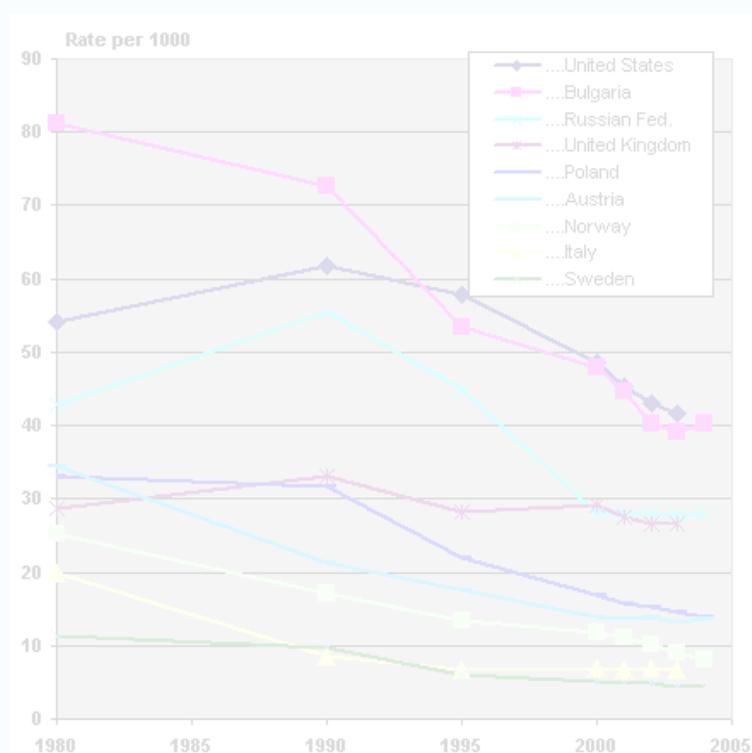
◆ There is a lack of information and statistics, as well as a need for transparency and inclusiveness.

◆ Public procurement policies should promote the use of sustainably produced wood.

Facts and figures

Number of children born to adolescent women is decreasing

Adolescent fertility rates in selected UNECE countries, 1980-2004



Source: UNECE Gender Statistics Database

Note: The adolescent fertility rate is the number of children born alive to women aged 15-19 per 1000 women in the same age group.

Over the last 25 years, better access to sexual education and increasing availability of contraceptives (among other factors) has led to a significant decline in fertility rates of adolescent women in most UNECE countries. In the 1990s, the downward trend became apparent also in countries like the Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States, where fertility rates of adolescent women had kept rising throughout the 1980s. Yet, in 2003-2004 the United States together with Bulgaria still had the highest rates of children born to women aged 15-19 years, and the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom were among the top ten countries. The lowest adolescent fertility rate – nearly ten times below the ones reported in Bulgaria and the United States – is registered in Sweden.

The report of the policy forum will be made available in a UNECE/FAO Geneva Timber and Forest Discussion Paper. Details of the presentations made at the policy forum are available at: <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/docs/tc-sessions/tc-64/2006PolicyForum.htm>.

For more information contact: Christopher Prins

Coming up ...

9-11 October
Committee on Environmental Policy

11-13 October
Working Party on Inland Water Transport

11-13 October
Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Harmonization of Fossil Energy and Mineral Resources Terminology

12-13 October
Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials "Environment for Europe"

For further information please contact:

Information Service
UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Tel: +41(0)22 917 44 44
Fax: +41(0)22 917 05 05

E-mail: info.ece@unece.org
Website: <http://www.unece.org>