

The UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists to monitor and develop assistance to countries of Central and Eastern Europe in transition in the forest and forest products sector

The Sixth Meeting of the Team of Specialists

(Warsaw, Poland, 3-6 March 2004)

Report

(as approved by participants)

Introduction

1. The sixth meeting of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists (ToS) to monitor and develop assistance to countries of Central and Eastern Europe in transition (CITs) in the forest and forest products sector was held from 3 to 6 March 2004 in Warsaw (Poland) on the premises of the Polish Forest Research Institute (Department of Forestry Economics and Policy). The Ministry of Environment of Poland and MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw supported the organisation of the ToS meeting.
2. The Mandate and Terms of Reference of the Team of Specialists on CITs expire in the year 2004, and this was the final meeting of the TEAM in this format. The ToS was established in accordance with the decision of the 50th session of the UNECE Timber Committee in 1993, and held its inaugural meeting in June 1994 in Geneva. The other ToS meetings were organised every second-third year in Geneva (UNECE), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Gmunden (Austria) and Debe/Warsaw (Poland).
3. Experts from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden and Ukraine attended the meeting. Representatives of the UNECE/FAO (Geneva), Pan-European Ministerial Conference on Protection of Forests (MCPFE-Liaison Unit Warsaw), and the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF) participated in the whole programme of the meeting. The list of participants is attached (*Annex I*).
4. A number of colleagues from several countries of the region were not able to attend the ToS meeting. They sent valuable contributions (progress reports, comments, suggestions and proposals to the provisional agenda, etc) in advance of the meeting. The UNECE/FAO secretariat received such acknowledgements and contributions from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Hungary, Germany, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, and Uzbekistan.
5. The reasons for non-attendance were different, but the main obstacle for colleagues from the transition countries preventing their participation in the meeting was the lack of funding for their participation, and need for a financial support for their travel. The ability to provide financial support to cover international travel expenses, accommodation costs, local transportation and full board for experts from CEEC and CIS countries in transition, is a key issue for a future successful involvement of these experts in the international processes.
6. The programme of the meeting included a one-day plenary session and a one-day technical excursion in the forest. The provisional agenda was quite intensive and covered the developments since the last meeting of the team, country progress reports, issues relating to the resolution H3 implementation, expected impact of the EU enlargement, as well as the open discussion on the future of the UNECE/FAO work with Central and Eastern European countries.

7. The ToS leader *Mr. Stanislaw Zajac* (Poland) opened the meeting, and the representatives of the MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw (*Mr. Piotr Borkowski*) and the UNECE secretariat (*Mr. Kit Prins and Mr. Alexander Korotkov*) made the welcoming and introductory remarks. They highlighted the main issues to be addressed by the TEAM, as well as the expected outcome from plenary discussions. Professor Dr. S. Zajac chaired the meeting. The participants adopted the provisional agenda and timetable proposed by the secretariat (*Annex II*).

Developments since the last ToS meeting

8. The participants of the meeting were informed about the work done by the TEAM and the UNECE/FAO secretariat since the last ToS meeting held in Debe/Warsaw, Poland, from 12 to 14 September 2001 in conjunction with the MCPFE workshop. The secretariat highlighted the relating decisions taken by the parent bodies, and the meeting reviewed the key activities, which might affect the current and future work in this area.

9. The H3 Report on "*Forestry Cooperation with Countries in Transition*" was prepared and published (Timber Committee Discussion Paper, ECE/TIM/DP/28) before the Vienna Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE-2003). The special poster devoted to the CIT activities was exposed at the MCPFE-2003 Conference. The structure of the H3 electronic database was up-graded, its contents was maintained and regularly up-dated. The list of H3 National Co-ordinators was also up-dated in the process of maintaining the H3 electronic database.

a) Fourth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe

10. The Forestry Ministers at the MCPFE Conference "*Living Forest Summit*" in April 2003 in Vienna was an important event in the pan-European regional forest policy dialogue. The Conference did not discuss directly the implementation the resolution H3 "*Forestry Cooperation with Countries with Economies in Transition*", and the "*countries in transition*" matter as a whole, and the MCPFE-2003 Vienna Conference did not provide any direct and explicit guidance on the future of the co-operation in this area (<http://www.mcpfe.org>).

11. At the same time, there are a number of specific references on the co-operation with CEEC countries in the MCPFE-2003 documents. The "*MCPFE Work Programme*", elaborated by the Expert Level Meeting in October 2003, confirms, in fact, that the UNECE/FAO should continue to coordinate the monitoring of the H3 Resolution, where the signatory countries and the European Union made commitments to strengthen their CIT cooperation.

12. The Vienna "*Living Forest Summit*" Declaration noted in particular the necessity of "... *continuous process of implementing previous MCPFE commitments and the emerging new challenges ...*". The Declaration stated that the *Signatory States and the European Community committed themselves*, in particular, to address the "*challenges that forest owners are facing in Central and Eastern European Countries, especially those related to changes in forest ownership*", and to "*further develop co-operation among countries with different socio-economic situations, especially with regard to Central and Eastern Europe*".

13. The Vienna Resolution 1 (VR I) notes that "*The importance of building new capacities by means of training, education and research, and making best use of existing capacities is emphasized in particular with regard to Central and Eastern European Countries*". The Vienna Resolution 2 (VR II) pointed the need to "*promote the development of and encourage the participation in associations of forest owners, of the forest workforce and of forest entrepreneurs, in particular in Central and Eastern European Countries*".

14. The MCPFE Work Programme, when referring to the Resolution H3 “*Forestry Co-operation with Countries with Economies in Transition*”, confirms that the UNECE is the “*International Co-ordinator*”, and formulates the further implementation work as “*Adding new information reported by national correspondents to the H3 Database*” (page 5 of the Work Programme).

b) *EU accession process: forest sector issues and timetable*

15. With regard to the EU accession process, the countries concerned have done the significant work to prepare their forestry sectors for the accession. The most countries have elaborated new (or modified) forest policy programmes and strategies. The countries have adopted legislative frameworks to the changing social and economic situations. Of course, different countries have applied different models of the transition of their forestry sectors, and correspondingly achieved the different results. The lessons, which these countries have learned, and the experience, which they gained, will be extremely helpful for the “second wave” of the accession process.

16. The Team of Specialists once again emphasized the magnitude and scope of the transition process, as well as its importance not only for the European forestry sector, but also for the developments in forestry at the global level. The twenty-seven (27) countries of the Central and Eastern Europe and the former USSR, which are being considered as “countries with economies in transition” since 1993 (only 9 countries constituted this region in 1989), comprise some 980 million hectares of forests, i.e. about 25.3 percent of the world forests. After the eight (8) transition countries will join the European Union in May 2004, this area will still remain about 915 million hectares, i.e. near 23.6 percent of the world forests.

17. The Team of Specialists noted a number of issues and challenges, which the CEEC in transition (as actually some EU countries as well) were facing in the forestry sector. Among those issues and challenges are the following:

- political, economic and financial position of forestry sector in many countries is still weak;
- CIS and south-east European countries frequently cannot attend international meetings if their costs are not paid, thus losing (a) benefits from the participation in the activities, and (b) leading ideas in the sector and possibilities to make useful contacts.

18. This situation raises questions “*How to promote further the economic integration of non-EU European countries in the context of post-European Union enlargement?*”, and “*What specific activities should be undertaken for countries with different stages of developments of transition economies ?*” These questions had to be answered in a differentiated way for the (a) EU accession countries, (b) emerging market economies, and (c) less advanced transition economies. These would also be the key questions to address by a successor of the present ToS.

c) *Review of other relevant activities*

19. The opinions of colleagues who could not participate in the meeting and sent their comments, suggestions and proposals concerning the UNECE/FAO co-operation with CEEC and CIS countries, were taken into full consideration. For example, the issues indicated by Mr. Ahmet Sejdic, Director, J.P. “BH Šume” (Sarajevo) in his letter to the secretariat, refer to situation in the sector, where *practically impossible to impose a united policy concerning the forestry in Bosnia and Hercegowina without involving the international European forestry institutions*». Ms. Frances Snaith from the UK Forestry Commission noted the importance of this activity as a whole, but questioned the usefulness of the H3 electronic database (pl., see the section of the report below), etc.

20. The Leader of the TEAM, Dr. S. Zajac presented the document on the “*Evaluation of the ToS work and its accomplishments*”, which he prepared at the request of the secretariat for the Process of the Strategic Review of the UNECE/FAO Integrated Work Programme. The participants

took note of the contents of the document. There were no any additions or corrections to the proposed presented text of the ToS self-evaluation.

Country reports by participants

21. Dr. Igor Buksha (Ukraine), Dr. Stanislaw Zajac (Poland) and Ms. Natalie Hufnagl (CEPF) delivered the keynote background presentations. All participating CEEC, CIS and donor countries presented their reports on progress and developments in the forest and forest products sectors of Central and Eastern European countries, emphasizing the assistance and co-operation aspects. The above presentations and reports, prepared along the proposed outline, had been made available in the written form (in English) for participants and provided good standpoints for discussions.

22. The participating countries described and commented in their reports on the present situation in the forestry and forest products sector from the point of view of the transition process to the market economy, views on the trends and prospects in this area, on existing bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes (type/volume, focus on identified needs, role and scale of the inter-CITs co-operation, etc). The implication of the EU recent developments with regards to the CEEC forestry sectors was referred specifically.

23. The questions of "ensuring sustainable forest management in CITs", "promoting financial and technical assistance for forestry sectors of CITs" and "transfer of knowledge; infrastructure and capacity building", as well as aspects of the implementation of the Helsinki Resolution H3 were also covered in the reports.

24. The participants stressed that a more active involvement of CEEC and CIS countries in transition into the international processes would require not only an external financial support, but also a higher profile of forestry within the national economies. The importance of the national focal points, their sufficient level and continuity in co-operation, is one of the prerequisites of the successful transition process. The situations in the forestry sectors are different in CEEC and CIS countries in transition, and the international co-operation should be placed into a national context. The work done in the accession countries shows that the transition process demands a lot of patience and persistence, based on "step by step" approaches to respond to the high expectations raised.

25. The country reports in written format from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Sweden and Ukraine are available from the secretariat. The PowerPoint presentations will be posted on the UNECE Timber Committee web site (<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber>).

Implementation of Resolution H3

26. The Team of Specialists recalled that the MCPFE (Helsinki) Resolution H3 "*Forestry Co-operation with Countries with Economies in Transition*" indicated that the main responsibility for its implementation is with countries themselves: "*The Signatory States and the European Community commit themselves to promote and support cooperation for mutual benefits ... in order to provide relevant expertise and advice, and to invite appropriate organizations and Institutions to do likewise.*"

27. The UNECE/FAO acts as the international co-ordinator of the monitoring of the H3 implementation, fully relying on the support from countries (H3 National Coordinators), and the limited resources available in the Geneva secretariat for this work. The key tool for monitoring and coordination of activities according to the Resolution H3 is the Access electronic database, which was developed by the UNECE/FAO with the direct input from the signatory countries, and which is available on the Timber Committee website (<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/h3/h3.htm>).

28. The contents and the database structure had been upgraded in 2002/2003. The upgraded database contains detailed information on projects reported by national correspondents, forest resources information, contact addresses of H3 National Coordinators, supplementary information and an automatic link to the UNECE website. The detailed ‘*Users’ Guide for the H3 Database*’ facilitates the work of countries with the database.

29. The database includes currently about 780 projects reported by donor and recipient countries and organisations. The projects themselves have a variety of objectives, scope, and methods for implementation. The information on reported projects refers to types of cooperation, dates, cost, contact person(s), results expected, results gained, etc. It is possible to sort and search the database according to a number of fields in order to produce statistics for analysis purposes.

30. The national correspondents for Resolution H3 are the only official source of the information presented in the database, and the information in the database by far not comprehensive, and not all countries’ activities are equally represented there. The ToS discussed in depth and tried to reply to the question: is the further (resources demanding) development/ maintenance of the H3 electronic database needed?

31. A unanimous ToS position on the H3 database matter was not reached. Some participants (e.g. CEPF, or Finland) considered that the database was useful tool and the continuation of this work would be needed. Some others, like e.g. Denmark (or UK in written form) doubted the usefulness (and cost-effectiveness) of the H3 database maintenance and updating.

32. A number of participants strongly endorsed the usefulness of the H3 database, while some others noted that the database should either be made really comprehensive, or dropped because it would not be reasonable to spend significant secretariat and NCs time and resources to maintain a database of limited usefulness. Dr. Jan Ilavsky (Finland) suggested bringing this issue to the attention of the UNECE/ FAO parent bodies.

33. The situation with the countries’ “interest” in the H3 database, and their willingness to contribute to its possible development, is getting even more complicated in the light of the EU accession, and the expected shift in the focus of co-operation more to the eastern and SEE countries. The “show of hands” by participants, which was suggested and run by the Chairman was (slightly) in favour of maintaining and developing the database, but in a “simplified” and in a “more user-friendly” format.

34. Finally, the participants suggested that a H3 database “Users’ Survey” would be helpful to define the future of the database, the necessity to maintain (or to develop it further), and to decide on the modalities of maintenance and updating the H3 electronic database (if it finally be supported by countries and potential users).

Impact of the EU enlargement

35. The discussion of the issue of expected impact of the EU enlargement for forestry sectors of new EU members and non-accession countries was based on the keynote presentation by Dr. Jan Ilavsky (Finland), and addressed in the presentations provided by other participants. One of the main questions addressed was “*What are the main needs in forestry sectors of “non-EU” CEEC and CIS countries?*”

36. The ToS agreed that the CEEC and CIS countries, and their forestry sectors are different, and they could not be considered as a single homogeneous group of countries (*in the forestry sector*

terms). Among some of them there are a number of common features, which would allow to consider these countries (conditionally) as:

- EU accession countries; or
- emerging market economies; or
- less advanced transition economies.

In final analysis, when the co-operation and assistance are concerned, these “non-accession yet” countries should be considered individually.

37. Some questions and challenges are common for the forestry sector in all the European countries (EU and non-EU), such as *‘Raising interest of high-level political and administrative circles in forestry sector’*, or the *‘Improvement of the investment conditions in the forestry sector’*. In some countries, one of the major obstacles to the sustainable forest management remains unfavourable investment environment. Fostering entrepreneurship in the forestry sectors transition economies is still one of the main tasks to be implemented in the nearest/ foreseeable future.

38. The ToS confirmed that the current three major programme areas of co-operation and assistance to countries in transition (possibly with some modifications) would be relevant not only for the non-accession countries, but also they would be still valid for some EU member countries. The following work areas should be the focus of the co-operation in the near future:

- Institution and capacity building and framework conditions; building the legal and policy infrastructure for sustainable development of the forestry and forest products sector, including extension services, education and training;
- Activities related to the development of market oriented and ecologically sound enterprises in the forestry and forest products sector, with specific references to cross-sectoral and private forest owners issues;
- Issues of general importance for the protection of forests, forest conservation and sustainable development of the forest sector and issues of concern for individual countries or group of countries.

39. The wide diversity of the economic, social and environmental conditions, as well as historical aspects, should be carefully taken into account when deciding on the approaches of the international co-operation and assistance, and recommending the institutional structures.

Future of the UNECE/FAO work with CEEC

40. The on-going process of the Strategic Review of the UNECE/FAO Integrated Programme of Work indicates the following directions (formulations) of the future work, provided by the reviewing experts, and which are relevant to the cooperation and assistance to CEEC:

- “co-operation with MCPFE, and contribution to SFM in the region, especially in CEEC”
- “continue providing assistance for countries in transition”
- “shift in focus of attention to eastern and SEE countries, to promote their European integration”
- “support to countries in transition, in particular non-EU countries”

41. The team considered that the strategic directions of the UNECE/FAO activities in the co-operation and assistance for CEEC in transition should be consistent with the previously done work in this area, and comprise the following aspects:

- Institution and capacity building
- Legal and policy infrastructure for SFM
- Extension services, education and training
- Market oriented & ecologically sound enterprises
- Cross-sectoral & private ownership issues
- Issues of general importance: protection of forests, forest conservation, specific issues, etc

42. The experience gained in the process of the current activities, as well as the “institutional memory” have to contribute maximum for the future developments in the area of the co-operation and assistance to CEEC in transition.

43. The basic objectives and tasks of the future ToS might remain as in the previous one, namely:

- To review periodically programme on CIT
 - To make recommendations to UNECE/FAO
 - To review countries’ needs for assistance
 - To develop ways of co-operation
 - To contribute to effective & efficient way of assistance
 - To monitor and coordinate H3 implementation
- but, its focus should be more on the to eastern and SEE countries

44. The ToS recommended in the future work periodically review priority areas and themes for co-operation in the fields:

- a) policy, research, education;
- b) sustainable management, silviculture, ecological and protection aspects;
- c) economics, information, PR, marketing

45. The participants agreed that the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists (ToS) to ‘*monitor and develop assistance to countries of Central and Eastern Europe in transition (CIT) in the forest and forest products sector*’, which was established in accordance with the decision of the 50th session of the Timber Committee, and held its first meeting on 6-8 June 1994 in Geneva, by the current sixth meeting has successfully accomplished its mandate, and should terminate its work in 2004.

46. A new Team of Specialists should be established by the UNECE/FAO parent bodies, as a successor to the current TEAM, with the newly formulated Mandate and Terms of Reference, which presumably should include all the relevant activities which have been run by the present ToS.

47. The participants provisionally agreed that the first inaugural meeting of the new Team of Specialists could reasonably be convened in the second half of the year 2005, if the decision of the UNECE/FAO parent bodies to set up a new TEAM would be positive, and its membership would be defined. The exact date, place and the programme of the inaugural ToS meeting (if any) will be agreed in due time between the new leader of the TEAM and the secretariat.

48. The participants of the ToS meeting suggested setting up an *ad hoc* Task Force, which would formulate the main objectives of the new Team of Specialists and elaborate proposals for its Mandate and Terms of Reference, to be approved by the parent bodies. The Task Force would communicate by electronic means (e-mail), and its initial suggestions could already be presented to the extended Bureaux of the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission in April 2004.

Proposals and recommendations

49. The UNECE/FAO cooperation with CEECs and CIS, and the future ToS and activities, should take into full consideration the variety of forest policy developments and related institutional changes (forest strategies and programmes, legislative frameworks, administrative structures) in these countries in the process of their transition to market economies.

50. Further strategic directions of the international co-operation in the forestry sectors of transition countries, as well as priorities for the future work, should be in line with the major issues and challenges for forests and the forestry sector in individual countries and to respond to their needs.

51. International cooperation and assistance under UNECE/FAO auspices should facilitate ways and means of ensuring the economic, ecological and socio-cultural dimensions of sustainable forest management. The ToS (in the future, as in the past) might provide an excellent tool for the networking and exchange of ideas and experience, which are beneficial for the transition countries. More intensive use of modern communication methods would be helpful, but personal contacts were considered indispensable.

52. The efforts and strong willingness of the transition countries themselves to develop the co-operation of forestry with other sectors of national economy, co-operation between countries, as well as to improve further the knowledge, and to increase the awareness, about forests and forestry, is the main prerequisite for the success of the transition process in the sector.

53. The creation of a "Trust Fund" to support the forestry sectors, especially those in the "less-favoured" CEEC and CIS transition countries, would help to bring them into the European forestry community in large, and to arrange their participation in the international forestry-related processes. The availability of such a Fund might raise also the potential of the future Team of Specialists, which would deal with the transition process issues.

54. The participants of the meeting confirmed that the detailed proposals and recommendations elaborated during the Debe (Poland) workshop, organised by the ToS in the co-operation with the MCPFE Liaison Unit Vienna in September 2001, have by no means lost their relevance, and these recommendations should be brought to the agenda of the future ToS work.

55. The Proceedings of the Debe workshop "*Forests and Forestry in Central and Eastern European Countries - The Transition Process and Challenges Ahead*" published by MCPFE in 2002 in two volumes is the valuable reference material for the work with CEEC and CIS. They bear the analysis of the situation, refer to the current and future developments and propose activities to respond to the challenges in the transition process for many years ahead.

56. The ToS noted in particular the need to a continued studying and analysing the "*Trends in policies and institutions for the forestry sector in CIS and SEE countries*" and overview of the "*Changing Role of State Forest Services*", while focusing more on '*Private forestry issues, and efforts to increase capacities in CIS and SEE countries to achieve SFM at the national level*'. The first and possibly the most important step in this direction would be the breaking of the current (actual) "isolation" of some CIS and SEE from exchange of experience and ideas, and more active their participation in the international forestry-related events.

57. The Team of Specialists indicated specifically the following areas of possible cooperation, assistance and support to the countries in transition to market economy, i.e. to those countries which are not joining EU this year:

- contribute to the development of forest policy aimed at sustainable forest management
- contribute to improvement of forestry and environment legislation
- facilitate investments into the forestry sector
- contribute to capacity building to bring forestry in line with the EU legislation
- provide support to private forestry
- improve assessment of forest ecological benefits
- improve communication between relating institutions
- assist in building up of integrated forest information system
- improve the cost efficiency in forest management practices

- reinforce the UNECE and MCPFE co-operation on CEEC

58. The workshops, conferences, seminars and meetings, as well as studies on the above topics would be very helpful (and needed) for CEEC and CIS countries, but the representation and active participation of the countries concerned in these activities would need a substantial (and targeted) financial support. The fund-raising with the purpose to organize and support the required activities is indispensable for the success of the work with CEEC.

59. Concerning the future work of the ToS on CITs, the participants discussed and considered the following options:

- ToS terminates its work (in the current format) in the year 2004
- ToS be possibly transformed into a new team, in a different format
- UNECE/FAO establishes a new ToS on CIT (CEECE and CIS) countries

60. The ToS suggested the option to set up a new UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on “*forests and forestry sector of CIS and South-East Europe (SEE)*”. The new TEAM should focus mainly on the non-accession (EU) countries, with the purpose to facilitate the monitoring and analysis of the developments in the transformation of forestry sectors. The Mandate and Terms of References of the new (or transformed) ToS should be elaborated in the process of a wide consultation with the CEEC themselves. The main focus of the new ToS activities would also depend on the objectives and scope of the UNECE/FAO work with the CEEC and CIS countries.

61. A small *ad hoc* group of experts (Task Force) has to be convened to elaborate the proposals for the Terms of Reference and Mandate of the future possible ToS. The *ad hoc* group will work by means of electronic communication, and members of the group will be invited by the secretariat in consultation with the participants of the meeting and other experts working in this area.

Technical excursion in the forest

62. The important component of the programme of the Team of Specialists meeting was the field excursion to the Forest District in *Wyszki*, located some 70 km from Warsaw. Mr. *Waldemar Zmijewski*, Superintendent Forester (“*Nadlesniczy*” - Head of the Forestry District) presented the organisational structure of the Forestry District and its work in the direction of the sustainable forest management. His substantial PowerPoint presentation was followed by the discussion, concentrated on the practical aspects of the forest management planning and the implementation of the forestry activities.

63. The *Wyszki* Forest District is an average “self-sustained” state forest enterprise (*Lasy Państwowe*). The forest management and forest protection work, including the programme of planting (afforestation) and other forestry operations, is being done on the basis of the results of their commercial activity. The forest operations, such as logging, are being implemented by contractors. The Forest District supports a highly computerised Forestry Education Centre. In general, the District has a well-advanced information system, starting from the microcomputers at felling sites, and finishing by the supply of the required data to the headquarters in Warsaw.

64. The presentation, the following excursion in the forest, and discussions, demonstrated the work, which had been done by the Polish regional forestry in the preparation of the forthcoming accession of Poland to the European Union. Special attention was being paid to the implementation of the EU relating directives, regulations and communications (<http://www.lasypanstwowe.gov.pl>). The EU “*Natura 2000*” regulation was discussed specifically, as it was affecting the practical aspects of the implementation of some forestry operations by “imposing” strong restrictions in many areas. The local foresters noted that the *Natura 2000* is a good “idea”, but it should have a “more human face”.

65. This excursion gave the opportunity to the ToS meeting participants to learn more about economic, technical, social and environmental aspects of Polish forestry, and values of Polish forest resources. The organizers provided excellent economic insight and technical guidance to the forested areas, planted forests and felling sites, which was highly appreciated by the participants of the excursion.

Concluding remarks

66. The participants of the Team of Specialists meeting expressed their sincere gratitude to the Polish Forest Research Institute (Department of Forestry Economics and Policy), to the Ministry of Environment of Poland, and to MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw for the excellent organisation of the ToS meeting, for the organisational and logistics support, and for their support of the UNECE/FAO activities aimed to assist forestry sectors of countries on transition. The participants were grateful for the outstanding hospitality demonstrated by the host organisations during their stay in Poland.

67. This final ToS on CITs meeting appeared to be an important event in reviewing the current situation in the forestry sector of CEECs and CIS countries in transition, elaborating recommendations and proposals for the further UNECE/FAO actions in this area. The Report of the meeting, as well as the PowerPoint presentations by participants will be posted on the Timber Committee Internet website (<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber>).

68. The brief evaluation form (questionnaire) requesting from the ToS members their feedback on the different components of the organisation and running the team's meeting, as well as their suggestions/ recommendations for the future, was distributed at the end of plenary session. According to the received replies, practically all respondents evaluated the overall quality of the international workshop and the ToS meeting as "excellent" or "very good".

69. The high appreciation for the support of the UNECE/FAO work and the assistance to forestry sectors of countries in transition, and to corresponding ToS activities, was extended to countries, national institutions, country focal points and national co-ordinators, individual experts and other partners, as well as to all members of the Team of Specialists for their devotion and efficient contribution, which was indispensable for the success of this work.

70. The participants expressed special thanks to the ToS Leader Professor Dr. Stanislaw Zajac and his team in the Forest Research Institute for the excellent work done in the preparation and running the ToS meeting. The UNECE/FAO secretariat and the ToS extended its deep appreciation to Dr. S. Zajac personally for his excellent service in the capacity of the Leader of the Team of Specialists during almost the 10-year period, and for his invaluable contribution to the international co-operation with countries of Central and Eastern Europe in transition.
