

**Economic and Social Council**

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**Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations****Economic Commission for Europe****Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry****Seventy-third session**

Engelberg, 2-6 November 2015

Item 7(e) of the provisional agenda

**ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry  
matters**

**Food and Agriculture Organization****European Forestry Commission****Thirty-eight session**

Engelberg, 2-6 November 2015

**Frequency of sessions of the Committee on Forests  
and the Forest Industry****Informal note by the Secretariat***Summary*

In line with the 2013 review of the 2005 ECE reform, and in accordance with the Guidelines on Procedures and Practices for ECE bodies adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe (E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464, annex III, appendix III); at its seventy-second session held in Kazan, Russia Federation, in November 2014, the Committee considered a document containing its draft rules of procedure. At that session, proposals were made by delegates, which are contained in a revised draft of the Rules of Procedure (RoPs) (see document ECE/TIM/2015/10).

A proposal was made also to explore the potential benefits and detriments of holding the Committee session every other year. In line with this request, this note provides information to facilitate the consideration of this agenda item.

1. At its seventy-second session in Kazan, 18-21 November 2014, the Committee reviewed its draft Rules of Procedure (RoPs) (ECE/TIM/2014/12) for consideration and possible adoption at Silva2015. At that session, proposals were made by delegates, which are contained in a revised draft of the RoPs (see document ECE/TIM/2015/10). A proposal was made to explore the possibility and desirability of holding the Committee session every other year. Changing the frequency of COFFI meetings from annual to biannual would have implications, which member States are invited to consider carefully.
2. Since its establishment in 1947 COFFI has held its meetings annually, as do other Committees of ECE. In line with this, the COFFI draft rules of procedure<sup>1</sup> stipulate that sessions of the Committee shall be held regularly once a year.
3. According to the ECE-FAO Integrated Programme of Work approved by COFFI and the EFC at their joint session in Rovaniemi in 2013 (para 25) “the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry meets annually, while the European Forestry Commission meets every second year. The two bodies are encouraged to continue holding joint meetings in line with established practice and with the aim to further strengthen cooperation and exploit synergies.” The programme of work covers the period 2014-2017.
4. As mentioned, all Committees of the ECE meet regularly once a year. This is linked to programme planning and management, a process for which regular input to the UN headquarters in New York is expected by the Committees. The Strategic Framework of each sub-programme (e.g. Forestry and Timber) is prepared on a biannual basis while, budget planning follows on the year after the strategic framework is approved. Regular input, to be provided on an annual basis to these two exercises has been considered timely and helpful. It is also advantageous to have decisions, such as approval of particular publications and work priorities undertaken on an annual basis by the Committee in order to address emerging issues.
5. In addition to the needs imposed by programme planning, monitoring and reporting, the COFFI primary function is to ‘, within the context of sustainable development, provide member countries with the information and services which they need for policy- and decision-making as regards their forest and forest industry sector (“the sector”), including the trade and use of forest products and, when appropriate, formulate recommendations addressed to member Governments and interested organizations’ (COFFI Terms of Reference, document ECE/TIM/2013/2).
6. To this end, and in order to provide timely and updated information to member States and relevant stakeholders, the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section collects data on an annual basis on wood removals and forest products production and trade, covering the 56 member countries and publishes these on the Joint ECE/FAO website, as well as in FAO statistics.
7. Based on these data, the Joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section publishes the Forest Products Annual Market Review (FPAMR). The Review analyses latest trends in policies, research and markets regarding their influences and impacts on forest products markets in the ECE region.
8. Member states can access a copy of the Review in mid-August. The Review is the first analysis of international forest products’ statistics and underlying drivers. The printed version of the Review is officially released during COFFI, which forms the foundation of the market discussions Feedback during the annual COFFI Market Discussions has been

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<sup>1</sup> ECE/TIM/2015/10

<sup>1</sup> See draft rules of procedure (ECE/TIM2015/10), para 2.

useful for identifying the emerging areas of focus for the forthcoming Review and together with the country market statements and the forecast tables provides valuable input, for the annual COFFI Market Statement. This process has been considered constructive, not only for providing market insight from member states to the general public, but also for informing delegates on current developments affecting users and producers of forest products.

9. A final point to consider is whether or not there would be sufficient time to provide the necessary guidance and agreement for the operation of the Joint Section by meeting every other year instead of annually. Under the current scenario, even-year meetings focus primarily on accomplishing the tasks of the Committee as it relates to the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section; and odd-year joint meetings focus on areas of mutual work together with the European Forestry Commission, which affords less time for discussing the particulars of work of the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section.

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