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Geneva, 28-30 April 2008

REPORT

**Special Session on the Strategic Review and Plan of the Integrated Programme of Work
on Timber and Forestry of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European
Forestry Commission, 28-30 April 2008, Geneva**

I. Introduction

1. The UNECE Timber Committee held a Special Session on the Strategic Review and Plan at Geneva from 28 to 30 April 2008, as decided by the Timber Committee at its 65th session. The session was attended by representatives of Austria, Belarus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.
2. Representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), partner organization to the UNECE for the joint UNECE/FAO integrated programme of work on timber and forestry, attended the session. The Liaison Unit Oslo of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) was also represented.
3. The European Landowners' Organization (ELO) was represented as an international non-governmental organization.

4. Msrs. J. Dengg (Germany), Chairman, UNECE Timber Committee, A. Chaudron (France), Chairman, FAO European Forestry Commission, Ms. V. Cram-Martos, Director, UNECE Trade and Timber Division, and Mr. W. Killmann, Director, Forest Products and Industries Division, FAO, welcomed the delegations and addressed the session.

II. Adoption of the agenda (Agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TIM/S/2008/1

5. The provisional agenda (ECE/TIM/S/2008/1) was adopted with some changes in the timetable.

III. Arrangements for chairing the meeting (Agenda item 2)

6. The meeting was co-chaired by the Chairman of the UNECE Timber Committee and the Chairman of the FAO European Forestry Commission.

IV. Strategic Review: approach and methods,

results of self-evaluations, country and stakeholder input (Agenda item 3)

Documentation: ECE/TIM/S/2008/2

7. The session was informed of the approach and method to the 2007-2008 strategic review and planning process. Previous strategic reviews of the integrated programme of work of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission had been conducted in 2001 and 2004.

8. The session welcomed the emphasis given to measuring the utility of the programme's outputs, as a guide to decision making. It was informed of the main results of a user survey conducted in May-September 2007, as well as other efforts to measure the programme's

utility such as analysis of website downloads. The session welcomed initial actions taken by the secretariat to improve the website and the newsletter, on the basis of recommendations received through the survey. The reviews of the UNECE/FAO country profiles were rather critical, despite their popularity as measured by downloads. The profiles were criticized as being out-of-date, lacking a common format and of inconsistent quality. There are opportunities to develop synergies with the FAO Forestry Department country profiles and to adopt a systematic approach to their production and updating.

9. Leaders and representatives of the UNECE/FAO teams of specialists presented the results of their self-evaluations. The session welcomed this method of evaluating the teams' effectiveness and impact.

10. The session welcomed the contributions from 24 member countries and 12 stakeholders through the strategic review process. It agreed on the following, most important priorities and needs for the forest sector, as indicated by countries and affirmed by stakeholders through the strategic review enquiry, which should form the background for the consideration of programme activities during the next five years:

- (a) Climate change, bioenergy and wood mobilization;
- (b) Sustainable forest management: indicators, technical norms and economic viability;
- (c) Sector policies and institutions: Institutional and legislative changes and restructuring;
- (d) Forest health;
- (e) Conservation and biodiversity;
- (f) Forest fire prevention and restoration;
- (g) Cross-sectoral cooperation;
- (h) Infrastructure and rural development;

- (i) Afforestation and reforestation;
- (j) Public procurement policies and standards.

11. This is reaffirmed by the guidance provided by the MCPFE Warsaw Ministerial Declaration and resolutions on “forest and water” and “forests, wood and energy.”

12. The secretariat complemented this list with the following priorities:

- (a) Deforestation;
- (b) Globalization of forest products markets and its effects on the UNECE region;
- (c) Governance, illegal logging and trade;
- (d) Public perception of forests and forestry.

13. Switzerland stated that the programme produces high-quality, relevant and timely outputs and should continue to do so, and at the same time, reach a wider audience, enhance cross-sectoral cooperation and inter-organizational collaboration at the international and national levels. More capacity building should be conducted including Russian interpretation and translation.

V. Strategic Plan 2008-13: objectives, governance, resources, structure (Agenda item 4)

Documentation: ECE/TIM/S/2008/3 and ECE/TIM/S/2008/3/Add.1

14. The Session considered the Strategic Plan 2008-13, based on the proposals by the secretariat, encompassing the work programmes 2008-09, 2010-11 and 2012-13. It agreed to present the Strategic Plan for endorsement to the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission during its joint session at the European Forest Week, on 23 October 2008 in Rome.

Core Profile and Activities

15. The session agreed that the core profile of the programme lies in the collection and analysis on a regular basis of information on forest products markets, forest resources, forest sector policies and institutions, and sector outlook, encompassing climate change and energy. The programme helps governments and stakeholders to develop policies that implement sustainable forest management in the UNECE region, addressing, as necessary, topical issues relevant to the forest sector, by providing objective information and analysis together with a neutral forum for discussion. The programme works through networks with a wide range of experts and stakeholders, adapting flexibly to new priorities as they emerge, being more actively participatory than many other forest institutions and bodies. On this basis, the session agreed that the five work areas should be maintained as a structure that reflects programme expertise and that has proven to work well in the past.

Objective and Strategy

16. Delegates welcomed the careful and transparent process to develop the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2013. There was broad support for a clear concise objective, which encompasses the strengthening of the forest sector as well as the sector's contribution to sustainable development throughout the UNECE region. The methods used to achieve this objective are laid down in the strategy: monitoring, analysis, capacity building and the provision of a forum for policy discussions.

17. Several countries suggested that there would be a value in making a more specific mention of climate change in the strategy and, in particular, the role that forests, through carbon sequestration, storage and substitution, can and do play in mitigating some of the adverse effects of climate change, as well as in adapting to it. Ireland stressed the important

role of increased afforestation in carbon sequestration. There was consensus that bio-energy and climate change were key issues that would need to feature prominently in the future programme of work. The session agreed that the strategy should refer to the promotion of the involvement of the countries of eastern Europe, southeast Europe, central Asia, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean region in international activities. It emphasized the importance of cross-sectoral coordination, as well as inter-regional cooperation.

Implementing Sustainable Forest Management

18. The session emphasized the importance of implementing sustainable forest management notably through capacity-building activities and welcomed the proposals from the secretariat for implementing the future work programme in this respect. There was considerable potential for developing partnerships based on existing networks (see examples in annex 2 to ECE/TIM/2008/S/3/Add.1). However, this potential would not be fully achieved if there was not the continuity provided by a coordinator who could promote partnerships, make contacts and seek funding. The session supported the identified need for a full-time coordinator for the capacity building work and asked the secretariat to develop the approach laid out in annex 2 to the background document and approach countries and other possible partners for core funding.

19. The session agreed that there was a strong need for assistance to the countries of eastern Europe, Caucasus and central Asia, to help them to implement sustainable forest management. It agreed that the UNECE/FAO programme could contribute by applying the following principles:

- (a) Work out from existing areas of strength;

- (b) Continue to work closely with other actors, including sister international organizations and associations and NGOs, including the National Forest Programme (NFP) facility;
- (c) Focus on the subregional level (Caucasus, Balkans, central Asia), where there are sufficient similarities to make international exchange meaningful;
- (d) Main outputs: subregional workshops (“train the trainers”), and codification of best practice (if necessary with guidelines on adaptation to national circumstances, presented in an easy-to-understand format, translated into local languages);
- (e) A full time “coordinator” is absolutely essential to make the best of networks.

20. It requested a task force, as suggested in annex 2 to ECE/TIM/S/2008/3/Add.1, to develop the ideas, seek preliminary funding ideas and submit proposals to the joint session during the European Forest Week. It also urged countries to consider whether they could make available the services of a coordinator for this work.

21. The session suggested that one of its outcomes be a list of activities which can only be implemented or improved with extrabudgetary funding and to circulate this list to countries with requests to consider funding such activities.

Work Area 1 “Markets and Statistics”

22. The session agreed with the maintenance of the same programme elements for work area 1 “Markets and Statistics” during the period 2008-2013, as during 2004-2008.

23. The Session agreed with revised terms of reference of the Team of Specialists on Forest Products Markets and Marketing, which had been endorsed by the FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics at its April 2008 session. The revisions include expanding the Team’s international network and forums for discussion, including

web-based, on forest products markets and marketing. Its major outputs for 2008-2013 were expanded to include new activities of contribution to the wood energy market study in conjunction with the long-term sector outlook, maintenance and expansion of their “Current Issues” website.

24. The Session supported the accomplishments of work area 1, which is fundamental for the parent bodies’ work programme. “Flagship” publications such as the *Forest Products Annual Market Review* should be financed through the regular budget. However, the productivity of this work area is dependent on the in-kind contributions of experts donated by countries and support for activities such as marketing workshops and chapters in the *Forest Products Annual Market Review* and their presentations. The secretariat expressed sincere appreciation for countries’ and organizations’ support of the activities in this work area.

25. One element of implementing sustainable forest management is to ensure sustainable development of forest products markets. The secretariat’s ability to build capacity in forest products markets has been substantially augmented with the loan of a forest products marketing consultant over the past four year by the UK/Scottish Forestry Commission. While unfortunately his tenure will end in July 2008, a number of capacity building workshops have been conducted. Success in capacity building is contingent on country partners, and the consultant has built a valuable network in the Balkan region. Country support of marketing capacity building has been, and will be, fundamental to continuing this programme element. Strategic alliances with other international organizations are also critical to expanding the secretariat’s resources and expertise.

26. The Russian Federation called for a wider scope to the market analyses, for example to include a focus on the rising importance of Asian countries such as China, Japan and Korea,

and South American countries such as Brazil. Within the UNECE region, the CIS countries other than Russia deserve a special focus.

27. There was strong support for continuing the collection, validation and dissemination of forest products statistics. These statistics obtained through official statistical correspondents, are the basis for all the market analyses, which were commended for being of high quality and produced in a regular, timely manner. Portugal called for improving the forest products prices database and website with partner organizations.

Work Area 2 “Forest Resources Assessment”

28. The session agreed that the scope of work area 2 should be broadened to include “improving information on forest types” and “monitoring and analyzing forest ownership and tenure.”

29. It agreed that the mandate of the Team of Specialists be broadened to cover monitoring and analysis of forest sector policies and institutions, as increasingly this information is collected in the same process as information on the forest resource and forms an important element of sustainable forest management. It noted that the information generated by work areas 1, 2 and 5 is the basis of the forward looking analysis generated under work area 3. The team responsible for guiding work area 2 should cooperate as necessary with the teams responsible for forest sector outlook and for eastern Europe and central Asia. The Session welcomed the offer by France to host a workshop on forest types, if so agreed by the forthcoming Team of Specialists meeting.

30. The session was informed that the study on private forest ownership was nearing completion and agreed that it should be repeated in 5-10 years.

31. The session approved the programme elements proposed in the draft Strategic Plan as well as the revised terms of reference on the “Teams of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable

Forest Management,” as endorsed by the Joint UNECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Products Economics and Statistics.

Work Area 3 “Forest Sector Outlook”

32. The session endorsed the proposed programme elements under work area 3, addressing forest sector outlook, climate change and energy-related issues, including demand and supply for wood energy and wood availability and potential wood supply.

33. Many delegates stressed the importance of a work area which was forward looking and provided objective and policy relevant scenarios for the use of policy makers and their advisers. The session noted that recent work on wood availability and demand had been possible because the secretariat had been able to react flexibly, and on the basis of the European Forest Sector Outlook Study (EFSOS) scenarios, to an emerging policy issue: it was vital to maintain this capacity. It was therefore necessary to start preparations for new European forest sector outlook studies which would be able to provide better analysis of emerging issues, notably bioenergy demand and potential wood supply. One important aspect was the need to create a core group which would be able to do the analytical work, and to provide resources for leading this cooperative work, as at present the secretariat had no post for this task.

34. The session noted that countries had identified bioenergy and climate change as the two priority issues for the period under discussion: both of these should be addressed under work area 3, drawing on information and analysis from other work areas. For both the UNECE/FAO programme should take up a leadership role, by moving quickly in areas where it had a comparative advantage.

35. As regards bioenergy, it agreed that the interconnected issues of demand for wood energy, wood availability, potential wood supply and increased wood mobilization were best addressed in the context of a new comprehensive outlook study, drawing on the work done recently in this area. This study should take into account in its scenarios climate change aspects, both as regards adaptation and mitigation policies. This work could be guided by a team of specialists along the lines of the revised proposals submitted shortly before the Special Session.

36. The session endorsed the creation of a “Team of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook” with the principal mandate to advise the secretariat on the preparation of regional outlook studies. The team should also monitor the use of wood for energy, and as such advise the secretariat on the conduct of the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry. Through its activities and the provision of guidance to a Task Force on Wood Availability and Demands, the Team should contribute to the implementation of Warsaw Resolution 1 on Forests, Wood and Energy.

37. The Session noted that such a Task Force on Wood Availability and Demands has been working successfully on an ad hoc basis, after having been initiated in 2007 by UNECE and FAO with interested experts from the research community (University of Hamburg), industry (Confederation of European Paper Industries, European Panel Federation/Confederation of European Woodworking Industries), the European Commission (Directorates General Enterprise and Industry and Agriculture), and experts from Finland, Sweden, and France. The task force started to work when it was realised that it was urgent to collect best available information on current and future sources and uses of wood, in light of the increasing demand for wood energy. Results of the work of the task force, notably studies on wood resources availability and demands, and a workshop on national wood resource balances, were presented and endorsed by the joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest

Economics and Statistics at its 30th session and the UNECE Timber Committee at its 65th session. The work was monitored by the bureaux.

38. The session asked the Task Force on Wood Availability and Demands to continue to address the following topics in its future activities:

- (a) Gather best available information on sources and uses of wood with a particular focus on wood energy, and encourage empirical research to improve data quality on national and international level;
- (b) Develop the methodology of Wood Resource Balances, as a tool to assess and double-check data;
- (c) Collect and assemble information on potential wood supply on national and international level, in cooperation with other organisations and projects in this field (e.g. the European Forest Institute (EFI));
- (d) Analyse policies for renewable energy and their interaction with the forest sector.
- (e) Analyse and advise on policies for increasing the mobilization of wood resources, whilst respecting principles of sustainable forest management.

39. The above mentioned activities are contributing to improve the understanding between the forestry and energy sector. The Task Force will report to the new Team of Specialists on “Forest Sector Outlook” which will provide guidance to the Task Force’s work on the activities mentioned above.

40. The session considered the creation of a Team of Specialists on Forests and Climate Change, which could address both mitigation and adaptation strategies and measures for the European forest sector. Its terms of reference were considered but should be finalized after the session of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission

during the European Forest Week where forests and climate change will be discussed and delegates will have an opportunity to express their opinions. The mandate should be firmly based on the comparative advantages of the integrated programme. The activities should take into account work by others, notably the seminar on climate change and forest health in Umea/Sweden in August 2008 and the workshop on harvested wood products and climate change policies in September 2008 in Geneva, as well as the discussion on forests and climate change at the European Forest Week. The Special Session noted that climate change is also affecting forest health with consequences for wood supply. It would be desirable to increase the visibility of forest sector points of view, notably in the run-up to the UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties in Poznan in 2008 and Copenhagen in December 2009.

Work Area 4 “Social and Cultural Issues”

41. The session endorsed the programme elements included for work area 4 in the Strategic Plan 2008-13, as proposed.

42. The leaders of the Team of Specialists on Gender and Forestry and of the Expert Network on Implementing Sustainable Forest Management presented the self evaluation of their teams' activities, and their proposals for future work, which were approved by the Session. The Special Session agreed that the Team of Specialists on Gender and Forestry had terminated its work, but that follow up to the Team's recommendations was necessary, notably as regards monitoring of trends in this respect. It welcomed the fact that a seminar would be held in Sweden in June 2009 to monitor progress and asked the secretariat and Ms. Gun Lidestav (Sweden), the team leader, to contact countries to request them to nominate a contact point to prepare the seminar. The session welcomed the actions of the Joint Expert Network and its innovative and effective work methods. It endorsed its proposals for future

work. The session noted that the Team of Specialists on Best Practices in Forest Contracting would have finished its work in end-2008.

Work Area 5 “Policy and Cross-sectoral Issues”

43. The session agreed with the proposed programme elements for work area 5, encompassing monitoring and analysing forest sector policies and institutions as well as a number of cross-cutting programme elements, including forest fires, cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination, and the production of forest sector country profiles.

44. The session was informed of the programme’s efforts to strengthen the monitoring and analysis capacities on forest policies and institutions, through data collection, analysis, and exchange, facilitated through the UNECE/FAO/MCPFE Inter-Secretariat Coordination Group on Monitoring Forest Policies and Institutions. It welcomed the contribution by France through an Associate Professional Officer assigned to this work area, which addresses the need of improving information availability on policies and institutions, which are an important element of sustainable forest management.

45. The Session noted in particular the importance of improving sectoral and cross-sectoral communication and the work conducted in this context by the Forest Communicators Network. It agreed with the proposed expansion of the mandate of the Communicators Network, welcomed its contribution to the European Forest Week and noted its request for more administrative support by the secretariat.

46. The session agreed that the Team of Specialists on Forest Policy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia continue to monitor the implementation of the UNECE/FAO Strategy on Eastern Europe and Central Asia, whilst focusing its activities on forest policy, based on past work and planned future activities, notably the production of a publication on policies and institutions. It agreed that this be reflected in the Team’s title, its objectives and outputs.

47. The Session decided that the mandate of the Team of Specialists on Forest Fires should not cover the global vegetation fire inventory as this was already covered by FAO.¹

Communications

48. The session stressed the importance of good communication. The secretariat benefited from the input of two members of the Forest Communicators' Network (FCN) who had helped the UNECE/FAO Timber Section to develop a communication strategy. The strategy has been complemented by the preparation of annual communication action plans that focus attention on the key target audiences and the key topics. The quarterly newsletter provides a regular flow of information about the work of the secretariat and its practical achievements. Improving communication is a main objective of the European Forest Week (EFW), which responds to the Warsaw Declaration that called for increased communication effort. The EFW is a deliberate attempt to increase the profile of the sector. There was recognition of the valuable support that countries will be giving to EFW. The Session invited countries to submit further ideas and suggestions for continued improvement in communication.

Resources

49. The Special Session considered the resources available to implement the integrated programme. With regard to the regular budget, it took note of the distribution of staff resources considered necessary by the secretariat to implement the agreed programme (ECE/TIM/S/2008/3, Table III). Some delegations considered more resources should be assigned to work areas 1, 2 and 3, but it was agreed to leave the responsibility of assigning regular budget staff time to the secretariat. It noted the contributions of extra budgetary

¹ Subsequent to the Special Session, this proposal was contested by the Team leader. The Terms of Reference of the Team will be discussed and finalized by the bureaux, subsequent to consultations with the Team leader and the FAO secretariat.

resources, as listed in the document, and of input of FAO staff from outside Geneva, who made a significant contribution, which was not apparent at present.

50. The Special Session urged countries to consider providing seconded personnel or financial resources to support the implementation of the integrated programme. It noted that, in the secretariat's opinion, there are three priority needs for extra budgetary funding, of equal importance:

- (a) A mid-level professional to provide continuity and fund raising for the work on implementing sustainable forest management, to act as coordinator and overseeing the efforts (see ECE/TIM/S/2008/3/Add.1, annex 2).
- (b) Support for the work on energy and outlook studies, under work area 3. This could be either a loaned expert or project funding to support coordinated research, or both.
- (c) It is likely that the report to the Oslo Ministerial Conference will require extra funding (loaned professionals and contributed resources) along the lines of the arrangements for the Warsaw report.

Governance

51. The delegates endorsed the governance and reporting structure of the UNECE Timber Committee (TC), the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC), the Joint Bureaux of the two bodies, the Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics, and the Teams of Specialists.

52. The Session thanked the Teams of Specialists for the work conducted during the period 2004-2008 and decided that eight Teams of Specialists will be created for the period 2008-10, renewable until 2013, reporting either to the Joint Working Party or the Joint Bureaux: Teams of Specialists on Forest Products Markets and Marketing, Monitoring

Sustainable Forest Management, Joint UNECE/FAO/ILO Expert Network on Implementing Sustainable Forest Management, Forest Fire, Forest Communicators Network, Forest Sector Outlook and Forests and Climate Change.

52. A template was introduced by the secretariat which the Teams should use for reporting to the parent bodies (see annex to appendix 1). A list with the team members should be incorporated in this reporting template.

53. The proposed changes to the terms of references of the UNECE Timber Committee were approved by the Special Session. Changes to the terms of reference of the Joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics were approved, as suggested by the Working Party, whilst stressing that the provision of guidance on Work Area 5 should primarily focus on policy monitoring and analysis with regard to data collection, validation, storage and dissemination. Portugal expressed concern with regard to the expansion of the mandate of the joint FAO/UNECE Working Party, as this would increase difficulties for nomination for the meetings.

VI. United Nations Strategic Framework 2010-11 (Agenda item 5)

Documentation: ECE/TIM/S/2008/4

54. The Timber Committee endorsed the changes to the Strategic Framework 2010-11, which were introduced in light of the outcome of the strategic review. It agreed with the expected accomplishments and indicators of achievements proposed by the secretariat.

VII. FAO Strategy for Forestry (Agenda item 6)

Documentation: ECE/TIM/S/2008/5

55. The Special Session was informed of progress in preparing the FAO Strategy for Forestry, which would be endorsed by the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) in March

2009. Suggestions had been invited from countries and regional forestry commissions, on the basis of a discussion paper, and a draft strategy would be circulated for review in June 2008, and consideration by stakeholders and the COFO Steering Committee in September. The European Forest Week would also be informed of progress and invited to comment. Switzerland stressed the importance of cross-sectoral communication, adaptation to climate change, and improving sector governance and tenure and a proactive role in leading the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

**VIII. Cooperation with the Ministerial Conference
on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) (Agenda item 7)**

56. The session was informed of the preparation for the MCPFE work programme and its focus on topics and activities of high political priority and interest, focusing on added value at the European level and taking into consideration the guidance by the Warsaw Ministerial Declaration and the resolutions, notable on energy, climate change and water.

57. The Session noted positively the complementarity of the UNECE/FAO work and the MCPFE work, and the joint presentation of their work programmes at the European Forest Week, on 24 October 2008. It welcomed the fruitful cooperation between the bodies and expressed the wish to continue this commitment and to strengthen it in future.

58. It noted positively the concrete examples of UNECE/FAO's contribution to the MCPFE work, such as through the workshop on harvested wood products, work on wood availability and demands, the European Forest Week, the workshop on forests in a changing environment and future work on forest types.

IX. Any Other Business (Agenda item 8)

59. The Session welcomed preparations for the European Forest Week and congratulated the Organizing Committee on its work. It regarded the European Forest Week as a major communication opportunity, to reach out to other sector, addressing the themes “forests, energy and climate change” and “forests and water” during the week 20-24 October 2008 in Brussels, Rome and at the national level through separate events. The session was informed of the format of the week, including plenary sessions in the morning and policy briefings in the afternoons, as well as the joint session of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission on Thursday afternoon, 23 October, during which the Strategic Plan, developed as an outcome of the Special Session (see ECE/TIM/S/2008/6/Add.1), will be considered for adoption.
