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DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL CHAIRS REGIONAL COORDINATION MEETING FOR THE UNECE REGION

The Deputy Secretary-General, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiros, was in Geneva on 17 October to chair the yearly meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for the UNECE region.

The RCM, convened by the UNECE Executive Secretary, brings together regional directors of UN agencies to address issues of high priority on the UN development agenda that call for policy coherence at the regional level and require inter-agency cooperation. 19 agencies participated in the meeting.

Dr. Migiros provided an update on the global preparatory process for the Rio+20 Conference. She commended the RCM for its efforts to come forward with a very substantive contribution to the Rio+20 process. The draft



RIO+20

Regional Preparatory Meeting

1-2 December 2011

of a Regional Inter-agency Report focusing on the transition to a green economy in the UNECE region will be presented to the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for Rio+20 on 1-2 December 2011 for discussion with governments and other stakeholders.

The other main issues discussed were

- the MDG post-2015 agenda
- cooperation with UN Women at the regional level
- the need to reconsider traditional development assistance frameworks, tools and planning processes for middle-income countries, especially in view of the extremely heterogeneity of this group of countries in the UNECE region. □

UNECE SIGNS MOU WITH GEORGIA UNDER THE EU WATER INITIATIVE



UNECE and the Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) that will be carried out in the country in the framework of the European Union (EU) Water Initiative. The memorandum was signed on 19 October in Tbilisi.

The overall objective of the NPD is to assist Georgia in reaching the water-related Millennium Development Goals, in particular to integrate the principles of sustainable development into national policies and programmes and reverse losses of environment resources. It also aims at reducing the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation by 50% by 2015. The MoU provides specific and concrete terms of reference for the NPD which will focus on:

- Institutional reform to approximate national legislation to the EU Water Framework Directive, including through the preparation of a new National

Water Law;

- Improving the water and health situation through the development of targets and target dates in accordance with the Protocol on Water and Health;
- Strengthening transboundary water cooperation with Azerbaijan and supporting Georgian efforts towards preparing for accession to the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention).

Thus the NPD will at the same time facilitate Georgia accession to and implementation of both UNECE and EU legal instruments, also supporting Georgia's efforts in its association process with the European Union.

In order to coordinate the implementation of NPD, the MoU established a Steering Committee which includes representatives of 15 ministries, the Georgian Parliament, agencies, academia and the civil society.

The NPD in Georgia is financed by the Government of Finland, in the framework of its Wider Europe Initiative, and the European Union. Georgia National Water Partnership provides practical support to the process. □

For more information, please visit:
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UNECE TIMBER COMMITTEE FORECASTS THAT WOOD AND PAPER PRODUCTS' MARKETS WILL CONTINUE TO GROW – AND GROW GREENER - IN 2011 AND 2012

Experts forecast a continuing upturn in wood and paper products markets (consumption, production and trade) in 2011 and 2012 for the UNECE region, with an increase in overall consumption of 0.8% in 2011 and 1.1% in 2012. Production in the same years is forecast to rise by 1.5% and 1.7% respectively. In terms of trade, exports are forecast to increase by 1.5% and 2.2%, with imports expected to fall slightly (-0.5%) in 2011 before rising by 0.7% in 2012. The forecasts were prepared during the annual Market Discussions of the joint UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission on 12-13 October 2011 in Antalya, Turkey.

There are variations across the region:

- The picture in the Russian Federation is positive, with a forecast increase in consumption of close to 10% in 2011, falling to roughly half that figure in 2012. Production too is forecast to increase by only 6.7% and 4.8% respectively, so that increased consumption would need to be met, in part, from higher imports, forecast to increase by 4.5% and 3.3%.

LAUNCH OF A REGIONAL PROJECT ON THE FORESTATION OF THE DRY BED OF THE ARAL SEA KEMER, TURKEY, 13 OCTOBER

Andrey Vasilyev, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary, and Saghit Ibatullin, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), presented a regional project on the forestation of the dry bed of the Aral Sea on 12 October, at the joint session of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission "Orman 2011, Forests in a green economy".

The project, elaborated by the Governments of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan builds on on-going efforts of these governments to roll back environmental degradation and help achieve environmental sustainability in the Aral Sea Basin.

Desertification has had a dramatic impact on Central Asia. Every year, winds carry some 70 million tons of sand, salt and dangerous chemicals from the bed of the Aral

- The situation in North America is not so encouraging: the housing market, a key driver of demand for forest products, remains highly uncertain, with new housing starts expected to show little, if any, improvement in 2011 or 2012. While production is forecast to increase by 1% in 2011 and by a further 1.6% in 2012, overall consumption is forecast to fall in 2011 by 0.5%, before climbing again in 2012 by 0.7%. Exports are forecast to rise by 4.9% and 4.3%, helped by strengthening demand for sawn softwood from China and particle board exports.
- Forecasts for Europe suggest that growth in consumption will be disappointing, achieving only 0.8% in both 2011 and 2012, reflecting the general economic situation. Production is forecast to increase by 1% and 1.3% respectively. However, countries such as Germany and Poland, where economic conditions are better, may see stronger rises in consumption and production. Exports are expected to show only modest growth in 2011 of 0.3%, improving to 1.3% in 2012. □

The most current market information on forest products market developments is available in the Timber Committee market statement at:
<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/timber/meetings/20111010/ApprovedTcMktStatement111014.pdf>.



Sea into the atmosphere. These pollutants are spread thousands of kilometers away from the region.

The forestation of tens of thousands of hectares of the dry bed of the Aral Sea will roll back environmental degradation and help thousands of families to return to the region and restart economic activities.

The project is an important component of the Third Aral Sea Basin Programme, a five-year programme of action of IFAS to improve environmental, social and economic conditions in the region.

UNECE provides assistance to the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in the field of water resources management, environment protection and climate change adaptation. □

For further information, please visit: <http://www.ec-ifas.org/>.

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