

Karlo Amirgulashvili, UNECE/FAO Side event in Batumi

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues and friends,

First of all, I would like to thank the previous speakers for excellent presentations and information provided and thanks to the present audience for participating in this side event.

Now, I would like to highlight the significance of UNECE and FAO two-year capacity-building project - “A greener economy in Central Asia and the Caucasus with sustainable forests” and the draft of “**National Action Plan for the Georgian Forest Sector in a Green Economy**” which was elaborated as a result of series of national and local multi-stakeholder workshops on sustainable forest management for Greener Economies in Georgia.

According to the new draft of Georgian Forest Code and a reform strategy, one of the main objectives is to help create conditions that will enable the forestry sector to increase its contribution to the economy and to increase employment especially among the rural population. Forest managing body is obligated to undertake forest management with the mandatory participation of professional services through qualified foresters and forest workers.

The main objectives and activities being conducted under the forest sector reform are:

- Developing the legislation required to achieve the goal of Georgia’s National Forest Concept
 - ✓ New draft of the forest code have been elaborated
 - ✓ The main legal acts are being developed
- legally ensure the development of the skills and capabilities of government institutions so that they can perform their functions effectively
- Ensure that full information is obtained about Georgia’s forests to support decision-making and planning related to their use

- ✓ The design study for National Forest Inventory, as well the development of Forest Information and Monitoring system are under elaboration
- ✓ The Global Forest Watch initiative (Georgia project as a pilot) have been started to address key barriers for improving availability, transparency, timeliness and accuracy of Forest information and ensure that the data can be used and spark action. Moreover, the project will develop its own National web based platform with GFW tools that can ingest data from different sources in order to develop a National Forest and Land Use Information and Decision Support
- The forest education strategy addressing the challenges of forest education on different levels including academic and vocational training is under preparation
- The development of standards for different groups/levels of forest experts and the development of respective curricula especially for vocational training of forest guards and forest workers are ongoing
- Negotiations with potential training institutes have started. In addition, efforts to improve the academic education of future forest experts have started. The consideration of more practical training for future academic staff is acknowledged and has to be organised
- Moreover, according to the reform strategy, a plan for providing the forest sector with sufficient numbers of people with suitable qualifications shall be elaborated and be implemented
- Actions are slowly taking place in order to obtain sufficient information about the market for wood and wood products to be able to decide on development goals and strategies for the state forest management organisation and the wood processing sector; and
- to help create conditions that will enable the forestry sector to increase its contribution to the economy and to increase employment especially among the rural population

The main findings and actions derived from the UNECE and FAO capacity-building project - **“National Action Plan for the Georgian Forest Sector in a**

Green Economy” are fully reflected in the National Forest Sector Strategy and Action Plan, which are:

- Evaluation and Establishment of adequate institutional structure for the sector
- Increase indirect use of forests
- Define the existing resources and potential (wood market study)
- Increase access to forest services
- Simplify procedures for the use of wood and non-wood resources
- Introduce modern technologies
- Maximize the share of fuel wood (renewable) resources in an energy balance, taking into account their finite resources
- Promote the biomass production and utilization

We are expecting enhanced cooperation with UNECE and FAO, especially, during the implementation of the Forest Sector Reform strategy and action plan with regards to the challenges and actions addressing the forest sector in green economy and creation of green jobs.

We strongly believe of the UNECE and FAO experience and the initiatives to be greatly supportive, and as continued cooperation which could be capacity development projects aiming through training and policy advisory services to assist Georgia and other countries in the region develop and implement context specific strategies and actions to more fully harness the potential of sustainable forest management for green economies.