

70th session of the Timber Committee

Tuesday, 16 October 2012

Mr. Sven Alkalaj

Madam Chair,

Distinguished delegates,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

This is the first time that we meet since I have taken office. However, this is by no means the first time I have heard about this community. The ECE is currently going through a review process and I'm pleased to say that the Forestry and Timber subprogramme has so far been highlighted as effective, delivering significant and relevant outputs despite its limited resources. This has not only been recognized by the ECE constituency, but also by FAO and its constituents in the latest evaluation of FAO's role and work in forestry.

And I quote from the report presented last month at the 21st session of the FAO Committee on Forestry:

"FAO and the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section are seen as a world leader in global forest products statistics [...] The partnership with UNECE Timber Committee is important because the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section represents a unique case of two UN organizations sharing the same secretariat and work program (related to forest products and industry) and active involvement of the private sector. (It is one of) the only formal forestry-related set-ups where FAO is systematically linked to the private sector and also industry."

You will hear more about our recent track record during the presentation of the results of the 2013 Strategic Review of the joint programme of work and its bodies.

So much for the past, what about the future? First of all, we must be aware that what lies ahead may not be easier, on the contrary. We are entering, in fact we already have, an era of great challenges, which require, or rather compel us to tax our resources, our skills and our cooperation to the utmost. If I had to point out some key tasks which characterize the present and the near future and affect or will affect significantly our professional environment, I would like to point out the following:

First, the new joint ECE/FAO programme of work for the period 2014-17 is up for review. Second, the draft Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy, which after several consultations with different stakeholders from Geneva to Antalya to Rio has reached an advanced stage, is also on the

agenda. Finally, the meeting will discuss the organization of the European Forest Week (EFW) in 2013, and hear about preparations for Metsä2013, the joint session of the ECE Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission to take place in Rovaniemi, Finland, next year.

Taking into account the focus of this year's TC session, representatives of the private sector are also invited to join the meeting to share experiences, information and recommendations on the sector. The meeting will offer an opportunity to strengthen the partnership between the United Nations and the forest sector in order to further promote and implement best practices for sustainable forest management and for a dynamic forest sector that could lead the transition towards a green economy.

Needless to say, we will also have a session dedicated to market discussions. These will focus on sustainable forest products and their contribution to the green economy, covering the broad market and policy developments related to innovative and sustainable forest products, and how they support a more environmentally friendly and stronger economy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you can see we are covering a wide range of activities that encompass the forest sector as a whole. And I believe that this breadth of activities should also be reflected in the name of this body. You may ask: what's in a name?

But, if names were really unimportant, why do companies spend billions searching for that key brand name? Why would politicians clamor about the names of institutions and buildings?

Your name is your face to the rest of the world, it's your first point of contact with a stranger: it's your identity! In the corporate world, the choice of a good brand name is considered critical for the success of a project. A new product from an established brand is in high demand even before the quality of the product itself is known. But, is rebranding really sufficient to take you to the path of success all on its own? There actually are people who believe that they can change their destinies by just changing their names. But I personally feel it works both ways. First you need to do your job, make your name and then onwards your name will make you out.

I do believe that over the years this Committee has performed well and has demonstrated it is about much more than "timber". We now look at the whole value chain including forest services and all forest products markets. I invite you therefore to consider the Bureau's proposal. Of course, there are other proposals making the rounds in the corridors. In the end, I hope we will be able to pick a name that really matches our identity.

I look forward to these discussions and wish you a successful week.