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**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC
COMMISSION FOR EUROPE OF RELEVANCE TO THE COMMITTEE**

(Item 2 of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

This document presents the results of the fifty-sixth session of UNECE which are relevant to the Committee's activities. The Committee is invited to take note of the Commission's conclusions and requests and respond to them as appropriate.

INTRODUCTION

1. The fifty-sixth session of the Economic Commission for Europe took place from 8 to 11 May 2001 in Geneva. During its session, decisions were taken in three areas that have a direct impact on the work of the Timber Committee, which is also invited to respond when action on its part is required. These three areas are: increased policy coherence, strengthening intersectoral links within the ECE, and the United Nations' Millennium Declaration. The relevant discussions and decisions are summarised below.

INCREASED POLICY COHERENCE

2. The Commission agreed that there was a need to strengthen the overall policy coherence between the Commission and its Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs). To achieve this goal the Commission decided to establish a Steering Group to discuss overall the policy and direction of the ECE. The Steering Group will meet in the context of ECE's annual sessions and will include the Bureau of the ECE, the PSBs chairpersons and the Executive Secretary. The Steering Group reports to the Commission.

3. *The Timber Committee Chairman will participate in the Steering Group and inform the Committee and its bureau of results.*

STRENGTHENING INTERSECTORAL LINKS WITHIN THE ECE

4. The Commission underlined the importance of the role of ECE in promoting regional cooperation on intersectoral issues. It concluded that, while intersectoral cooperation was very much needed for policy coherence, it did not occur spontaneously but needed planning and stimulation. It also noted that intersectoral activities should be carefully planned so as to avoid overburdening the PSBs and affecting their core activities.

5. As a result, PSBs were requested to examine the most efficient, flexible and cost-effective modalities to address intersectoral issues. Some suggestions were: joint meetings of the PSBs or their bureaux; the creation of joint groups of experts or task forces; the delegation of one member of a PSB to a meeting of another PSB; specific projects that are jointly implemented and monitored; and the establishment of web pages dedicated to the sharing of information on developments in intersectoral cooperation.

6. "Trade, timber and environment, promotion of trade of timber and timber products and sustainable forest management" is an area where the Commission specifically requested the Timber Committee to develop intersectoral cooperation with the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development.

7. PSBs were further requested to review annually already ongoing intersectoral cooperation and to consider potential new issues for such cooperation to be subsequently brought to the attention of other concerned PSBs, with decision thereon to be taken by the Commission. The Commission also encouraged PSBs to develop other cross-sectoral activities whenever opportunities present themselves.

8. PSBs were also encouraged to find new ways to secure the means for implementing intersectoral activities, including setting aside regular resources and seeking extra budgetary funding for these activities.

9. *Intersectoral cooperation is the subject of a special discussion under item 6 of the Provisional Agenda. The Committee will be invited to respond to the Commission's request under that agenda item.*

THE UNITED NATIONS' MILLENNIUM DECLARATION

10. At the United Nations' Millennium Summit in 2000, the heads of UN member States adopted the Millennium Declaration. This declaration contains a number of goals that both Member States and the United Nations are committed to accomplish. In support of this process, the Commission held a roundtable to discuss the key policy concerns from the Declaration that are of relevance to the ECE region.

11. The Commission invited its Principal Subsidiary Bodies to consider what contribution they could make to the implementation process, and how to integrate the Millennium Declaration concerns and objectives into their programmes of work. In this context, issues that the Committee should pay particular attention to include (comments in bold italic draw attention to how the Committee and its partners are addressing the Millennium Declaration topics in its field):

- development and the eradication of poverty; ***Although the Committee frequently draws attention to the importance of all three “pillars” of sustainable forest management, including economic sustainability, it has no specific activities on poverty eradication;***
- the use of information technology to support development; ***a seminar in 2000 addressed the question of information systems in forestry;***
- good governance; ***The EFC, the Committee's sister body, monitors developments in forest policies and institutions, and national forest programmes, which may be considered “good governance” in the sector;***
- environmentally-friendly international trade and investment; ***to be discussed under item 6 of the provisional agenda;***
- a greater involvement of civil society and, particularly NGOs, in the Committee's work. ***Several major NGOs as well as social organizations and the private sector participate actively in various parts of the Committee's activities;***
- In addition, the Commission highlighted the need for all PSBs to make special efforts to eliminate the negative consequences from the Chernobyl disaster. ***A project proposal for management of forests contaminated by radioactivity was drawn up by the team of specialists on this topic and included in the consolidated list of priority projects presented to donors.***

12. The Commission further agreed periodically to review progress made towards implementing the Millennium Declaration, as it has been invited to do by the General Assembly.

13. ***The Committee is invited to consider whether any modifications or additions to its programme are necessary in the light of the Millennium Declaration.***
