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**INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON FORESTS, SUPPORT TO
THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES**

(Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda)

Note by the Secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. At its discussion of strategic directions in the mid 1990s, the Committee and the Commission decided to give highest priority to supporting the regional and global dialogue on forests. Since then, this item has been on the agenda of all Committee sessions. The present document describes developments in the dialogue at global and regional levels during the past year and invites comment from the Committee on how support might be continued, and what should be the role of the Committee in this respect. Much of the background information is available and has been presented before to the Committee (for instance, last year in document TIM/2000/3), so is not repeated here.

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SUPPORT TO THE GLOBAL DIALOGUE

2. During the period under consideration, the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) was set up, holding a preparatory session and its first session, both in New York, in February and June 2001 respectively.

3. Substantive outputs of UNFF-1 were decisions on (i) the multi-year programme of work (MYPOW), (ii) the Plan of Action (POA) for the implementation of the Proposals for Action agreed on by UNFF's predecessors the Intergovernmental Panel and Forum on Forests (IPF and IFF), and (iii) the initiation of its work with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF). The next session of the UNFF, which will include a Ministerial segment, will be held in Costa Rica in March 2002. The CPF, which is the successor to the Interagency Task Force on Forests (ITFF), was established at its meeting in Rome in April 2001. Its function is to support the UNFF in its MYPOW and the implementation of the POA, and to assist in monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards attaining UNFF objectives and in supporting countries in providing forest-related information. Currently it is preparing a Work Plan at the invitation of the UNFF for presentation to UNFF-2. The CPF, which is chaired by FAO, is composed of the original eight members of the ITFF plus two new members (at the time of drafting this note in July 2001). Besides the members of the CPF there will be a network of other organisations to help implement the CPF Work Plan.

4. The Timber Committee, through the joint work programme could thus make important contributions to the work of the UNFF through support to member countries in their reporting to the UNFF, through FAO as a member of the CPF or directly as a potential member of the CPF network. Some examples of areas in which contributions are being made include the following:

- *Forest resources of Europe, CIS, North America, Australia, Japan and New Zealand (TBFRA-2000)*, along with associated documents and database is a major contribution to the global **Forest Resource Assessment**
- Development of **outlook studies** (EFSOS)
- Supporting and monitoring progress in **national forest programmes** in Europe
- Contribution to the global effort to improve the **quality of the international data set**, notably through the activities of the Intersecretariat Working Group on forest sector statistics and the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics
- Under "**trade and environment**" UNECE/FAO monitors markets for certified forest products. (See also discussion on intersectoral activities under item 6 of the provisional agenda)
- The team of specialists under the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee has prepared a report on **participation** in forest decision-making
- A seminar on the **role of women** in the forest sector this topic was held in 2000 in Portugal
- UNECE/FAO is active in the area of improving and harmonising **concepts and definitions**, as recommended by IFF

- The ECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network (team of specialists on **public relations**) is one of the few international actions in the field of PR
- IFF has also called on countries and organisations to **stimulate the sound use of wood as an environmentally friendly and renewable raw material**. A seminar on this topic will be held in Romania in 2002

5. The extended bureau meeting for the strategic review considered the question of support to the global dialogue and stated that “the outputs of the UNECE/FAO work programme notably that on information and analysis should be made available to UNFF but there should be no special dialogue. EFC, like other regional forestry commissions, should articulate regional concerns for transmission to COFO and UNFF.”

6. A side meeting at the time of COFO (March 2001) of the extended bureaux “noted that there had been discussion in several fora of a ‘regional dimension’ to UNFF. A meeting of the bureaux of the FAO regional forestry commissions (RFCs), also held at COFO, identified a possible role for the RFCs in providing a neutral forum to identify and articulate regional concerns, which could be transmitted to global fora such as COFO and UNFF. Furthermore it noted that some countries in the region had not been able to participate fully in the global dialogue on forests, whereas they could participate in the regional discussions. Some participants pointed out that the primary actors at UNFF were countries, who were responsible for the political decisions: regional organisations could contribute information and analysis, but need not have a major role. The meeting suggested:

- ECE/FAO should await decisions at UNFF and any requests which might be received
- in this area, it should continue to work closely with MCPFE
- the interests of all countries in the region should be borne in mind”

7. *The Committee is invited to:*

- *Consider the possible relationship of the Timber Committee and its joint programme with FAO in support of the UNFF and the CPF*
- *Identify certain programmed activities, including those summarised above, as contributions to the global dialogue;*
- *Consider endorsing the view of the extended bureaux meetings on the strategic direction of future work in this area; and*
- *Consider the possible role for the Regional Forestry Commissions in providing a neutral forum to identify and articulate regional concerns which could be transmitted to global fora such as COFO and UNFF.*

SUPPORT TO THE FOREST DIALOGUE AT REGIONAL LEVEL

8. The extended bureaux meeting “strongly supported continued cooperation with MCPFE”. About a third of the activities in the MCPFE programme of work are being implemented by UNECE/FAO, alone or with partners (see list in TIM/2000/3).

9. Recent major activities undertaken through the joint UNECE/FAO programme in **direct** support of the MCPFE programme include:

- participation in the work on improving the **indicators of sustainable forest management**, drawing on experience with TBFRA
- participation of the secretariat and the TBFRA correspondents in work to improve the information base on “**protected and protective forests**” and drawing up the new MCPFE classification, based on detailed information, gathered through the TBFRA network on national forms of protection regime.
- A joint meeting of the UNECE/FAO team on **assistance to countries in transition** and an MCPFE workshop to consider the strategic issues in this area and how Helsinki resolution H3 on forestry assistance to countries in transition (for which UNECE/FAO is international coordinator) should be implemented.
- It is intended to complete the base line study of the outlook study (EFSOS) by end 2002, in order that it may be useful in the preparatory phase of the Ministerial Conference in Vienna in 2003.
- A wide range of other UNECE/FAO activities is in general conformity with the objectives identified by MCPFE.

10. The chief of the MCPFE Liaison Unit Vienna regularly attends bureaux meetings of UNECE/FAO and other meetings under their auspices, and there is constant close communication between the Liaison Unit and the Geneva secretariat. One question which has arisen is what information should be presented to the Ministerial Conference in Vienna in 2003, and how UNECE/FAO can contribute to collecting it, as it did for the 1998 Lisbon Conference.

11. By the time of the Committee session, the Liaison Unit Vienna will have prepared a discussion paper for the MCPFE expert level meeting 22-23 October 2001, on possible themes for the fourth Ministerial Conference in April 2003. The secretariat will make this paper available also to Timber Committee delegations who may wish to take the opportunity to comment on the issues raised.

12. UNECE/FAO cooperates with a wide range of other regional bodies, governmental and non-governmental in implementing the MCPFE programme of work.

13. *The Committee is invited to consider:*

- *how regional collaboration in the forestry dialogue should be developed and with which partners, and*
 - *specifically, recognising that the cooperation between MCPFE and UNECE/FAO is satisfactory, how it could be further improved.*
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