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Russian Federation pledges financial contribution to UNECE

At the recent Sixtieth Anniversary Session of the UNECE, Alexander Yakovenko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, participated as keynote speaker in the panel devoted to "Building on UNECE's sixty-year contribution to pan-European integration: cooperation for stability and prosperity in the ECE region".

He informed the Commission that his country had decided to contribute \$1.2 million annually, starting from 2008, in voluntary funding for UNECE programmes. He expressed the hope that the Russian Federation's donor contribution would substantially complement other external sources of funding for technical assistance projects implemented through the Commission.

United Nations regional commissions promote the Information Society

As a follow up to the World Summits on the Information Society, and parallel to the 2007 Annual Session of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Regional Commissions organized an event entitled: "The Information Society – From Declaration to Implementation" at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 21 May 2007.

The keynote speaker at this event was the Executive Director of the European Environment Agency, Prof. Jacqueline McGlade, speaking on the importance of developing a "European Shared Environmental Information System".

Forestry in Uzbekistan

How much does the forestry sector of Uzbekistan contribute to the sustainable development of the economy?

The answer to this question can be found in the recently published UNECE/FAO discussion paper "Forest and Forest Products Country Profile: Uzbekistan" (ECE/TIM/DP/45).



The primary role of forests in Uzbekistan is to protect agricultural lands, populated areas and soil of surrounding territories from water and wind erosion, to prevent mudflows, and to stabilize sands of deserted areas. At the same time, the country's forests are the source of some low-quality timber (also used for energy purposes), as well as of non-wood products such as nuts, fruits, medical plants and fodder.

Forest areas constitute some 8% of the land and are unevenly distributed over the territory of the country. The forest ecosystems of Uzbekistan are extremely fragile and sensitive to human intervention. The area under forests has considerably declined during the last century, but the process is currently being stabilized.

Managing the environmental footprint of the Information Society

The Information Society can play an increasingly significant role in promoting sustainable development and a healthy environment. It can also be a tool for empowering the public and strengthening participatory democracy. However, its potential in these areas is not being fully realized, according to the UNECE.



sustainable future.

Closing the digital divide is a major policy goal of the WSIS follow up activities. It is estimated that the rate of growth in participation in the Internet will exceed 10% per year during the five year period 2005-2010. This has significant environmental implications, both positive and negative.

In particular, efforts to close the 'digital divide' need to be accompanied by stronger measures to curb the growing negative environmental impacts arising from increased usage of information and communication technology (ICT).

"The potential for ICT to reduce environmental impacts is considerable, e.g. through using teleworking or virtual conferencing to cut down on transport emissions," according to Mr. Wates. "However, ICT carries its own environmental footprint.

At the event "The Information Society – From Declaration To Implementation", on 21 May, the Secretary to the UNECE Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (*Aarhus Convention*), Jeremy Wates, examined the challenges and opportunities that ICT presents to achieving a more environmentally



Even as we seek to make the best use of the new electronic media, we must remain aware of the challenges ICT poses to achieving sustainable development, and make efforts to minimize the potential environmental damage."



continued



These challenges include ensuring that the production of ICT is clean and efficient, and that the energy used to power the ICT sector – most especially the Internet – does not undermine efforts to respond to the threat of global warming. Another concern is the illicit movement of transboundary wastes that originate from ICT usage in the developed world and end up being dumped in landfills of the developing world. At least 100,000 scrapped computers are arriving in the port of Lagos, the Nigerian commercial capital, every month.* There are also more indirect effects, such as the use of the Internet to spread information that promotes unsustainable lifestyles and environmentally damaging choices.

The event also provided an opportunity to explore how new forms of electronic communication are being used to promote greater transparency and facilitate public participation in decision-making. In the environmental sphere, the Aarhus Convention provides an international framework within which countries from throughout much of Europe and Central Asia have taken on a legal obligation to promote the availability of environmental information through the Internet.

“The Internet has allowed a dramatic increase in the exchange of information between citizens and their Governments. Yet the immense potential for electronic participation in decision-making has not yet been realised,” say Mr. Wates, citing the findings of a recent survey under the Convention to assess the implementation of electronic access to environmental information.

At the side event, the UNECE secretariat announced the launch of a new phase in the development of the Convention’s Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy, (<http://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org>), a global electronic portal. The Aarhus Clearinghouse enables Governments and citizens to share electronically information on their activities promoting environmental democracy. It collects emerging practices around the globe in the areas of access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters. ❖

* *United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Achim Steiner, speaking before the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Basel Convention, Nairobi, Kenya, on 27 November 2006.*

For more information visit www.unece.org/env/pp or contact Jeremy Wates (jeremy.wates@unece.org).



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The forest and forest products sector of Uzbekistan like that of most of the countries of Central Asia has undergone considerable transformations during recent years. The transition to a market economy demands deep reform of forest management, so that it would be sound not only economically, but also socially and ecologically.

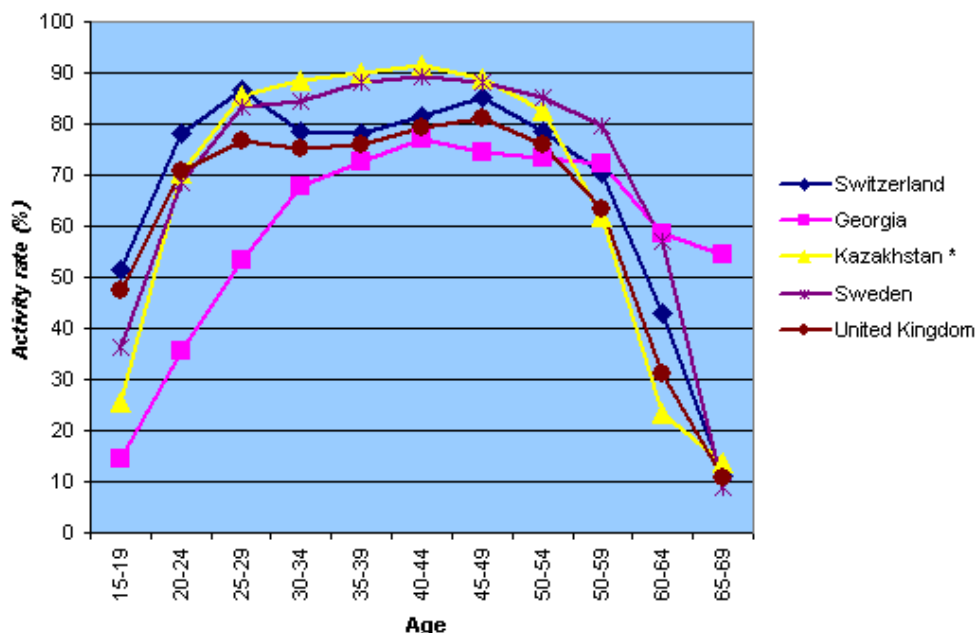
A shortage of funds for foresters and poor equipment of forestry enterprises has led to significant losses of wood through illegal logging. The current transitional economic and socio-political developments in Uzbekistan might create the opportunity to develop a forest legislation, supporting new systems of sustainable forest management, new policies and approaches regarding the use of forest resources. ❖

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Facts and figures

Women’s economic activity by age cohorts

Women activity curve, selected countries, 2005



Source: UNECE Gender database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data.htm>)

Notes: Economic activity rate refers to the percentage share of the labour force (employed or seeking employment) in the total population.

* Data refer to 2004.

Women’s participation in the labour market during their active life varies across countries. In the UNECE region, the inter-country variation of activity rates is strongest in the early stages of work life (15-19 age group) and near the retirement threshold (60-64 age group).

In general, women’s activity rates rise gradually after the age of 25 and reach their peak at the age of 40-44 (Kazakhstan, Sweden in our sample). However, differences in job-holding attitudes during the child caring period may advance or postpone the peak activity period. In Switzerland, for instance, women’s economic activity reaches its highest level at the age of 25-29 and drops during periods corresponding to intense childcare before resuming ascent at the age of 40. To some extent, a similar pattern is observed also in the United Kingdom. Commonly, by the age of 60-64 women start to withdraw rapidly from labour market. Georgia, where an important share of women stay in activity beyond the age of 65, is an exception.