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REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES SINCE THE FIFTY-FOURTH SESSION
AND PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 1998 TO 2002

MEETING OF THE JOINT FAO/ECE TEAM OF PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALISTS
IN THE FOREST AND FOREST INDUSTRIES SECTOR

(Item 6 of the Provisional Agenda)

Note by the secretariat

This document contains the June 1997 meeting report of the Joint FAO/ECE Team of Public Relations Specialists in the Forest and Forest Industries Sector.

The Committee is invited to review the Team's activities, especially its study of timber substitutes campaigns and a global forestry communicators' forum.

**MEETING OF THE JOINT FAO/ECE TEAM OF PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALISTS
IN THE FOREST AND FOREST INDUSTRIES SECTOR**

Biri, Norway, 25-27 June 1997

Report of the meeting¹

Introduction

1. The meeting of the Joint FAO/ECE Team of Public Relations Specialists in the Forest and Forest Industries Sector was held in Biri, Norway on 25-27 June 1997.
2. The following countries were represented by the 27 participants: Austria, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The ECE, FAO and Malaysian Timber Council were also represented. A list of participants and speakers is attached as Annex 1.
3. Ms. Berit Sanness (Norway), Deputy Team Leader, welcomed the team to Biri.
4. Mr. Ingwald Gschwandtl (Austria), Team Leader, chaired the meeting and Mr. Ed Pepke (FAO/ECE) was rapporteur.
5. The provisional agenda was adopted.

**Communication needs to promote wood as an environmentally friendly material
(Item 1)**

6. Mr. Pepke reviewed the 10 recommendations from the workshop in Jönköping, Sweden in April 1996 which had been passed on to the Team for consideration by the parent bodies. The first recommendation calls for promotion of wood through coordinated international efforts.
7. Mr. Jan Hagsted (Sweden), Director of the Nordic Timber Council, described the positive attributes of wood and cited these trends: a move to high technology, internationalization, media prominence, economy consciousness, globalization of trade, new role of women, improved quality of life, and environmental consciousness. His visions of truly aware environmentally conscious consumers, high performance products, market oriented research and development, and a growing wood culture led to the following targets: to accept the finality of global resources; to use less energy; and to accept environmental life cycle analyses. He concluded that we should have confidence in wood, work on wood's strengths, improve the quality and quantity of our messages, focus on key groups and have a long-term perspective. He recommended that:
1. environmental consciousness offers us unique PR opportunities; 2. we create a PR master plan; 3. we develop new PR methods; 4. the industry have a market orientation; 5. much more money be spent on PR; and 6. that competence is crucial at every level.
8. The discussion indicated that the team agreed with these two sets of recommendations and they delayed action until the discussion of item 6.

¹ As prepared by the secretariat and team leader.

Communication on forest certification (Item 2)

9. Mr. Sven Sjunnesson (Sweden), Forestry Director of the Swedish Forest owners' Federation presented the ISO and FSC approaches to certification. The advantages of ISO are: it is international and well-organized; 14001 is an environmental tool covering all parts of the company; it is adaptable to local needs; and the company decides the necessary level of detail. FSC advantage is that it is recognized by NGOs. He said the shortcomings of the FSC approach are that it does not address chain of custody and certification of small forest holdings requiring group certification.

10. In the discussion Mr. Ronnie Williams (UK) announced the new "Forestry information digest", a British initiative to coordinate information on certification developments by countries volunteering to join. It also includes the UK move to establish a framework for forest certification systems in the EU.

11. No agreement was reached on the possibility of a joint ISO and FSC system and there were strong opinions expressed on both sides of the issue. The Team decided to focus on the communications aspects and Mr. Sjunnesson closed by saying that certification is a marketing tool, but it is an inefficient communication tool for sustainable forest management.

Communications aspects of the Pan-European Process for the Protection of Forests in Europe (Item 3)

12. Mr. Luis Costa Leal (Portugal) explained the history of the Pan-European Process (PEP), including the Strasbourg and Helsinki Ministerial Conferences, their resolutions and their follow-up. The third ministerial conference will be held in Lisbon in June, 1998. Currently the focus is to ensure income, employment and goods and services from forests as prerequisites for sustainability. Mr. Leal requested support from the Team on general public relations for the process and its outcomes, and especially for any forthcoming items relating to PR.

13. As all programme of work items for the European Forestry Commission and the Timber Committee fall under the follow-up to both UNCED Rio and the PEP, Mr. Gschwandtl summarized the informal discussion saying that the work should be formalized when more developments evolve from the Pan-European Process. Mr. Gschwandtl, whose country is co-host to the Lisbon conference, will be the focal point and will solicit ideas and then submit a proposal for from the Team to the Liaison Unit of the Pan-European Process..

Public opinion surveys concerning forest management and use of wood (Item 4)

14. Ms. Maria Hugosson (Sweden) presented the latest results from the Nordic Country survey of public opinion in the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Germany. The survey confirmed that consumers have low knowledge of the forest and forest industry (FFI) sector and that people like wood, but do not like cutting trees.

15. A survey presented by Mr. Juhani Karvonen (Finland), showed that Finns believe the most credible source for information on the FFI sector is the forest industry.

16. Mr. Yves St-Onge (Canada) presented results of a recent survey which shows that while environmental issues are declining, in favour of concern for employment, the forest industry was seen as more damaging than industries of: oil/gas, coal, mining and hydro-electric. However the public recognized that the industry is trying to take corrective measures and that forests are important for both resources and employment. The greatest threat to Canadian forests was seen to be overcutting.

17. The Austrian wood promoting campaign by Proholz has succeeded in changing public opinion regarding the volume of forest resources increasing, rather than decreasing, according to Mr. Gschwandtl.

Canadian experience with Internet communications (Item 5)

18. Mr. St-Onge presented the "forestry gateway" which has a current campaign by the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association which invites the public into pulp and paper mills to see their environmental-related improvements.

Public relations campaigns of substitute materials (Item 6)

19. Ms. Sanness presented a draft report titled, "The environmental promotion of wood substitute industries" which describes the PR campaigns of the steel, aluminium concrete and plastic (PVC) industries and gives an overview of these industries. Wood is quickly losing its market share in a number of applications like windows, doors and framing sawnwood.

20. A proposed schedule was presented for advancing the current draft through a second draft and then to finalize it for the 1998 TC and EFC sessions. The first step will be to identify possible partners and to send initially an invitation to participate in the project and then next a request for funding. The cost of the first draft was more than £10,000, while the work needed for the final draft is estimated at £100,000.

21. The Team thanked Ms. Sanness for her work and encouraged that it be expanded to include wood promotional campaigns and price/cost information on substitutes. A subgroup led by Norway was formed to direct the project consisting of members from Finland, Austria and the Netherlands. Also the Nordic Timber Council, Canada and USA will be asked to join the subgroup.

22. The results of this project will form the basic market intelligence for advancing the messages described in item 1 on wood as an environmentally friendly material.

Forestry communications activities in southern European countries (Item 7)

23. Mr. Alvaro Branco Vasco (Portugal) presented a paper and video on "Forests in Motion," a successful PR/educational campaign directed at children.

24. "Public relations in forestry and the wildfire problem," a paper by Mr. Nicholas Efsthatis, who was not able to participate due to an unforeseen trip to the UN General Assembly, was distributed.

Evaluation of FAO/ECE PR activities (Item 8)

25. Mr. Gschwandtl presented the overwhelmingly positive results of the November, 1996 PR workshop for countries in transition (CITs). With 11 countries participating, the workshop assessed the CITs' PR needs and brought more CITs into the Team's network and activities.

26. The Team thanked Mr. Gschwandtl for organizing the workshop and they thanked the Austrian Federal Ministry of Forests for their generous sponsorship, both of which contributed to the success of the workshop.

27. Mr. Pepke showed the new publication of "Forest and forest industries country fact sheets" which is also available through the new Timber Committee website. Following the comments, it was decided to eliminate the statistics on apparent consumption, self-sufficiency ratio and net trade. Additional modifications to the website edition were suggested, eg to put a "definition" button at the end of each page and to segregate the English and French versions. Finally the Team requested that a reader survey be performed to more accurately determine readers' reactions and needs.

28. Mr. Pepke showed the Timber Committee website (<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber>) and the Team suggested that Adobe Acrobat be incorporated for graphics, especially for the "Country fact sheets." The Team requested links to the Nordic Timber Council and the Malaysian Timber Council. The Team requested their own homepage be established but that the Team mailing list have restricted availability initially for team access only. FAO, ECE/FAO and Canada will develop the site.

29. An example of PR for a product of the TC and EFC is the series of presentations and press conferences done in the Nordic Countries and Austria on the recently published "European timber trends study." As a step toward increased activity by more countries, the Team requested that a copy of the publication be sent to each team member. Mr. Pepke encouraged more team members to take advantage of this PR opportunity for their countries and simultaneously for the parent bodies.

30. Mr. St-Onge presented the results of the Team's World Food Summit poster which sought to raise the visibility of the team, to contribute to a common cause and to experiment with an international cooperative product. After assessing the positive and negative aspects of the project, he concluded that there would not be a poster for the World Forestry Congress.

31. Mr. Steve Dembner (FAO) invited team members to capitalize on the PR value of the October, 1997 World Forestry Congress in Turkey. As many of the Team members are planning to attend, Mr. Gschwandtl will investigate the possibility of a satellite meeting on FFI sector PR.

32. Mr. Dembner reminded members to take advantage of the PR Internet list server (subscriptions available by sending a message to Forestry-PR-Experts-L@mailserv.fao.org).

33. Mr. Dembner also announced the availability of the FAO "State of the world's forests" which has numerous possibilities for PR tie-ins.

Special PR activities in countries and regions (Item 9)

34. Dr. H. S. Leng and Ms. Sheam Satkaru-Gonzoles (Malaysia) discussed an exciting variety of the Malaysian Timber Council's PR activities. They urged continued cooperation with the Team to promote all wood products as it has a beneficial effect on tropical timber.

International forestry communicators forum (Item 10)

35. Mr. St-Onge proposed the objectives of a forum would be: 1. to present PR programmes; 2. to discuss partnership possibilities; 3. to broaden the communication network; and 4. to exchange common messages and priorities. The rationale for the forum is that the Team has established an international node for forestry communication which continually needs to be broadened and that the Team is an agent of change and communication of global FFI sector issues and initiatives.

36. The Team responded favourably to the proposal and established a subgroup (Norway, Finland, Austria, Portugal and France) under the leadership of Mr. St-Onge to develop the forum. The first step will be an inquiry of the interests of forestry communicators. Then members will work on its organization with groups on logistics, programme and promotion. The forum could take place in 1999.

Team operations (Item 12)

37. The next meeting will be held in southern Europe, possibly Greece or Portugal, in late April or early May, 1998. It will focus on the special needs of FFI communications in the Mediterranean countries. More information will be forthcoming.

38. Mr. Gschwandtl will brief the Timber Committee at its October, 1997 session on the developments of the Team. Mr. St-Onge urged team members to brief their country's heads of delegation to the TC and EFC on the Team's affairs so that they are aware of developments when they meet.

Living Forests project (Item 13)

39. Ms. Sanness explained the Norwegian Living Forests project which, in addition to focus on competence building and initiate R&D work, is leading to establishment of standards that can be used for certification of sustainable forest management. This multi-party process encompassing forest owners, industry, government, trade union, environment, women and consumer organizations in Norway, has established four test areas, of which the Team visited a forest on the Brøttum test area.

40. Mr. Gunnar Mæhlum, a forest farmer and Chairman of Brøttum Forest Owners' Association, displayed his forest management practices and described how they have changed according to the test standards to achieve sustainable management. Following the forest visit, the Mæhlum family prepared a wonderful lunch at their farmhouse for the Team.

Other business (Item 11)

40. Mr. Pepke informed the group of a seminar being planned by the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training on "environmental training in forestry." Its PR segment will need assistance from the Team.

41. The Team learned about FFI PR in conjunction with the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympics. Mr. Knut Dæhlen, Director of the Oppland County Forest Service, displayed some of the venues for the games and distributed examples of PR materials which were aimed at visitors and journalists during the Olympics. He then represented the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry Department at a hosted dinner.

42. The Team warmly thanked Ms. Sanness and the staff of the Living Forests for their excellent arrangements and generous hospitality.

Annexes attached to the original report (available from secretariat)

1. List of participants
2. List of materials distributed at the meeting.