



Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

TIM/1998/1
23 July 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

TIMBER COMMITTEE
Fifty-sixth session
28 September - 1 October 1998

IMPLEMENTATION OF ECE PLAN OF ACTION

(Item 2 of the Provisional Agenda)

Note by the secretariat

This document presents the Commission's requests as regards prioritisation of activities, cross-sectoral issues and review of publications. The Committee may wish to endorse the list of priorities proposed in the annex, draw the Commission's attention to ongoing work on cross-sectoral issues and to the fact that its recurrent publications are kept under continuing review by an intergovernmental body, the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics, and therefore merit continued publication.

INTRODUCTION

1. In 1997, ECE drew up and implemented its Plan of Action (E/ECE/1347). In October 1997, the Committee was informed of those parts of the Plan relevant to its activities, and responded to the requests made of it. For an account of this see TIM/1997/1 and ECE/TIM/89 paras. 7-9. At its session in April 1998 the Commission reviewed the implementation of the Plan, notably by Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) such as the Timber Committee, and made some further decisions. The objective of the present document is to present items on which the Committee is expected to make decisions or proposals at its 1998 session, with the necessary background information.

Cross-sectoral issues

2. At its session in 1999 the Commission will discuss implementation of the provisions of the Plan of action on the four ECE "cross-sectoral issues"¹. As mentioned in TIM/1997/1, sustainable development of the forest and forest products sector is at the heart of the Committee's activities: this question will be addressed in detail in TIM/1998/4 on support to the global and pan-European activities for sustainable forest management. Activities for countries in transition are addressed in the document on the work programme. The business community has been involved in the Committee's activities since the beginning.

3. With regard to *main streaming of the gender issue*, the special topic at the 1996 joint session of the Committee with the EFC was "Women in forestry". The role of women in the sector was also mentioned in the resolutions of the Lisbon Ministerial Conference and the final report of the IPF. Therefore the secretariat is proposing, as one of the possibilities for inclusion in the programme, an activity on "The role of women in European forestry". For information on this proposal see TIM/1998/4..

Prioritisation of the work of the Timber Committee

4. The Commission at its 53rd session endorsed "Common Guidelines for Prioritisation of the Work of PSBs" (E/ECE/1365 para. 29). The Committee is invited to prioritise its programme according to these guidelines. A draft prioritisation, based on the rank ordering agreed in 1997 and agreed by the Committee Bureau, is presented in the annex. The following comments are necessary as background for the Committee's discussion of this point:

- As there are only six ECE staff members carrying out the Committee's programme, it has not been possible to prioritise "at the level of activities employing at least one staff member"
- Programme element 1.3 (Sustainable forest management in the region: support to the follow-up to UNCED and the pan-European process on the protection of forests) should be considered "higher priority", and programme elements 2.3 and 2.4 (activities of *Silva Mediterranea* and of the Working party on Management of Mountain watersheds, respectively) should be considered "lower priority" in the Timber Committee's rank ordering. All others should be considered "medium priority".
- The question of what to do with more resources is addressed under item 5 of the provisional agenda on sustainable forest management in the region. The secretariat, after consultation with the Bureau, has prepared a number of proposals on this topic (to which the Committee has attached "highest priority" since 1993), which are within the Committee's mandate and feasible with the Committee's normal methods. These proposals concern the

¹The outlook for sustainable development, main streaming the gender issue, special concern for countries in transition and the involvement of the business community.

following major topics:

1. Role of European forest ecosystems in the mitigation of climate change
2. Trade and environment issues in the forest and forest products sector
3. Strategies to stimulate and promote the sound use of wood and other forest products as environmentally friendly and renewable materials;
4. The forest sector and society: dialogue, communication, participation, confrontation and dispute settlement
5. Role and responsibility of European private forest owners;
6. Role of women in European forest sector.

Thus the Committee's discussions under item 5 of the provisional agenda will identify rather clearly what could be done with more resources.

- As would be expected with a body whose core function is "monitoring and analysis", most programme elements are of an ongoing nature. For these activities, in accordance with the Commission's decision, more specific information is being provided in the draft programme on what outputs are planned for the next two years.
- The next prioritisation should be carried out in 2000, prior to the budget submission for 2002-2003.

Review of recurrent publications

5. The Commission requested each PSB to "review the recurrent publications falling within its purview in order to determine whether their continue publication is merited". The Committee may wish to inform the Commission that the recurrent publications under its auspices are reviewed, in detail, every two years, by the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics, whose major function this is. At its most recent session in 1997, the Working Party approved the system for collection and dissemination of information and analysis, while suggesting a number of improvements. In addition, a user survey is being carried out on the Committee's publications in 1998, with the support of the Government of Finland, to provide an objective indicator of performance in this respect, and to ensure that the publications correspond as closely as possible to users' needs. The interim results of the user survey will be presented during the technical briefing during the Committee session. The Committee may wish to state, in the light of this situation that its publications are kept under constant review and that they merit continued publication.

Annex

Proposed rank ordering of programme elements in Timber Committee programme

- 1.3 Sustainable forest management in the region: support to the follow-up to UNCED and the pan European process on the protection of forests (priority ranking 1)
- 1.5 Review of markets for forest products and short term forecasts (priority ranking 2)
- 1.6 Outlook for the supply and demand for timber and for non-wood goods and services (priority ranking 3)
- 1.1 Collection and dissemination of information on trends in the sector, including publication of the *Timber Bulletin* (priority ranking 4)
- 1.2 Forest Resource Assessment 2000 (temperate and boreal forests) (priority ranking 5)
- 1.4 Activities for countries in transition, including coordination of implementation of resolution H3 of the Helsinki Ministerial Conference (priority ranking 6)
- 2.1 Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics (priority ranking 7)
- 2.2 Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training (priority ranking 8)
- 2.3 EFC/AFWC/NEFC Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions, *Silva Mediterranea* (priority ranking 9)
- 2.4 FAO Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds (priority ranking 10)