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**STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE ECE TIMBER COMMITTEE/FAO EUROPEAN
FORESTRY COMMISSION PROGRAMME OF WORK**

(Item 3 of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

This document presents the process of the strategic review decided on at the joint session in Rome in October 2000, and its main results, as regards the work programme, the process of programme formulation and review, methods of work of teams, prioritisation of activities and availability of resources. The Committee is invited to discuss and endorse the results of the review.

INTRODUCTION

1. At their joint session in Rome in October 2000, the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission agreed to undertake a strategic review of their integrated programme of work. This review was completed between October 2000 and summer 2001. The present document presents for the attention and endorsement of the Committee the results of that review.
2. *The Committee is invited to review the strategic review process and its results, and agree on a strategic vision of its activities to 2004, including the recommendations about allocation of secretariat*

resources, and programme formulation and review. As agreed in Rome, the EFC bureau will represent the EFC at the meeting, in order to avoid a year's delay before the next EFC meeting. The integrated programme itself is included in document TIM/2001/8 for adoption under item 8 of the provisional agenda.

THE PROCESS OF THE STRATEGIC REVIEW

3. The review was conducted as follows:

- Countries were invited to comment on the present programme and their needs. Partners and stakeholders were also consulted. Twenty-one countries, ten partners and other stakeholders sent comments. The stakeholders included international organisations, as well as national and international academic bodies and trade associations;
- The replies were analysed and synthesized by the secretariat, which also prepared draft proposals for revisions;
- An extended bureaux meeting (i.e. a meeting of the Timber Committee and EFC bureaux, with participation of any other countries which wished: 16 countries participated in the three day meeting) in February 2001 agreed on the outline of a revised integrated programme;
- A side meeting at the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) in Rome in March made it possible to brief a wider circle and explore some aspects in greater depth;
- The Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee and the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party both reacted to the proposals, with further suggestions;
- The regular bureaux meeting in May in Geneva finalised the revised programme;
- The present document, and the document containing the draft integrated programme are presented to the Committee session by the bureaux who have accepted a closer degree of involvement in programme review than in the past.

4. In the interests of transparency, all the documents relative to each stage of the process, including the country replies to the enquiry, have been posted on the Timber website (http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/strategic_review/strategic_review_replies.htm), and are therefore not quoted extensively here.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE REVISED INTEGRATED PROGRAMME

5. The main features of the revised programme (see TIM/2001/8 for the full text) may be summarised as follows:

- Inclusion of a new section on mandate and vision;

- Division of the programme into five major work areas, three under the guidance of the Joint Working Party, one under the guidance of the Joint Committee and one (policy and cross sectoral issues) under the direct guidance of the parent bodies;
- Each work area contains some elements which are of a continuing nature and some of a “project” nature, with a defined time period;
- Division of the programme into a two page overview, and a more detailed tabular presentation of activities, outputs and timing;
- Inclusion of a table of guidance to the secretariat as regards allocation of its resources and a list of the inputs provided by countries under each element, thus making more explicit the participatory nature of most of the activities, and the large investment made by countries in carrying them out. The share of secretariat resources assigned to each work area has been modified in accordance with the guidance given by the bureaux, thus reflecting countries’ priorities;
- A complete list of all teams of specialists, with mandates, outputs and plans is also included;
- The whole programme will be posted on the website, and kept up to date.

PROGRAMME FORMULATION AND REVIEW

6. One aspect discussed in depth was how to ensure that the programme was properly reviewed (no “rubber-stamping”), but without excessive use of meeting time, or duplication of discussions between different levels (i.e. team of specialists, subsidiary body, parent body, bureaux).

7. The bureaux agreed on the following main principles:

- The programme should be **reviewed in depth**, through an extended bureaux meeting (i.e. with the participation of all countries who so wished) reconsidering priorities, main directions and resource allocation, every four years, and the results approved at the joint session of the Timber Committee and EFC;
- The **constituent parts of the programme** are the mandate and mission, the overview (objectives of work areas and list of programme elements), the detailed tables for the five work areas (including duration and description of each programme element), the mandates of all current teams of specialists and the allocation of Geneva secretariat resources between programme elements;
- Between these in-depth reviews, the **bureaux**, who meet at least once a year, usually in Geneva on the occasion of the ECE annual session, are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the programme, and are authorised to approve modifications to it. An up-to-date version of the programme, incorporating any recent changes should be posted on the website;
- The **Timber Committee and the EFC** at their regular sessions should be informed of recent developments for the programme (maximum 1 page per work area), and invited to confirm that the programme was being implemented in a satisfactory way. A paper prepared by the secretariat and the bureaux, should draw the Committee’s or Commission’s attention to points of importance where comment or decision by the policy level bodies was needed;

- The **subsidiary bodies** (Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics and Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Working Techniques and Training of Forest Workers) should review in detail those parts of the programme for which they are invited to provide guidance, through the detailed work area tables, and suggest modifications. They should also, if necessary draw the attention of the bureaux and/or the parent bodies, to any issue which they consider important, for information or decision;
- **Teams of specialists** should confine their activities to those specified in their mandates. They should report briefly in writing to the bodies noted in their mandates. The formation of any new team, in any work area, should be submitted for approval to the bureaux of the parent bodies, because of the resource implications for the Geneva secretariat.

8. Subsequently, the Working Party also discussed these issues, as well as the decline in participation at its session, which it attributed in part to the lack of clarity as regards functions and responsibilities between teams, subsidiary bodies and parent bodies: its recommendations are presented below:

- Role of the Working Party. For the three programme areas assigned to it, the Working Party will have responsibility for detailed review of the elements of the integrated programme of work of the joint secretariat. The work of the Working Party will continue to rely on the existence of Teams of Specialists. Therefore the Working Party must be more directly responsible for development of the mandate and terms of reference for Teams of Specialists, and Teams must be asked to report through the Working Party to the parent bodies in order to ensure effective oversight. The Working Party will be responsible for (1) providing guidance to the Teams of Specialists on the decisions of the parent bodies, and (2) communicating to the parent bodies the results of the work of the Teams of Specialists;
- The bureau of the Working Party (chair and vice-chairs) will function in a manner comparable to the bureaux of the parent bodies: the Working Party can authorise its bureau to take decisions in the period between sessions, subject to review at the following session of the Working Party;
- The bureau of the Working Party is expected to contribute actively to the work of the bureaux of the parent bodies, and should be represented by its chair at the annual bureaux meetings;
- With regard to periodicity of Working Party sessions, The Working Party will begin meeting on an annual basis starting in 2002. Meetings will take place in March or April, to precede the meeting of the bureaux of the parent bodies. Meetings of the Working Party will remain 2 to 3 days in duration;
- In summary, the Working Party's advice to the parent bodies is for (1) renewed commitment for participation in the Working Party, (2) recognition of the responsibility for oversight of Teams of Specialists that accompanies the role of the Working Party, and (3) annual meetings of the Working Party that are designed to integrate more effectively with other activities of the parent bodies. (TIM/EFC/WP.2/2001/9).

9. *The Committee is invited to consider the proposals by the extended bureaux meeting as regards programme formulation and review as well as the Working Party's proposals and decide whether to accept these recommendations.*

PRIORITISATION OF ACTIVITIES

10. It was agreed that prioritisation should be reviewed by the joint ECE TC/FAO EFC session, concentrating on “project” items and the results should be valid for 4 years. The joint meetings of the Bureaux should carry out periodic reviews between sessions.

11. Within the framework of the ECE prioritisation exercise, the meeting proposed a higher priority for programme area 1 “markets and statistics” and lower for “technology, management and training”, with medium for the other work areas. It stressed that these were relative terms and did not imply that “lower priority” items were not valuable.

12. *The Committee is invited to endorse both the process proposed for reviewing priorities and the decision to assign “higher” priority to work area 1 and “lower” priority to work area 4.*

RESOURCES

13. The strategic review process took into account the resources available to carry out the integrated programme, which may be summarised as follows:

- 9 ½ regular secretariat staff, provided by UNECE and FAO: 5 professional (3 UNECE, 2 FAO) and 4 ½ support staff (3 UNECE, 1 ½ FAO) with office infrastructure and conference services provided by UNECE. Total regular staff costs are nearly \$800,000 per year, not including the infrastructure expenses;
- Travel, consultancy and equipment funds from UNECE and FAO regular budgets (in 2001, UNECE \$17,000 and FAO \$58,000);
- Input from countries to implementing the programme in the form of providing information, participating in meetings, serving on teams etc. This input is described in qualitative terms in the resource table in TIM/2001/8. The secretariat has made a rough estimate of this major input at about 16 staff years of senior to middle level personnel, plus travel costs of just under \$700,000, for a total of nearly \$2.5 million;
- A number of countries already contribute to reinforcing the secretariat’s capacity, by contributing to the trust funds, loaning experts, interns, etc. These are described in the column “Supprt to secretariat functions” in the resource table. The nature of this contribution is conceptually different from the normal input expected from every country, as it focuses on the “centre”, the secretariat’s capacity to manage the programme, and analyse information. The value of this contribution may be very roughly assessed at nearly \$400,000.

14. The annual costs of implementing the integrated programme could therefore be estimated as follows:

	(000 \$)	%

UNECE and FAO regular budget	1420	33
staff	800	19
UN “apportioned costs” (offices, conference services etc.)	550	13
non-staff (travel, consultants)	70	2
Country contributions to secretariat (secondments, trust fund, interns etc.)	390	9
Country input	2470	58
staff time (participating in teams, seminars, Committee session, supplying information etc.)	1780	42
travel (tickets, living costs)	690	16
TOTAL	4280	100

15. The table above is based on very rough estimates, but nevertheless seems to reflect an important reality: that over half of the resources devoted to implementing the integrated programme are provided directly by countries themselves, notably the time of staff and travel costs. Two major conclusions may be drawn:

- The fact that countries are willing to commit, year after year, nearly \$ 2 ½million to participating in UNECE/FAO activities is a clear indication of the importance they attach to them (there is no legal obligation to participate), and that they believe that their investment (an average of about \$60,000 per year for each country, although there are wide variations) is worthwhile;
- Planning exercises should take clearly into account the need to use also country resources in an efficient way.

16. The bureaux considered that it is possible to implement the programme *ad minima* with the resources currently available to the secretariat and in countries. However, more solid outputs, with significantly stronger impact could be easily achieved with some additional resources, in view of the usefulness of the tasks and the strong commitment by countries to achieve results through international cooperation. Thus the main constraint appears to be the resources available to the secretariat : for that reason the extended bureaux meeting identified a number of programme elements where supplementary resources would be desirable (marked with an X in the table on resources in TIM/2001/8). Some countries already contribute resources (right hand column), but in the secretariat’s view, the quality and scope of the output could be significantly increased if more resources (financial or in kind, notably loaned experts) were made available, by countries or from other sources e.g. EU funds, business and NGO partners.

17. The extended bureaux meeting therefore considered that “attention should be paid to fund raising (contributions of money and in kind). A list of the extra-budgetary resources considered necessary should be drawn up annually by the secretariat, prioritised and presented in an easy to understand format, to facilitate and coordinate possible country inputs”. The secretariat is devoting more time to fund raising and has already met with some success through developing partnerships in connection with certain work areas (notably EFSOS, marketing, TBFRA). It is preparing a list of the type suggested by the extended bureaux meeting, which it is hoped to present to the Committee session.

18. *The Committee is invited to consider how sufficient resources may be made available to carry out the integrated work programme at a satisfactory quality level. Delegations are invited to consider whether their country can contribute to the implementation of the work programme and are invited to contact the secretariat at an early stage of formulating any proposals.*

WORK METHODS OF TEAMS OF SPECIALISTS

19. The side meeting at COFO considered the use of teams and made the following remarks:

20. “The meeting recognised that a problem could arise if a team did not achieve its planned goals in the time foreseen. It is important to recognise that:

- when agreeing to participate in teams, countries had made a moral commitment to reach the goals agreed;
- the parent bodies and the secretariat also have a responsibility to prevent a team failing, once its mandate has been agreed.

21. The following factors are among those which make for successful teams:

- a clear and relevant mandate;
- committed team members, with sufficient resources;
- members from a variety of backgrounds;
- a facilitator to maintain momentum;
- an active and diplomatic leader.

22. The following principles should be applied:

- When drawing up team mandates, the Timber Committee and the EFC should plan realistically and countries must be prepared to make an appropriate commitment of resources to achieve the agreed aims;
- If a team appeared not to be achieving its aims, the secretariat should first contact the team leader and then, if necessary, the bureaux and the parent bodies, who should take the necessary decisions which might involve reformulating the mandate, replacing team members, putting in new resources, or terminating the team’s activities;
- In any case the secretariat should not replace team members’ inputs itself;
- The Committee and the Commission must ensure that they can monitor and guide teams’ work in a satisfactory way, which might imply a limitation to the number of teams working at any one time.”

23. *The Committee is invited to review and endorse the principles formulated by the COFO side meeting, which would then be applied by all concerned (team leaders and members, secretariat, bureaux etc.).*

CONCLUSIONS

24. The strategic review was an in-depth detailed, participatory and transparent exercise which re-examined, without pre-judgement, all aspects and priorities of the UNECE/FAO programme in a pragmatic way, and laid solid foundations for future activities. The secretariat would like to express its appreciation to all those who took part, contributing their knowledge and expertise to improve the service which the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission can offer to their members.
