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**UNECE/FAO IN A CHANGING INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: BRIEFING AND
DISCUSSION OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document presents to the Committee the relevant developments in the changing international environment, so that it can take them into account when deciding its own activities, and, if necessary take up a position on the issues presented. Representatives of the bodies concerned will be invited to brief the Committee orally.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. As in previous years, this agenda item presents an opportunity to brief the Committee on relevant developments in the changing international environment, so that it can take them into account when deciding its own activities, and, if necessary take up a position on any of the issues presented. This document briefly presents relevant developments since October 2006. Representatives of the bodies concerned will be invited to brief the Committee orally.

II. OUTCOME OF MAJOR INTERNATIONAL FOREST DIALOGUES AND AGREEMENTS

United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and linkages to regional forestry bodies

2. The sixth session of UNFF (February 2006) set four global objectives on forests and agreed to make progress towards their achievement by 2015. These can be summarised as: reverse of loss of forest cover; enhance economic, social and environmental benefits; increase the area of protected forests and the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests; and reverse the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management.

3. At its seventh session (April 2007), UNFF adopted a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, in addition to deciding on its multi-year programme of work. The proposals of UNFF7 were considered by ECOSOC in July 2007, but formal decisions were postponed. On the basis of a recommendation by UNFF, the General Assembly, at its sixty-first session, proclaimed 2011 as the International Year of Forests (Resolution 61/193). The eighth session of UNFF will take place from 20 April 2009 onwards, in New York.

4. The Multi Year Programme of Work of UNFF states that “relevant regional and sub-regional forest-related mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes are invited to address issues and agenda items planned for each Forum session and to provide a concise summary of their deliberations, to be submitted well in advance to the secretariat prior to the upcoming Forum session, and are encouraged to contribute to the discussions of the Forum sessions, according to their respective mandates” (E/2007/42, para. 7). The joint bureaux of the Timber Committee and European Forestry Commission have been discussing a possible input to UNFF8 with other regional bodies, notably MCPFE, and the Committee will be informed orally of progress.

5. *The Committee is invited to consider how the UNECE region might provide input to UNFF8, in the light of the invitation by UNFF and the above-mentioned discussions with other regional bodies.*

III. COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP ON FORESTS

6. The 14 members¹ of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests are committed to strengthening this voluntary partnership, as part of the international arrangement on forests, notably through collaborative and well-coordinated activities at the regional and national levels. There are five CPF joint initiatives (see <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/cpf/en/>):

- (a) Global Forest Information Service (GFIS) that catalogues key information resources, such as news, events, publications and job vacancies provided by partners. (www.gfis.net);
- (b) International forestry directory;
- (c) Sourcebook on funding for sustainable forest management;
- (d) Task force on streamlining reporting;
- (e) Work on harmonizing terms and definitions

IV. FUTURE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE TIMBER COMMITTEE, THE FAO EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION, AND THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE (MCPFE)

A. Background

7. There has been active partnership between the Timber Committee and the EFC since 1948; and of both with MCPFE since the mid-1990s. The latter cooperation was mentioned in the UNECE Reform and encouraged by the Executive Committee. Despite their differing organisational structures, all three promote sustainable forest management in the region and organize working groups, seminars and workshops on specific subjects. Most European countries are members of all three organizations. Sessions of all three bodies are regularly kept informed of plans and cooperation, and there is close cooperation between secretariats. The head of the MCPFE Liaison Unit regularly attends meetings of the joint bureaux of the Timber Committee and European Forestry Commission.

B. Recent developments

6. There has been intense cooperation over recent years notably in implementing the MCPFE programme of work (13 projects - out of 27 - in the MCPFE programme have been implemented with UNECE/FAO participation), and preparing the *Report on State of Sustainable Forest Management in Europe 2007* for the Warsaw Ministerial Conference in November 2007. Both UNECE/FAO and MCPFE have contributed in their areas of comparative advantage: this has been regularly welcomed by intergovernmental meetings of both UNECE/FAO and MCPFE as an efficient use of scarce resources.

¹ Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) member organizations: Center for International Forestry Research; FAO (Chair); International Tropical Timber Organization; International Union of Forest Research Organizations; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility; Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests; Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; World Agroforestry Centre; World Bank; World Conservation Union.

7. It has also been proposed that the joint session of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission, scheduled for 2008, should be expanded to become a “pan-European Forestry week”, with participation also of MCPFE and the EU. This proposal was discussed in the first half of 2007 by the joint UNECE/FAO bureaux in a joint meeting with the MCPFE General Coordinating Committee, and at a meeting of the EU Standing Forestry Committee. The four secretariats are consulting on the basis of the discussion and will make a proposal in September/October 2007, for the consideration of the intergovernmental mechanisms, including, of course, the Timber Committee at its annual session.

8. It is also foreseen that there will be communication and cooperation during the UNECE/FAO strategic review process with the MCPFE, which will at the same time be drawing up its own programme of work for the period before the Oslo Ministerial Conference. The modalities of this cooperation have not yet been defined, but the principles of mutual awareness and cooperation are agreed.

9. Possibilities for formalizing the cooperation with MCPFE, as mandated in the context of UNECE reform, are presently being explored (see ECE/TIM/2007/2).

10. *The Committee is invited to review the cooperation between UNECE/FAO and MCPFE, notably the proposals which will be submitted for the pan European Forestry Week in 2008, and agree on future activities in this respect.*

V. OTHER COOPERATION

11. In view of the increasingly inter-sectoral and cross sectoral nature of the issues affecting the forest sector, there is frequent cooperation and interaction between UNECE/FAO and other global and regional bodies, in the form of cooperation to prepare/review reports and studies, data sharing, participation in meetings, coordination of planned activities and so on. A few relevant examples (intergovernmental organisations only) are presented here, but this is not a comprehensive list.

- (a) European Commission: cooperation on data validation and collection (JFSQ with Eurostat, forest fire with Joint Research Centre, Ispra), joint wood energy enquiry, mobilizing wood resources (DG Enterprise on task force, participation in meetings).
- (b) European Environment Agency: data sharing, mutual reviewing for Warsaw report and EEA study on European Forest Biodiversity.
- (c) European Forest Institute/JRC, Ispra: participate in work on European forest information communication platform.
- (d) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: briefing on latest IPCC report during Policy Forum, 10 October 2007.
- (e) International Tropical Timber Organization: contribution of chapter to FPAMR, speaker at market discussions, data exchange.

12. The UNECE/FAO Timber Section also cooperates with other relevant UNECE activities, such as energy, trade, environment and water. A more detailed account of these is included in document ECE/TIM/2007/2.