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**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
in a changing international environment: briefing and discussion
of recent developments**

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in a changing international environment: briefing and discussion of recent developments

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document presents the developments in the international processes and organizations' activities that the secretariat considers relevant and of interest to the Timber Committee.

The Committee is invited to take these developments into account when deciding on its own activities.

I. Introduction

1. As in previous years, this agenda item presents an opportunity to brief the Timber Committee on relevant developments in international processes and organizations, in order to take them into account when deciding on its own activities. This document briefly presents relevant developments since October 2009. It responds to the request by the Committee at its sixty-sixth session for a background document on international developments prior to the session (ECE/TIM/2008/9). Representatives of the bodies concerned will be invited to brief the Committee.

II. Major international forest dialogues and agreements

A. Food and Agriculture Organization

2. The European Forestry Commission (EFC) held its thirty-fifth session in Lisbon from 27 to 30 April 2010. The session was attended by 48 representatives from 19 member countries, one member organization and one observer country. Fifteen representatives of eleven observer organizations also attended.

3. The EFC identified a number of regional issues to be brought to the attention of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) at its twentieth session, to be held on 4-8 October 2010. The meeting will highlight topical global forestry issues during plenary sessions and side events. The Commission requested FAO to:

(a) Consider developing a network and support service at the global level to assist countries in implementing international commitments related to forests and climate change. Such a network could be supported by creating a working party or similar arrangement to enhance the linkage between scientific and technical work and the political level, where regions are well represented;

(b) Strengthen its capacities in forests and climate change;

(c) Improve knowledge and enhance data gathering on wood energy, with a view to clarifying its environmental impacts and potential in sustainable energy production, including compared with other renewable energy sources, and to support countries' efforts in this regard;

(d) Make every effort to raise the profile of forests and forest-related issues through concerted action and synergies with relevant partners at the regional and global levels, including by actively contributing to the International Year of the Forests in 2011;

(e) Provide information on the forest and water interface.

4. The Commission also recommended that FAO provide information and support to countries in formulating policy and legal frameworks related to forests and water and in strengthening capacities related to the establishment of such payment of ecosystem services schemes.

5. At its session in March 2007, the FAO Committee on Forestry had requested FAO to develop the Global Forest Resources 2010 Assessment (FRA). This would be based on a comprehensive country reporting process and a global remote sensing survey. Special thematic studies linked with FRA 2010 and covering special issues form an integral part of the Assessment. FRA 2010 covers 233 countries and territories and 178 officially nominated national correspondents provided national information for most of them. The

Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 provides new and updated information for more than 90 variables, encompassing indicators used to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, the 2010 Biodiversity Target of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the four Global Objectives on Forests adopted by the United Nations Forum on Forests.

6. In addition, FRA 2010 statistics on trends in forest carbon stocks will support predictions of climate change and development of appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures. This information, combined with data on forests' health, their contribution to national economies, the legal and institutional framework governing the management and use of the world's forests will help assess progress towards sustainable forest management and will support policies, decisions and negotiations in all matters where forests and forestry play a part.

7. The Key Findings of the FRA 2010 were presented in March 2010 and are available in 6 languages on the FAO website. The main report will be released in October 2010.

B. United Nations Forum on Forests and linkages to regional forestry bodies

8. The United Nations Forum on Forests held a special segment of the Ninth Session of the Forum (UNFF9) on 30 October 2009, which adopted a resolution on the Means of Implementation for Sustainable Forest Management (forest financing). Accordingly, the Forum established the open-ended intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on Forest Financing (AHEG) to meet before UNFF9 and before UNFF10, as well as a Facilitative Process.

9. In its recent meeting, the UNFF9 Bureau decided that the first meeting of AHEG would be held from 13–17 September 2010 in Nairobi. The UNFF9 Bureau also endorsed the UNFF Strategic Work Plan on Forest Financing, as the basis for planning for the UNFF work on forest financing starting from now until UNFF10 in 2013. In addition, the Secretariat has launched the Facilitative Process through a series of analytical studies on forest finance in Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as the initial work.

10. The four-year UNFF work on forest financing offers a unique opportunity for key actors, including forest-related regional processes, to play an active role in shaping global policy-setting on forest financing, including through informing and engaging Member States in the related events and meetings, including in the AHEG-1. The Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission are key organizations that can provide valuable input on forest financing strategies/ programmes/ actions, experiences and needs, and help to identify the key challenges and opportunities for forest financing within and among countries in the region.

11. The overall theme of the UNFF9 will be "Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication". The Session will also assess progress made on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and towards achieving the four global objectives on forests and launch the International Year of Forests (IYF 2011). It will include a high-level segment, which will be held on 2 and 3 February 2011.

12. The International Year of Forests 2011 will be launched during UNFF9, and will feature a series of high-level events, including panel discussions, media activities, issuance of a UN commemorative stamp series for the International Year of Forests, and other public events currently under consideration.

13. Discussions on preparations for the International Year of Forests were also at the core of the Forest Communicators Network annual meeting held on 26 to 28 May 2010 in Gothenburg, Sweden. The meeting also covered examples of best practice from countries and organizations, as well as the scope and concept of a future European Forest Communication Strategy.

C. Convention on Biological Diversity

14. In 2009 the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity published reports on “Connecting Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation” and “Forest Resilience, Biodiversity, and Climate Change”. The reports concluded that a portfolio of land use management activities, including the protection of natural forest, the sustainable management of forests, and the use of native assemblages of forest species in reforestation activities, can contribute to the objectives of both the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention.

15. The resilience inherent in intact forest ecosystems provides the best insurance against climate change, and helps ensure that forests meet the needs of present and future generations. If pushed past an ecological “tipping point”, these ecosystems could transform into a different forest type, or in extreme cases, a new non-forest ecosystem state could emerge. The new ecosystem state would invariably be poorer in terms of both biological diversity and delivering ecosystem goods and services, and would release additional greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Because of their reduced biodiversity, plantations and modified natural forests face greater disturbances and risks of large-scale losses due to climate change than primary forests. The reports say that risks can be partly mitigated by following a number of forest-management recommendations, including by ensuring national and regional networks of protected areas, and incorporating these networks into national and regional planning for large-scale landscape connectivity.

D. European Union

16. On 1 March 2010, the European Commission adopted a Green Paper that describes options for an EU approach to the protection of forests and to information about forest resources and their condition. The Green Paper sets out the main challenges facing Europe's forests. It identifies existing forest information systems and the tools available to protect forests, and raises a series of questions relevant to the development of future policy options. It is part of the follow-up to the White Paper on adapting to climate change adopted by the Commission in April 2009. The Green Paper options may lead to major changes in the extent of the information on availability of forest resources, which may benefit the wood raw material supply but also have an impact on privacy protection of forest owners.

III. Forest Europe process

17. Forest Europe recent developments are linked to the preparation of the Sixth Forest Europe Ministerial Conference held in Oslo on 14-16 June 2010. The preparatory process for the Ministerial Conference is supervised by expert level representatives from member countries, who met in Oslo in November 2009 and March 2010. The next meeting is scheduled for 14-15 December 2010 in Geneva, where a decision is expected on the proposal to be submitted to Ministers at the Ministerial conference to facilitate deliberations. Another expert level meeting could then be held in spring 2011.

18. Two main technical preparatory processes were active in the last months:

(a) The working group for preparing a decision on a possible legally binding agreement (WGLBA) met in Geneva in February 2010 and in Saint Petersburg in July 2010. The Working Group finalized a “non-paper” to be considered by Ministers concerning the possibility of starting negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in the region. The meeting also considered possible options for the future institutional set up for Forest Europe. The next meeting of the Working Group will be held in Rome on 30 September - 1 October back to back with the twentieth session of COFO;

(b) In parallel, a workshop took place in Brussels in May 2010 to develop a document on vision, goals and targets for the future of the Forest Europe process. A revised version was circulated in June 2010 and a final version should follow shortly. This document will be a key part of the package to be approved by the Ministers, since it will give strategic guidelines and specific targets for the next Forest Europe term.

19. The Forest Europe process is of relevance for the work of UNECE and FAO as it will continue to deliver strategic advice on governance of the forestry sector in the UNECE region for the next decade at least. Synergies between the different processes and organizations should be enhanced to increase coherence among processes and avoid duplication.

IV. Cooperation with other bodies and organizations

20. The Forestry and Timber Section collaborates with other global and regional bodies, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Specific examples of the modes of collaboration with a selection of partners include:

(a) **European Commission (EC):** cooperation on data validation and collection (Joint Forest Sector Outlook and State of Europe’s Forests with Eurostat). Eurostat shared its national data on socio-economic indicators that were used for the pre-filling of national reports for the State of Europe’s Forest 2011 report. The European Commission contributed to the State of Europe’s Forests report (Joint Research Centre, Ispra), the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry and “good guidance on sustainable wood mobilisation”. The second meeting of the Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management was held and co-organised by the JRC Ispra. The Forestry and Timber Section was a co-organiser of the conference “Future forest monitoring in the European Union. Providing information for multifunctional forest management” held in Uppsala, Sweden, in November 2009. In particular, there is close cooperation, information sharing and regular consultation with the Directorates General for Agriculture, Enterprise and Industry, and Environment;

(b) **European Environment Agency (EEA):** The European Environment Agency benefits from data collection on biodiversity related indicators by the Forestry and Timber Section, which data was widely used, for example, in the EEA study on European Forest Biodiversity. EEA and the Forestry and Timber Section closely collaborated on pilot reporting on and refinement of the new European Forest Types classification. One of the results of this collaboration was the organisation of the technical workshop on pilot application of the new classification in the reporting process for the next Forest Europe conference;

(c) **European Forest Institute (EFI):** EFI colleagues participate in the work of the core group of experts on the European Forest Sector Outlook Study and contribute regularly to statistical preparation of the UNECE/FAO *Forest Products Annual Market Review*. The EFI European Forest Observatory in Nancy, France is a key player in the process of reporting on qualitative indicators on Sustainable Forest Management, which includes collecting and analysing, processing and analysis of data on policies, institutions

and instruments for Sustainable Forest Management in Europe. EFI conducts joint projects with the UNECE/FAO on forest products prices. Other opportunities for collaboration, for example on data and information dissemination, are being explored;

(d) **International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO):** ITTO contributes the chapter on tropical forest products to the UNECE/FAO *Forest Products Annual Market Review* and participates as a frequent speaker at the Committee's annual Market Discussions. Statistics are collected jointly with UNECE/FAO via the Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire on forest products;

(e) **World Trade Organization (WTO), Trade and Environment Division:** Besides mutual information sharing, 2010 was marked by the co-organization with WTO of a workshop on trade measures and timber markets on 23 March 2010. It was followed by a joint contribution of the UNECE Trade and Timber Division with the Sustainable Energy Division to the WTO discussion forum on trade in natural resources;

(f) **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):** UNEP participates in numerous activities of the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section. In 2010, for example, a seminar on Environmental Governance for a Green Economy was organized jointly. UNEP also participates in and supports the biodiversity work of the UNECE/FAO European Forest Sector Outlook Study as a member of the core group of experts. The UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section is involved in the preparation process of the UNEP Green economy report. The Section attended review meetings in November 2009 and July 2010, and actively participated to the review process of the forestry chapter. The Forestry and Timber Section also attended the May 2010 annual general meeting of the sustainable buildings and climate initiative launched by UNEP in order to promote the organization of a forum in 2011 on measuring buildings carbon footprint, taking into account the raw materials processing and construction stages.

21. The UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section also cooperates with other relevant UNECE divisions and committees, such as on energy, trade, environment, housing and land management and water. A more detailed account of the latter is included in document ECE/TIM/2010/3.

V. Recommendations

22. **The Committee is invited to review the list of cooperation as indicated above and to suggest ways and means to strengthen partnerships with key organizations, particularly in the context of the International Year of the Forests.**
