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Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Committee

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Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Decision on the servicing of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe by ECE

Note by the secretariat

1. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe was held from 14 to 16 June 2011 in Oslo. Ministers agreed on a common vision, strategic goals and measurable targets for European forests by 2020 and on negotiating a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe. This two-track approach, combining the voluntary process with the negotiation of a legally binding instrument, is reflected in the two decisions adopted by the Conference¹:

(a) Oslo Ministerial Decision: European Forests 2020;

(b) Oslo Ministerial Mandate for Negotiating a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe.

2. In paragraph 27 of the Oslo Mandate, the Ministerial Conference requested the Forest Europe Liaison Unit and invited ECE, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the European Forest Institute (EFI) to jointly support the negotiation process. The distribution of roles among the Liaison Unit, ECE, FAO, UNEP and EFI is described in the Annex to the Rules of Procedure.

¹ The two decisions can be found on the following webpage:
www.foresteuropa2011.org/documents2.cfm.

3. In accordance with this Annex, ECE, FAO and UNEP will be responsible for:
 - Servicing meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) and its Bureau including session management, document management and reporting, as well as any other tasks requested by the Bureau or the Committee.
 - Providing legal advice.
 - Providing advice on synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and processes.
 - Liaising with United Nations organizations.
 - Providing analysis and information in support of the negotiations.
4. The joint ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, the FAO Forestry Department, and the UNEP Regional Office for Europe will service the negotiation process based upon the expertise of each organization and the resources they can contribute within their mandates.
5. As far as conference services are concerned, support will be provided within existing resources of ECE, FAO and UNEP depending on the venue of the session of the INC. For each session, the main official documents needing translation into official languages will consist of the agenda, the draft negotiating text and the report as well as notes from the secretariat for the facilitation of the negotiation.
6. In addition, the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section has developed an extrabudgetary project to respond to the request from the Oslo Conference. The project falls under Work Area 5, "Policy and Cross-Sectoral Issues" of the integrated Programme of Work on Timber and Forestry. It was submitted a first time for consideration by the Executive Committee at its forty-second session. It should start in September 2011 and end in December 2013.
7. Extrabudgetary contributions will consist of secondment of staff, contributions of staff time from FAO and UNEP, as well as funds from donor countries to support the participation of countries with economies in transition.
8. ECE will host the project and establish the related trust fund. This project would allow the use of extrabudgetary resources to strengthen the secretariat's substantive work in support of the negotiation process, without affecting the delivery of the current joint ECE/FAO Programme of Work on Timber and Forestry.
9. The Executive Committee is invited to:
 - (a) Welcome the commitment of interested donors to providing extrabudgetary resources in support of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, including secondment of staff;
 - (b) Formally approve that the ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber section contributes to the servicing of the negotiation of the Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe within existing UN resources.