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Communications and Outreach

Communications and outreach activities

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

This paper presents communication and outreach activities undertaken by the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section during 2012 to strengthen and consolidate efforts initiated during the International Year of Forests 2011 and to highlight the role of forests and forest industries in building the green economy. It presents the subprogramme's contributions to the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All. This paper also provides information on an educational tool developed as part of the dissemination plan for the State of Europe's Forests 2011 report. Finally, this paper recalls the decision of the Joint TC/EFC Bureaux to organize a second European Forest Week in parallel with Metsä2013, the next joint session of the TC/EFC to be held in Rovaniemi, Finland, in December 2013.

The Committee is requested to endorse the Joint Bureaux's proposal for the organization of a European Forest Week from 9 to 13 December 2013.

I. International Year of Sustainable Energy for All

1. The International Year of Forests (IYF) highlighted compelling examples from across the globe of national and international efforts to sustain and preserve forests. The IYF has served to engage successfully the global community on a topic that is vitally important to the sustainability of our planet. At its closing ceremony for the IYF on 14 December 2011, the ECE/FAO celebrated the end of a successful year of raising awareness on forests and forest industries and also announced the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All in 2012, and reminded participants of the important contribution wood makes to renewable energy supply.

2. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made sustainable energy one of the five priorities that will guide his second 5-year term. He is leading a Sustainable Energy for All Initiative which calls for private sector and national commitments and seeks to attract global attention to the importance of energy for development and poverty alleviation. The goal is to meet three objectives by 2030:

- Ensuring universal access to modern energy services;
- Doubling the rate of improvement in energy efficiency;
- Doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

3. In recognition of the importance of access to energy for sustainable economic development and in support of the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations General Assembly has designated 2012 as the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All. With this in mind, the Timber and Forestry subprogramme has placed stronger emphasis on its wood energy programme.

4. The findings of the latest round of the ECE/FAO Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE) were published online in early 2012 in a comprehensive online database, including a full set of indicators and country profiles. In 2009, wood energy accounted for 3% of the total primary energy supply (TPES) and 47% of the renewable energy supply (RES) in the ECE region, confirming its role as the leading source of renewable energy. Wood covered almost 20% of the total energy demands of Sweden, Finland and Estonia and accounted for well over half the renewable energy supply in the Nordic and Baltic States as well as in Serbia and the Czech Republic. Around 44% of all mobilised woody biomass supply is used for energy purposes. Despite the increasing rate of wood consumption for energy, the region's forests are increasing in area as well as standing volumes. The role of wood in total primary energy supply grew whereas a slight decline in the role of wood energy among renewables was recorded. This, perhaps, reflects a faster rate of growth by other sources of renewable energy such as wind and solar. The complete datasheets can be downloaded at www.unece.org/jwee2009.html. The next ECE/FAO Joint Wood Energy Enquiry will be issued in autumn 2012, collecting wood energy data for the year 2011.

5. On 8 May 2012, a distinguished group of speakers debated the pros and cons of using wood for energy during the "ECE/FAO Policy Debate on Wood Energy", held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The discussions, led by Tom Miles, Chief Correspondent for Thomson Reuters News, touched upon the economic, environmental and social aspects of the increasing demand for wood for energy purposes. This Policy Debate resulted in an open and comprehensive dialogue among a wide and varied group of stakeholders. Discussions mainly revolved around the sustainability of the increasing use of wood for energy purposes and the resulting competition with material uses of wood, namely for wood products.

6. The benefits of using wood as a source of energy were highlighted by speakers representing the wood industry, utility companies and forest owners and entrepreneurs.

Besides contributing to energy security by diversifying energy resources and reducing dependence on fuel imports, wood energy stimulates social and economic development by increasing the profitability of forestry and creating investment and job opportunities, especially in rural areas. However, these actors are all well aware that economic and ecological responsibilities should not be neglected; the use of wood for energy purposes should not harm the demand and supply for industrial use or damage the vitality of forests. Participants in the debate agreed that the production and consumption of woody biomass for energy purposes must be accompanied by the development of certification schemes and criteria to meet sustainability requirements in order to achieve both renewable energy and biological diversity targets.

7. Negative environmental and social aspects of wood mobilisation were, on the other hand, emphasised by representatives of environmental NGOs. Besides contributing to particulate matter emissions, wood burning and biomass extraction could lead to dramatic ecological impacts on forest health and biodiversity. Energy efficiency should have a high-level priority, including the clean and efficient consumption of wood energy, which could mean focusing on local use of industrial leftovers rather than relying directly on forests for energy. Thus, the debate called for continued investment in research and development of all non-wood renewable energies such as wind and solar power.

8. A policy brief summarizing the outcome of the policy debate is being prepared.

9. The ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section also organized a capacity building workshop on wood energy building upon its analytical and policy work. Thanks to the generous support of the French Ministry of Agriculture, the French Ministry of Sustainable Development and the FAO Forestry Department, over 60 participants from 23 countries and 8 international organizations met in Paris on the premises of the Ministry of Agriculture from 11 to 13 June 2012 at a ECE/FAO Workshop on “Improving Wood Energy Data for Better Policy Making”. Participants discussed the reliability of current wood energy data and identified its weaknesses and constraints. Countries shared experiences, tools and solutions for improving data to enable more informed choices and better responses to the Joint Wood Energy Enquiry. A growing network of correspondents and experts is being established as improving data requires constant communication between all stakeholders at both the national and international level.

II. Dissemination activities for the FOREST EUROPE/UNECE/FAO State of Europe’s Forest Report

10. The Committee will be informed of recent developments related to the dissemination and evaluation of the Forest Europe/UNECE/FAO report, State of Europe’s Forests 2011 (SoEF 2011). The final report and background material are available on the ECE/FAO and Forest Europe websites. Results of the reporting process were presented at various international and national meetings, whenever possible, together with the results of European Sector Outlook Study (EFSOS II) 2010-2030.

11. In order to support the further dissemination of information contained in the State of Europe’s Forest report, a Forest Europe and ECE/FAO interactive database on quantitative indicators was released in December 2011, including, for the first time, a Russian-language version.

12. SoEF 2011 was released at the Forest Europe Ministerial Conference in Oslo, Norway, on 14 June 2011. The content of the report is highly technical and includes reporting on pan-European Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), which encompass 35 quantitative and 17 qualitative pan-European indicators for SFM. The ECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section was requested to develop a dissemination plan and implement it following the release of the report. Part of this plan

included the production of an online educational kit for students (and relevant school teachers) as well as for interested non-professionals, based on the report's data and key findings. This on-line kit provides 11-12 year old students and teachers with basic knowledge about European forests and a better understanding of the role forests and forest products play in their everyday lives. In addition, the kit should enhance youth capabilities to contribute to sustainable development in general.

III. Second European Forest Week

13. Following the success of the first ever European Forest Week (EFW) which took place on 20-24 October 2008 in Rome, Brussels and all over Europe, the Joint Bureaux recommended at its last meeting on 6-7 June 2012 to organize a second European Forest Week in parallel with 'Metsä¹2013', the next TC/EFC joint session which will be held in Rovaniemi, Finland in December 2013.

14. To support this second European Forest Week, the Joint Bureaux requested the ECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network to develop and lead the implementation of a communication and outreach strategy to raise awareness and understanding about the EFW at local, regional and European levels.

The Committee is requested to:

- Take note of current activities undertaken in support of the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All and the dissemination of the State of Europe's Forests;
 - Endorse the Joint Bureaux's proposal to organize a European Forest Week from 9 to 13 December 2013.
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¹ Metsä means 'forest' in Finnish.