



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

ECE/TIM/2009/4  
31 July 2009

Original: ENGLISH

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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**TIMBER COMMITTEE**

Sixty-seventh session  
Geneva, 13-16 October 2009  
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**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 changing international environment which the secretariat considers relevant and of interest to the Committee.

The Timber Committee is invited to take these developments 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.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. As in previous years, this agenda item presents an opportunity to brief the Timber 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 2008. It has been prepared based on the request by the Committee at its sixty-sixth session for a background document on international developments in advance of the session (ECE/TIM/2008/9). Representatives of the bodies concerned will be invited to brief the Committee.

## **II. OUTCOME OF MAJOR INTERNATIONAL FOREST DIALOGUES AND AGREEMENTS**

### **A. Food and Agriculture Organization Committee on Forestry**

2. The Committee on Forestry (COFO) held its nineteenth session in March 2009. It endorsed the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Strategy for Forests and Forestry; supported the recommendation of the Independent External Evaluation of FAO to increase the share of the overall FAO budget that is allocated to forestry; and called on members to promote and participate in the World Forestry Congress to be held in Argentina in October 2009. COFO also agreed that sustainable forest management is key to the forest sector's response to climate change and recommended that FAO, together with other organizations, strengthen national capacities to develop an effective response to climate change. COFO proposed that FAO reinforce its capacities to support member countries in implementing forest policies and reforming forestry institutions; and supported the recommendation of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to prepare a FAO Report on the State of World Forest Genetic Resources.

3. As usual, The State of the World's Forests report was released for the session. It included analysis of issues of interest to the Timber Committee, such as the major global and regional trends that will affect forests, and their impacts, including financial impacts. The UNECE/FAO secretariat contributed to the analyses in the publication.

4. In response to calls by the European Forestry Commission, and other regional commissions, COFO's theme was on forests and climate change. COFO urged countries to engage actively in national and international responses of the sector to climate change and to help mitigate and adapt to climate change by adopting appropriate practices and policies. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests introduced a "Strategic framework for forests and climate change" to implement sustainable forest management (see paragraph 21). COFO in turn recommended that FAO, with other organizations and regional processes, strengthen capacities of member countries to implement sustainable forest management within their specific national context.

5. One agenda item was on adapting forest policy and institutions to change. COFO noted the economic, political, social, environmental and technological changes taking place at the national, regional and global levels and the consequent need to adapt forest policies and

institutions. COFO recommended that FAO, together with other international organizations, intensify efforts to provide timely support to countries in implementing their policies and reforming forestry institutions. One means is sharing experiences through regional and subregional reviews and analyses.

6. A special event was held on the forest sector and the global economic crisis. Speakers presented aspects of the crisis as related to their specific interests, for example how the green new deal in the United States would have some benefits for the US Forest Service. The UNECE/FAO secretariat contributed to the session's organization, in part as a prelude to the Policy Forum at the Timber Committee Session on "The Forest Sector in a Green Economy."

**7. Delegates are invited to take note of COFO's recommendations and discuss possible regional support from the Timber Committee and its secretariat. They are also invited to reaffirm the UNECE Timber Committee's commitment to its partnership with the FAO European Forestry Commission and to the UNECE/FAO integrated programme of work on timber and forestry.**

8. The next COFO is scheduled for 4-8 October 2010, a year earlier than normal, and the date is planned to avoid conflict with the Timber Committee week of 11-15 October. Timber Committee delegates are invited to take note of this date.

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

9. At its seventh session in 2007, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) decided on its new multi-year programme of work (2007-2015) and agreed on a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, which was subsequently adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2007 (Resolution 62/98). The instrument includes several specific national and international measures for action at all levels, as well as the four Global Objectives on Forests, that member States agreed to work towards the achievement of by 2015.

10. From 20 April to 1 May 2009, the Forum held its eighth session (UNFF8) and addressed two overall themes. The first theme "Forests in a changing environment" consisted of the following three issues: forests and climate change; reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification, including low forest cover countries; and, forests and biodiversity conservation, including protected areas. While addressing challenges, the Forum agreed on the need for intensified global action to protect the world's forests from a series of environmental threats. It adopted Resolution 8/1 calling for, inter alia, strengthening coordination and enhanced cooperation to integrate sustainable forest management strategies into relevant programmes and processes, such as those on climate change, biodiversity, desertification and water resources management. Significant attention was also devoted to the second overall theme on "Means of implementation for sustainable forest management" which included consideration of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework for all types of forests. Due to the complexity of the issue the Forum could not conclude its work on the subject and decided to forward the draft text on the means of implementation for consideration at its ninth session in 2011.

11. Regional cooperation was also widely recognized in Resolution 8/1 in terms of its potential contribution to identifying and working on the interrelated challenges and threats to

forests. In this regard, the Forum invited “regional and sub-regional organizations and processes to provide inputs to the ninth session of the Forum on the theme “Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication”, including through sharing regional perspectives, approaches and experiences”. The Forum also requested the UNFF secretariat to further promote and facilitate regional and sub-regional dialogue and cooperation on forests, including through country-led and region-led initiatives, and to develop a strategy to promote North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, for its consideration at its ninth session.

12. UNFF also invited “the governing bodies of member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), in particular the Conferences of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Convention on Biological Diversity, to continue to integrate the sustainable management of all types of forests into their strategies by, inter alia, “building on existing and well-established forest-related tools, processes, programmes and activities available at the national, regional and international levels to implement sustainable forest management”. These include, for example, “national forest programmes, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and other related monitoring methodologies and assessment tools, and measures for capacity building and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies” (E/2009/42, United Nations Forum on Forests, Report of the eighth session, 27 April 2007 and 20 April to 1 May 2009).

13. As agreed in 2008 at the European Forest Week, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission, the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the Environment for Europe/Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (EfE/PEBLDS) submitted a joint statement from the Pan-European Region to UNFF8, in response to an invitation by the UNFF secretariat. The statement highlights major policy achievements at the Pan-European level that promote sustainable forest management and contribute to the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. It refers, in particular, to principles and practices of sustainable forest management, including set criteria and indicators and operational level guidelines, the MCPFE regional approach to national forest programmes, ecosystem approach, sustainable development of the forest-based sector and science-policy interaction. For each substantive issue addressed at UNFF8, including among others climate change, biodiversity conservation, combating forest degradation and desertification, law enforcement, governance and trade, the statement provided background information, while depicting major policy commitments, main challenges and plans for future actions at the pan-European level.

**14. The Committee is invited to consider the outcome of UNFF8 in its future activities, and its relevance for the continued implementation of the Strategic Plan of the UNECE/FAO integrated programme of work on timber and forestry, considered under item 7. It is also invited to discuss the role of the Committee, and of the UNECE/FAO integrated programme of work, in contributing to global activities and the regional implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests.**

### **III. COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP ON FORESTS**

15. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) is a voluntary arrangement among 14 international organizations and their secretariats<sup>1</sup> which was established to support the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests. The partnership works to enhance cooperation and coordination on forests through information exchange and well-coordinated activities at the international, regional and national levels. Ongoing CPF initiatives include the following:

#### **A. Forests and climate change**

16. CPF members have developed a “Strategic Framework for Forests and Climate Change”, a document which proposes a coordinated forest-sector response to the global climate change agenda. The Framework puts forth a case for the tactical role of sustainable forest management in achieving long-term climate change mitigation and adaptation. The framework was launched in Poznan, Poland, during the fourteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in December 2008. The Global Forest Expert Panel on Adaptation of Forests to Climate Change, a CPF joint initiative, conducted a review and assessment of current information on links between forest ecosystems and climate, climate change impacts on forests and people, and options for adaptation. Based on this assessment, the expert panel prepared a policy brief for the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, and published a full, peer-reviewed assessment report in April 2008. The assessment report is available at: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-climatechange/en/>. In addition CPF organised “Forest Day” events at recent meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to promote discussion on the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

#### **B. Financing for sustainable forest management**

17. The CPF Advisory Group on Finance commissioned a study on “Financing flows and needs to implement the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests,” identifying financing needs, sources and mechanisms for financing sustainable forest management. The study is available at: [http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/ahcg/finance/AGF\\_Financing\\_Study.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/ahcg/finance/AGF_Financing_Study.pdf). Findings from the study were presented at the UNFF Ad Hoc Expert Group meeting convened in November 2008 to develop proposals for a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/framework. As part of their contributions to the work of the Advisory Group, a comprehensive update of the CPF Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management was also carried out.

#### **C. Assessment and monitoring of forest degradation**

18. To increase awareness of forest degradation issues and build country capacity to monitor, assess and report on forest degradation; the CPF joint initiative on forest degradation is working to identify parameters, proxy indicators, and assessment and monitoring methods. This initiative is a follow-up to the CPF initiative on harmonizing forest definitions and streamlining forest-related reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> CIFOR, FAO, ITTO, IUFRO, CBD Secretariat, GEF, UNCCD Secretariat, UNFF Secretariat, UNFCCC Secretariat, UNDP, UNEP, ICRAF, WB and IUCN.

#### **D. Streamlining forest-related reporting**

19. To reduce the reporting burden and improve efficiency in national reporting, CPF members are working to streamline reporting requests, synchronize reporting cycles, harmonize data-collection methods, increase data comparability and compatibility, facilitate accessibility and flow of information and strengthen national capacity.

#### **E. Global Forest Information Service**

20. The GFIS internet portal <http://www.gfis.net> provides a single entry point for a wide range of forest-related data and information. The CPF joint initiative has also developed common information exchange standards and is building capacity and enhancing partnerships among providers and users of forestry information.

21. **The Committee is invited to take note of these CPF joint initiatives and to consider their relevance for the activities under the joint UNECE/FAO integrated programme of work.**

### **IV. COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE TIMBER COMMITTEE, THE FAO EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION, AND THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE**

#### **A. Background and cooperation**

22. There has been active partnership between the Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission since 1948; and of both with Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) since it began in 1990. The latter cooperation was mentioned in the UNECE reform and encouraged by the UNECE Executive Committee. Despite their differing organisational structures, all three bodies 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.

23. The MCPFE Expert Level Meeting held in Oslo, Norway, in May 2008 adopted the new MCPFE Work Programme for the period up to the next Ministerial Conference. UNECE/FAO directly contributes to implementing the new MCPFE work programme by being a leading actor for 11 out of a total of 32 scheduled programme activities. In particular, UNECE/FAO has taken the lead on implementing the quantitative and qualitative indicators on sustainable forest management and preparing the Report on the State of Europe's Forests for the next Ministerial Conference. The intensive cooperation between UNECE/FAO and MCPFE, which has been strengthened over the past years, is thus being maintained.

24. The MCPFE took an active part in organising the "European Forest Week", 21 to 24 October 2008. As decided during by the Committee and the Commission, as well as the MCPFE Expert Level Meeting, MCPFE and UNECE/FAO, with other European organizations, provided

a joint regional European input to the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, as noted in paragraph 13.

## **B. Recent developments**

25. At the 2007 Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Warsaw, European ministers responsible for forests endorsed the Ministerial Declaration and Resolutions 1 and 2 on “Forests, Wood and Energy” and “Forest and Water”, respectively. They decided to conduct an external review of the MCPFE process and to initialise analytical work on possible future arrangements for the process.

26. The overall aim of the MCPFE external review, which began in 2009, is to provide a basis for future decisions on the strategic direction of the MCPFE. The review will mainly focus on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the MCPFE and its work. The findings of the review will be published in a report in October 2009, comprising a set of recommendations for action.

27. Following the commitments adopted at the Warsaw Ministerial Conference, a special process for exploring the possibility for a legally binding agreement on forests in the pan-European region was established. The MCPFE working group which leads the preparatory work on this topic is expected to analyze the potential value-added and the implications of different options for a legally binding agreement (LBA).

28. Based on preliminary analysis and discussions, three content options for a legally binding agreement were proposed for consideration: 1) MCPFE Ministerial Declarations and resolutions transformed into a legally binding status; 2) selected MCPFE core content, updated in order to adapt to new circumstances, and transmitted into a legally binding status and 3) building on MCPFE core content, with the addition of new content elements. The Working Group agreed to consider the content options 2 and 3 for further analysis of the added value and advantages and disadvantages of any potential legally binding agreement. The final recommendations from the Working Group will comprise an assessment of costs and possible implications for the MCPFE process, other European agreements, bodies and processes, forest related activities in the European Union, and international forest related agreements, bodies and processes.

29. In light of discussions in the European Union regarding the development of sustainability criteria for biomass, as stipulated by the Directive on the promotion of renewable energy sources (2008/0016(COD)), the MCPFE Expert Level Meeting held in Oslo in May 2008 established a process for reviewing sustainability criteria for forest biomass production. The objective of this review was to assess and demonstrate the applicability of existing MCPFE tools for sustainable forest management in response to new demands for the production of woody biomass.

30. The preliminary results from the process indicated that existing Pan-European tools provide an appropriate generic framework for a potential verification of sustainable forest management. The process formulated proposals for refining and further developing these tools in the context of bioenergy production, and indicated the direction of future work of the MCPFE in relation to challenges posed by climate change.

31. Together, the results of the review, the MCPFE working groups on sustainability criteria for forest biomass production and options for a legally binding agreement on forests in the pan-European region will facilitate the discussion on the role of the MCPFE, its future work and means of cooperation. It is expected that the results of the analytical work, in which the UNECE/FAO is taking actively part, will be discussed by the next MCPFE Expert Level Meeting in November 2009 in Oslo for decision on the direction of further work. Progress will be reported to the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission at their next sessions.

**32. The Committee is invited to consider the recent developments under the MCPFE programme of work in view of discussing future cooperation between the three bodies promoting sustainable forest management in the Pan-European region. It is invited to consider these developments in its future activities, when reviewing the programme of work under item 7.**

## V. OTHER COOPERATION

33. 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. UNECE/FAO has considerable cooperation with the private sector, for example international and national trade associations as well as non-governmental organizations. A few relevant examples of intergovernmental organisations (only) are presented here, but this is not a comprehensive list.

(a) **European Commission (EC):** cooperation on data validation and collection (Joint Forest Sector Outlook with Eurostat), contribution to the European Forest Sector Outlook Study and to the State of Europe's Forests report (Joint Research Centre, Ispra), joint wood energy enquiry, work on best practices guidance on sustainable wood mobilisation. In particular, close cooperation with Directorates General Agriculture, Enterprise and Industry, and Environment.

(b) **European Environment Agency (EEA):** data sharing, EEA study on European Forest Biodiversity, pilot reporting on and refinement of the new European Forest Types classification.

(c) **European Forest Institute (EFI):** participation in work of core group on European Forest Sector Outlook Study, contribution to the State of Europe's Forests reports

(d) **International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO):** contribution of chapter to Forest Products Annual Market Review, speaker at market discussions, data exchange.

(e) **World Trade Organization (WTO), Trade and Environment Division:** mutual information sharing, participation in meetings of Timber Section and WTO, e.g. on Environment-related Private Standards, Certification and Labelling Requirements.



(f) **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):** Participation in Teams of Specialists on Forest Sector Outlook, other meetings.

34. The UNECE/FAO Timber Section also cooperates with other relevant UNECE units and committees, such as on energy, trade, environment, housing and land management and water. A more detailed account of these is included in document ECE/TIM/2009/3.

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