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INTERNATIONAL EVENTS AND INITIATIVES, INCLUDING FUTURE COLLABORATION EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION, MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN EUROPE, UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE/TIMBER COMMITTEE, UN FORUM ON FORESTS

I. Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to cite a number of international events and initiatives of relevance to the European Forestry Commission (EFC) and to explore potential future collaboration with Forest Europe (Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe), the UN Economic Commission for Europe/Timber Committee (TC) and the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF). This session is intended to encourage contributions from the EFC to such institutions and identify the potential role of European forestry matters in these arrangements.

II. Background

II.1 Developments at the pan-European level

2. Increasingly, the deliberations of the EFC are intertwined with the programmes of the TC and Forest Europe. Together, these three entities provide a strong venue for forest-related inputs into global discussions on forests through processes such as the UNFF.

3. The TC and the EFC, established nearly 60 years ago, have respectively carried out functions of monitoring and reporting on forest products markets and statistics as well as information on forest resources and sustainable forest management. The EFC's work on monitoring policy developments affecting the sector and analysing strategic interventions has been strengthened in recent years by the joint work of the TC and the EFC, particularly given the results of the 2007 Strategic Review and the outputs of European Forestry Week in 2008.

4. The EFC and TC coordinate activities through their common secretariat and through

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information sharing, including through meetings of the joint Bureaux. The EFC, TC and Forest Europe work programmes are further elaborated by the secretariats and relevant stakeholders. These programmes are consulted to ensure that important developments in the forest sector throughout the region are being addressed.

5. At its expert level meeting during November 2009 in Oslo, Norway, Forest Europe adopted the terms of reference for a Working Group tasked to prepare options for its future work for consideration by the 6th Ministerial Conference. The Working Group was requested to examine options that would give Forest Europe status as a legal entity, including such possibilities as a convention or legally binding agreement on forests in Europe. The Working Group met from 24-25 February 2010 in Geneva, Switzerland, to commence its work. It is proposed that the Secretariats for the TC and the EFC continue to support, as requested, the needs of the Working Group.

II.2 Developments at the international level

6. At the international level, the EFC, through its joint programme of work with the TC, contributes to the regional implementation of the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests and the four global objectives on forests agreed in the framework of the UNFF. In the context of its Multi-Year Programme of Work, the next session of the UNFF will be held in New York, USA, in January 2011 and focus on 'forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication'. The UNFF will also review the progress made in the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and in achieving the four global objectives on forests. In addition, the 9th session of the Forum will include a high-level segment offering a great opportunity for ministers to provide further guidance for the process. Most recently, in October 2009, the Special Session of UNFF9 established an intergovernmental expert group to make proposals on strategies to mobilize resources from all sources for sustainable forest management. The expert group should submit a preliminary report to the 9th session and make final recommendations to the 10th session of the Forum in 2013. The Forum also launched a facilitative process to identify gaps, obstacles and opportunities; assist countries in mobilising resources and developing financial strategies for forests; and enhance coordination and cooperation among relevant funding sources and instruments.

7. The years 2010 and 2011 will be critical for raising the profile of biodiversity and forests. In 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity provides an opportunity to highlight regional progress on reaching global biodiversity objectives, including those stipulated by the forest biodiversity work programme under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), through the execution of its Pan-European 2010 Biodiversity Implementation Plan, will help sustain efforts in this respect. The year 2011 has been designated the International Year of Forests (IYF), with the UNFF secretariat as the lead institution for IYF events and initiatives. The IYF will offer prospects for the region to host forest-related events and disseminate forest information from the region, although specific contributions from the region have yet to be determined (also see FO:EFC/2010/3.x on the European Forest Week and the IYF).

8. In this context, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Forum for Forests (UNFF) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 15 December 2009 to closely collaborate in 2010 and 2011 at the occasion of the International years of Biodiversity (2010) and Forestry (2011). This Memorandum of Understanding is based on a request that both secretariats received from their respective governing bodies in May 2009 for UNFF and May 2008 for CBD. The agreement which is set to expire in December 2011, but can be extended if mutually agreed, is planning a joint program of work to address biodiversity in forests and also foresees the secondment of a temporary staff position, based in New York at the UNFF secretariat, to carry out these joint activities.

9. Finally, the forthcoming Committee on Forestry (COFO) will be held at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 4 to 8 October 2010. The meeting will have the objective of highlighting topical global forestry issues during side events and plenary sessions. The European forestry community's contribution will be essential to making the event a success, and thus it will be important to bring regional priorities on forests to the forefront of the COFO agenda. The EFC may wish to discuss important regional themes that may enrich COFO plenary sessions and side events.

III. Topics for discussion

10. The EFC may wish to take note of the progress made at the meetings of the Forest Europe Working Group and identify the contributions expected from the secretariat of the EFC with a view to reinforcing synergies between the EFC, TC, and Forest Europe.

11. The EFC may also wish to discuss which contributions it could have to various major events planned in 2010 and 2011. First, the EFC may wish to identify important regional themes that could enrich COFO plenary sessions and side events planned in October 2010 and thereby identify which inputs could be provided to COFO.

12. Second, the EFC may wish to consider the potential role of Europe in the upcoming UNFF session in 2011. As the themes of forest land tenure and the social and cultural aspects of forests will be discussed at this session, the EFC could draw from the TC's and EFC's strategic work on 'monitoring and analysing forest ownership and tenure' and the 'social and cultural aspects' of forests. The EFC could also clarify the specific role of the region in the evaluation and further implementation of the MYPOW and the hosting of regional events during the IYF.

13. In addition to the 2010 session of COFO, the 2011 session of UNFF and the IYF, the upcoming UNFCCC COP16 and International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 present opportunities for the EFC to raise policy awareness on the role of forests in sustainable development, preserving biodiversity and mitigating and adapting to climate change. The EFC is invited to identify specific actions that could be taken in collaboration with national governments and other international bodies to raise awareness on the role of forests.