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WORKING TOGETHER FOR FORESTS

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This note has been prepared for the plenary session of the European Forest Week on “Working together for forests” taking place on Friday, 24 October 2008¹. It presents key elements of the continued good cooperation amongst selected European organizations to promote sustainable forest management. Its objective is to provide the reader with background information and propose questions which participants in the session may wish to address during the discussion. Participants are invited to share their views on working together for forests, addressing if they wish the questions set out in this paper.

I. Introduction

1. The fourth plenary session of the European Forest Week in Rome, held on Friday, 24 October 2008, will demonstrate international cooperation to promote sustainable forest management within the region.

¹ This document was mandated by the Timber Committee at its 65th session. The report of this session is on the Committee website in English only (<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/tc-docs.htm>).

2. Decisions on the work programmes of UNECE/FAO and the MCPFE are taken by these bodies themselves but this plenary session is intended for exchange of information and discussion of major issues, including suggestions for contributions to work programmes and activities which the organizations active in the European forestry sphere plan to embark on. Comments are invited from national delegations, and also from international organisations and from stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society.

II. European Forest Sector Organisations, Processes, Initiatives and Institutions

3. The European forest sector is endowed with a rich infrastructure of international organisations and processes, which operate at the regional, sub-regional or global levels, and bring together governments, researchers, the private sector or civil society.

4. The UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission were founded 60 years ago and are probably the oldest regional organisations. Initially founded in the post-war period to exchange information on and negotiate between countries the allocation of wood raw materials for reconstruction, the Committee continued to monitor and analyse forest products markets and statistics, as well as information on forest resources and, more broadly, sustainable forest management. The Commission's work has centred on monitoring policy developments affecting the sector and analysing possible response strategies. The cross-sectoral dimension and the monitoring of policies and institutions have been strengthened in recent years under the joint integrated programme of work of the Timber Committee and European Forestry Commission.

5. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) is a high level political process and intergovernmental cooperation, delivering policies for a sustainable management of forests in Europe. The concept of sustainable forest management (SFM) has been agreed upon and further developed by the MCPFE with regard to principles, management, guidelines and policy monitoring tools. At Ministerial Conferences the ministers responsible for forests in Europe take decisions on common aspects of highest political relevance regarding forests and forestry. Ministerial Conferences took place in Strasbourg (1990), in Helsinki (1993), in Lisbon (1998), in Vienna (2003) and in Warsaw (2007). Norway assumed the chairmanship of the process at the beginning of 2008 and will host it until the next Ministerial Conference. The Liaison Unit is the coordinating secretariat of the MCPFE and represents the political process on various regional and global foras as well as to the public. It is a service-oriented office to support the co-operation of the ministers responsible for forests in Europe. The Liaison Unit is responsible for facilitation of the intergovernmental policy deliberations.

6. There are many other institutions, processes and initiatives that work for European forests, notably the European Commission, the European Forest Institute (EFI), the UNECE "Environment for Europe" ministerial process, with its Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), serviced by a joint secretariat with UNEP and the Council of Europe, and Europe and North Asia Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (ENA/FLEG) process, supported by the World Bank.

7. The scope of the work of other selected organisations and processes is briefly highlighted in the following.

8. The European Commission addresses forestry through a variety of activities and measures, primarily undertaken by the Directorates General Enterprise, Agriculture, Environment, Transport and Energy, as well as the European Statistical Office (Eurostat), the Joint Research Centre and the European Environment Agency. Based on Forestry Strategy of 1998, a Forest Action Plan was adopted in 2006, to provide a framework for forest-related actions at Community and Member State level and serve as an instrument of coordination between Community actions and the forest policies of the Member States. The overall objective of the EU Forest Action Plan is to support and enhance sustainable forest management and the multifunctional role of forests.

9. The European Forest Institute (EFI) is an international organisation established by European States to conduct and advocate forest research and facilitate forest research networking at the pan-European level. The purpose of the Institute is to undertake research on the pan-European level on forest policy, including its environmental aspects, on the ecology, multiple use, resources and health of European forests and on the supply of and demand for timber and other forest products and services in order to promote the conservation and sustainable management of forests in Europe.

10. The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) has been developed in 1994 to stop and reverse the degradation of biological and landscape diversity values in Europe, promoting the integration of biological and landscape diversity considerations into social and economic sectors. The Strategy reinforces the implementation of existing measures and identifies additional actions that need to be taken over the next two decades. The Strategy also provides a framework to promote a consistent approach and common objectives for national and regional action to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity. To halt the loss of biodiversity in the Pan-European Region, catalytic actions have been defined with stakeholders, reflected in the PEBLDS Pan-European 2010 Biodiversity Implementation Plan.

11. The Europe and North Asia (ENA) Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) process was initiated by the World Bank in May 2004, when the Russian Federation announced its support for such a process and intention to host a FLEG Ministerial in 2005. Subsequently, the Bank has provided technical support to the initiative and began coordinating work amongst participating governments and bilateral donor agencies. The 2005 the St. Petersburg Declaration organized under the ENAFLEG process contains an expression of commitment by 44 governments from the ENA region and other participating countries to take action to address illegal logging and associated forest crimes, along with an Indicative List of Actions for the implementation of the Declaration.

More information on regional forest sector organisations may be found in the discussion paper "International Forest Sector Institutions and Policy Instruments: A Sourcebook" at <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/docs/dp/dp-43.pdf>.

III. European Forest Sector Cooperation

12. European forest sector organizations, institutions and processes have been cooperating for a long time, to complement areas of expertise and provide best available information on developments in and outside of the sector to forest policy makers as well as the private sector and NGOs. The exceptional partnership between UNECE and FAO in the area of timber and forestry, operating through a joint UNECE/FAO secretariat, is 60 years old. UNECE/FAO has

collaborated with the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe since their inception, and has in past years contributed to implementing approximately one third of the MCPFE work programmes, and collected data on the implementation of the MCPFE resolutions. For example, UNECE/FAO and the MCPFE jointly elaborated the most recent 2007 Report on the State of Forests in Europe. The report assesses and analyses information collected on the MCPFE criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, which have been developed by the ministerial process and endorsed by the ministers at the Vienna Conference (2003).

13. UNECE/FAO and MCPFE cooperate with a number of other UN and international organizations, academia, the research community, the private sector and NGOs. The private sector and NGOs actively contribute to the work of the programmes, through research, and active participation in conference, policy forums, seminars and workshops.

14. Based on the MCPFE Warsaw resolutions “forests, wood and energy” and “forests and water”, cooperation in areas of concern to policy makers is being enhanced, through actions in the work programmes and exemplified through the joint organization of the European Forest Week, as well as in cooperation with relevant private sector and civil society organizations.

15. UNECE/FAO and the MCPFE coordinate activities informally through the sharing of information, for example at meetings of the joint Bureaux of the Timber Committee and European Forestry Commission in which the Head of the MCPFE Liaison Unit is a regular participant, and the MCPFE meetings in which UNECE and FAO participate.

16. The UNECE/FAO and the MCPFE work programmes (see Annexes 1 and 2) have been elaborated in coordination between the secretariats, and with contributions from stakeholders, to avoid duplication and achieve best synergies. Private sector and civil society organizations are solicited to voice ideas for contributing to the UNECE/FAO and MCPFE work programmes, in respective areas of expertise, to allow the forest sector throughout the region to jointly work towards its strengthening and its contribution to sustainable development of the region, with its economic, environmental and social dimension.

IV. Plenary Session “Working together for forests”

17. This plenary session is organized to communicate the joint work on forestry matters to other sectors. The session will highlight new challenges for forests and forestry in Europe in accordance with the recent political commitments adopted by the European ministers at the 5th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in November 2007, Warsaw, Poland.

18. The session is organized at the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission, marked by a joint session of the two partners and the adoption of a strategic plan for the UNECE/FAO integrated programme of work on timber and forestry for 2008-2013.

19. At the global level, the multi-year programme of work (2007–2015) of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), in accordance with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 2006/49 and its Resolution 7/1, sets a new focus on regional collaboration and partnerships. Through Resolution 2006/49, member States agreed to strengthen

interaction between the Forum and relevant regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organizations and processes, to facilitate enhanced cooperation and effective implementation of sustainable forest management. In this context, the UNFF, through ECOSOC Resolution 7/1, invited regional entities to address its agenda items and provide inputs to UNFF.

20. In response, the European ministers responsible for forests decided at the Warsaw Summit to develop, in cooperation with other regional bodies, consistent inputs from the Pan-European region, through sharing regional perspectives, approaches and experiences. MCPFE, the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission, PEBLDS and others are cooperating to provide their inputs to the UNFF sessions. A workshop "Forests in a changing environment" will be organized in Koli, Finland 3-5 September, 2008, to provide the basis for broad discussion on contribution from Europe to the eighth Session of the Forum (see Annex 3). Results of this meeting will be presented and discussed at this plenary session.

21. The plenary session will be divided into two parts, with the following themes:

- (a) "Working together for forests in Europe", which will be centred around MCPFE and ECE/FAO activities, but by no means confined to them;
- (b) "Europeans addressing forest in a changing environment", which will be based on the results of the Koli workshop.

22. The formal joint session of the Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission in the afternoon of Friday 24 October will address their input to the United Nations Forum on Forests, by these two organisations.

V. Questions for discussion

23. Participants in the plenary session are invited to address the following questions in their interventions during the plenary session "Working together for forests":

- (a) Do international activities for the European forest sector, including but not limited to those of MCPFE and UNECE/FAO, address the most important needs and priorities of the region? Are any major issues which deserve international attention not receiving the attention they deserve?
- (b) Are the activities carried out effective and well coordinated? Should there be more partnerships and joint planning whether between forest sector organisations and processes or with organisations and processes arising from other related sectors?
- (c) Are Europeans addressing in a satisfactory way the global issues identified by UNFF?
- (d) Did the "European Forest Week" help to improve synergies among forest-related organizations in Europe? Should it be organized again in 2010, or at a later stage?

24. The programme for the plenary session on Working together for Forests is available on the European Forest Week website: www.europeanforestweek.org.

Annex 1

Summary of the MCPFE Work Programme

Background

1. The Fifth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (5th MCPFE) "*Forests for Quality of Life*" was held on 5–7 November 2007 in Warsaw, Poland. At the Conference, ministers and high-level representatives of 46 European countries and the European Community endorsed the Warsaw Declaration and two Warsaw Resolutions: "Forests, Wood and Energy" and "Forests and Water".
2. The high-level political commitments made at the Warsaw Conference provide an important arrangement for actions dedicated to sustainable forest management in Europe in the coming years. While all commitments of the Warsaw Conference are being implemented at the national level, added value is generated through joint implementation of several activities at the pan-European level. In the Warsaw Declaration the ministers decided to "develop a work programme for the implementation of commitments of the 5th MCPFE in cooperation with relevant organisations, institutions and processes and to reinforce implementation of previous commitments" (Warsaw Declaration, para 38).
3. The MCPFE Work Programme has been elaborated with the aim to put the ministerial commitments into pan-European actions and to progress towards the envisioned long-term objectives of sustainable forest management.

Principles

4. The MCPFE Work Programme is guided by the following principles:
 - (a) The Work Programme reflects the political priorities addressed by the ministers at the Warsaw Conference and should be in accordance with the mandate and capacity of the MCPFE;
 - (b) The Work Programme embraces activities with added value at the pan-European level;
 - (c) The tradition of transparency and flexibility with regard to developing, implementing and reporting on the Work Programme is continued, including the ability to accommodate emerging issues;
 - (d) Programme elements and activities build upon, and are coordinated with work carried out by other partners and organisations, as well as work carried out to implement previous commitments;
 - (e) The Work Programme contributes to the implementation of forest related global commitments and the achievement of relevant global goals as well as to strengthening collaboration with forest related institutions, processes and initiatives at global, regional and sub-regional levels;
 - (f) The Work Programme builds on relevant scientific knowledge and strengthens the science-policy interface.

MCPFE Work Programme elements – implementation of Warsaw ministerial commitments

5. The MCPFE Work Programme comprises two parts: Implementation of the Warsaw ministerial commitments (chapter 4) and strategic direction of the MCPFE (chapter 5). The main thematic elements arising from the commitments at the Warsaw Conference are structured in the MCPFE Work Programme within five programme elements, as follows:

- (a) Sustainable Forest Management and Climate Change
- (b) Wood Mobilisation and Sound Use of Wood
- (c) Multiple Forest Ecosystem Services, including Forests and Water
- (d) Regional-Global Cooperation and Partnership
- (e) Cross-Cutting Activities: 1. Communication and Outreach and 2. Monitoring and Reporting, including C&I.

Strategic Direction of the MCPFE

6. Over the last eighteen years the MCPFE has defined and further developed the concept of sustainable forest management in the pan-European region through commitments, declarations and resolutions adopted at five ministerial conferences.

7. The MCPFE is now a well established and well recognised entity in the European and global forest policy arena. At the Warsaw Conference several ministers and heads of delegations, by referring to the important achievements of MCPFE, argued that it is time to consider new and innovative forms for future cooperation in order to meet challenges ahead and to progress towards the envisioned long-term objectives.

It was proposed to explore the potential for a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe. In the Warsaw Declaration the ministers also decided to carry out a review of the MCPFE process by the sixth ministerial conference, by assessing progress made and obstacles faced in the implementation of its commitments. Within the MCPFE Work Programme it is planned to establish the MCPFE Working Group on exploring the potential added value of and possible options for a legally binding agreement on forests in the pan-European region and to carry out the MCPFE External Review.

8. The full text of the MCPFE Work Programme can be downloaded at www.mcpfe.org.

Annex 2

Summary of the UNECE/FAO Strategic Plan 2008 to 2013 of the Integrated Programme of Work on Timber and Forestry

Background

1. The UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission have worked together closely since their joint founding in 1948, with a joint secretariat, joint publications, regular joint meetings and an integrated work programme. They undertake a Strategic Review every four –five years which resulted in 2008 in a thorough assessment of past programme achievements, and the determination of future programme priorities, through consultations with member states and stakeholders (http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/strategic_review/2007-2008/strategic-review.htm). The Strategic Plan 2008-13, proposed for adoption during the joint session of the Committee and the Commission during the European Forest Week, is made available to delegates as secretariat note ECE/TIM/2008/7. This plan has been discussed in depth during the Special Session on the Strategic Review and Plan, 28-30 April 2008, and subsequently finalized by the Bureaux. The following presents a synthesis of the main elements set out in the Strategic Plan.

Objective

2. The objective is to strengthen the forest sector and its contribution to sustainable development throughout the UNECE region.

Strategy

3. The programme will aim at developing and applying analytical and monitoring tools, both on policy and on developments on the ground, collecting, validating and disseminating information and analysis, as well as stimulating the exchange of experience, best practice and joint efforts to measure progress. The programme provides a platform for topical policy discussions, taking into account the changing policy environment, notably as regards climate change and bioenergy. It promotes the role of forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change. The programme will promote sustainable management of forests as well as the sound and legal use of forest products, for raw material and energy, and forest services, based on appropriate policies and institutions.

Activities and Structure

4. The integrated programme has five work areas:
- (a) Markets and Statistics
 - (b) Forest Resources Assessment
 - (c) Forest Sector Outlook
 - (d) Social and Cultural Issues
 - (e) Policy and cross-sectoral issues.

5. These activities are implemented by the joint UNECE/FAO secretariat, together with the FAO Forestry Department and its subregional offices in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and seven Teams of Specialists: Forest Products Markets and Marketing, Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management, Forest Policy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Forest Fire, Forest Communicators Network, Joint UNECE/FAO/ILO Expert Network to Implement Sustainable Forest Management, and Forest Sector Outlook.

Priorities

6. The outcome of the 2007-2008 Strategic Review placed a major emphasis on climate change, bioenergy and wood mobilization. The importance of sustainable forest management, sector policies and institutions, forest products markets, and cross-sectoral cooperation has been reaffirmed. Activities in these areas will be strengthened on the basis of initiated secretariat activities and the work of the Teams of Specialists.

Annex 3

"FORESTS IN THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT"
Pan-European workshop as a basis for a regional contribution
to the United Nations Forum on Forest (UNFF): Background and Objectives
Koli, Joensuu, Finland, 3 – 5 September 2008

Background

1. In October 2000, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) established the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) with the main objective to promote “... *the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end...*” based on the Rio Declaration, the Forest Principles, Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the outcome of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF) -processes and other forest related achievements.

2. According to the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the UNFF, its 8th session in early 2009 will address, among its agenda items, forests in a changing environment. This will include thematic issues on 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. Topics of the 8th session of the UNFF are also addressed by other fora, notably the three Rio conventions: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention on Combating Deforestation (UNCCD) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Strengthening cooperation and synergies between these conventions, forest related organizations and processes is essential and regularly emphasized by their governing bodies.

3. The UNFF at its 7th session invited relevant regional and sub-regional forest related mechanisms, institutions, organizations and processes to address issues and agenda items planned for each UNFF session and to provide a concise summary of their deliberations. These should be submitted to the UNFF secretariat well in advance in order to contribute to the discussions of UNFF sessions. The secretariat will prepare a summary report on the basis of regional inputs. The Ministerial Conference of the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) in Warsaw November 2007 welcomed the achievements of the 7th session of the UNFF and highlighted the importance of providing European inputs to the international forest policy dialogue. The European countries committed themselves to develop in cooperation with other regional bodies, processes and agreements, consistent inputs to the work of UNFF, inter alia, through sharing regional perspectives, approaches and experiences. The Warsaw Ministerial Declaration and the two Resolutions addressed several substantive issues for enhanced collaboration, including:

- (a) • Enhance regional contribution to the achievement of Four Global Objectives on Forests agreed by the UNFF and the implementation of the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests;
- (b) • Role of forests and their products in climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- (c) • Role of forests in combating desertification;
- (d) • Implementation of the relevant work programmes on biological diversity;

- (e) • Joint activities of the forest and water sectors, including mitigation of natural hazards such as floods and droughts;
- (f) • Support Forest Law Enforcement and Governance processes;
- (g) • Enhance use of wood as a renewable raw material and source of energy.

4. As part of the MCPFE Work Programme for 2008 - 2011, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland, with the financial support of the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, will organise a Pan-European workshop "Forests in the changing environment" on 3 - 5 September 2008. The workshop will provide a basis for discussion and elaboration of a contribution from Europe to the 8th session of the UNFF to be held in New York from 20 April to 1 May 2009.

Objectives

5. The workshop will have a European perspective to global issues. The objectives of the workshop are:

- (a) • Explore what are the priority issues related to the role of forests and sustainable forest management in the changing environment: climate change, loss of forest cover, forest degradation, desertification, biodiversity, protected areas;
- (b) • Share views on how to address these priority issues;
- (c) • Discuss how to ensure coherent actions at the national, regional and global levels;
- (d) • Provide a basis for a regional contribution to the work of UNFF.

6. The outcome of the workshop will be presented at the European Forest Week in 20 to 24 October 2008 and at the MCPFE Expert Level Meeting 12 to 13 November 2008, and forwarded to the UNFF secretariat.