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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

TIMBER COMMITTEE
Fifty-eighth session

EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION
Thirtieth session

JOINT SESSION
FAO Headquarters, Rome
9-13 October 2000

**Matters arising from the fifty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Europe of
relevance to the Committee**
(Item 9(a) of the Provisional Agenda)

Secretariat Note

This document informs the Committee of relevant items of the Commission's session:

- It includes a proforma and explanatory notes on the prioritization of the Committee's programme of work, as requested by the Commission;
- Operational activities under the Committee's auspices;
- Cross-sectoral and inter-sectoral concerns as regards relations with the business community.

The Committee is invited to respond when necessary.

Introduction

1. This document informs the Committee of matters relevant to it arising at the Commission's session and invites the Committee to respond when necessary. These relate essentially to prioritization, operational activities, and cross-sectoral concerns.

Prioritization

2. With regard to work programme prioritization, the Commission endorsed at its session in 1999, the new system of prioritization principal subsidiary bodies' (PSBs') work programmes proposed by the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work. The new system recommends that:

- All PSB activities using ECE regular budget resources should be included in the prioritization exercise;
- The three-tier system of prioritization should be maintained but PSBs which account for less than 5% of total ECE resources (Human Settlements, Timber and Sustainable Energy) may, if necessary, prioritise their activities on a two-tier basis;
- A proforma should be produced for individual PSBs to complete during the prioritization exercise;
- An explanatory note should be produced to accompany the new proforma, and
- The Chairman or a representative of the GEPW should attend the annual meetings between the Bureau of the Commission and the PSB bureaux. Other informal meetings between the PSBs and the Group of Experts could be arranged as necessary.

3. All PSBs were requested to apply this new priority setting system each budget-submission year, the present one is 2000 for the biennium 2002-2003. The secretariat consulted the bureau of the Committee and prioritised as requested its programme elements. The proforma and explanatory notes to be submitted are reproduced in the annex to this document. Delegations are invited to discuss, amend as necessary and agree in the prioritization.

Operational activities

4. The Commission requested each PSB to look at the operational activities undertaken within its field of competence and mandate, and to identify the needs for operational activities and financing for them.

5. Following this request, the Committee discussed its operational activities at its last session with a view to:

- Identifying needs for operational activities which cannot be met at present;
- Specifying the constraints encountered in responding to those needs;
- Making recommendations on the ways and means to overcome these constraints, including possibilities for additional funding;
- Providing strategic directions in terms of priority areas, types of projects and cooperation with partners: development banks, regional or subregional organizations and the business community.

6. The Committee's conclusions were consolidated with those of other PSBs and submitted to the Commission's annual session.

7. The Commission reaffirmed the importance of ECE's operational activities as a way to enhance the implementation of ECE conventions, protocols, norms and standards, promoting best practices and agreed policies and supporting European cooperation and integration and the transition process. It recognized that the Regional Advisers continue to play an important role in advising and helping the countries in transition apply ECE norms, standards and conventions.

8. The Commission agreed that priority should continue to be given to demands for assistance from the most vulnerable transition economies, particularly those in the CIS and among the Balkan countries. It also agreed that the decisions on which operational activities are selected and given priority should take into account guidance from intergovernmental discussions and be based on actual ECE expertise, and reflect the recommendations of external auditors. There was also general agreement on the need to develop inter-sectoral and multi-sectoral approaches to operational activities.

9. The Commission encouraged countries to include ECE on their lists of eligible institutions for the receipt of funding. At the same time, the secretariat was encouraged to renew its efforts to attract funds, both from public and private sources.

Cross-sectoral and inter-sectoral concerns

10. The Commission agreed that it was necessary to initiate, on a regular basis, debates and possible action on cross-sectoral concerns and inter-sectoral issues, an example of which was mitigating the effects of CO² emissions. The PSBs were requested to report back to the Commission on progress made in this respect.

11. With regard to ECE's involvement with the business community, the Commission agreed that this cooperation continue along the following lines for further action by the relevant ECE bodies:

- (a) Ensuring a real partnership whereby the business community benefits from its participation and at the same time contributes to the economic development of countries with economies in transition. For example, the business community should be requested to provide more financial support for seminars, workshops and other training activities as a contribution to the dissemination and implementation of conventions, norms and standards in these countries.
- (b) Ensuring that the business community's cooperation is limited to activities which are in line with and promote the basic United Nations principles, conventions and norms for better quality of life and social and environmental sustainability. Specific criteria could be developed for identifying such types of activities according to the nature of the areas concerned.
- (c) Promoting equal access by enterprises to ECE's public goods - information, region-wide forums, and norms and standards - thereby minimizing the risk that firms already dominant in the market of

their sector are given a further comparative advantage. For this purpose, steps could be taken to increase the representation of SMEs in ECE activities and to ensure the dissemination of ECE products among the widest possible range of business constituencies.

- (d) Speeding up the process of taking decisions on new initiatives such as the establishment of public-private advisory groups. One possibility would be to entrust the bureaux of the PSBs to take such decisions provided they are in compliance with guidelines to be agreed by the relevant PSBs.

12. It further decided that the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (or a sub-committee thereof) take up the above issues, in particular the development of guidelines and the possible procedures for facilitating public/private partnership.

13. The secretariat was requested to provide regular information on the development of the participation of the business community in its different committees and working groups.

14. The Committee is invited to comment on the above overview and make any necessary suggestions for improving the participation of the business community in its activities.

ANNEX

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
TIMBER COMMITTEE

SECTION 1: PRIORITIZATION

Please complete the following prioritization table. Each priority level (Higher, Medium or Lower) must contain at least one cluster of activities. The number of regular budget Professional staff (excluding the Divisional Director) must be shown against each cluster of activity e.g. 0.7, 1.4 etc.

Note: "ECE" = ECE Regular budget staff

"FAO" = FAO forestry staff assigned to Geneva Liaison Office and managed as part of the Timber Section. It does not include the many contributions from FAO HQ staff. ILO staff make a significant contribution to programme element 2.2.

N°	Clusters (or Main Subject Areas) of Activities	Priority Level (H, M, L)	Regular Budget Professional Staff
	A. CORE PROGRAMME: MONITORING AND ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOREST AND FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR IN THE REGION		
1.1	Collection and dissemination of information on trends in the sector, including publication of the <i>Timber Bulletin</i>	M	ECE: 0.3 FAO: 0.2
1.2	Forest Resource Assessment 2000 (temperate and boreal forests)	L	ECE:0.8 FAO: 0
1.3	Sustainable forest management in the region: support to the follow-up to UNCED and the pan European process on the protection of forests	H	ECE: 0.6 FAO: 0.1
1.4	Activities for countries in transition, including coordination of implementation of resolution H3 of the Helsinki Ministerial Conference	M	ECE:0.3 FAO: 0.1

	1.5	Review of markets for forest products and short term forecasts	M	ECE: 0.4 FAO: 0.8
	1.6	Forest and forest products sector outlook studies	H	ECE: 0.1 FAO: 0.7
	B. AREAS OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE COMMISSION AND/OR THE COMMITTEE			
	2.1	Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics	M	ECE: 0.2 FAO: 0.1
	2.2	Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training	M	ECE: 0.3 FAO: 0
	2.3	EFC/AFWC/NEFC Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions, <i>Silva Mediterranea</i>	L	ECE: 0 FAO: 0 (secretariat in FAO HQ Rome)
	2.4	FAO Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds	L	ECE: 0 FAO: 0 (secretariat in FAO HQ Rome)

SECTION 2: ACTIVITY OPTIONS

With the addition of one extra staff member, what additional activities would the Committee consider?

1. Intensification of existing activities, including:
 - Closer monitoring of forestry assistance to countries in transition and more workshops;
 - More (and more detailed) outlook scenarios, addressing more complex policy issues in the sector e.g. consequences of climate change or changed agriculture policy.
2. Major work on trade and environment issues in the forest and forest products sector.

With the reduction of one staff member, what activities would the Committee consider reducing?

As all the clusters are closely interlinked, it would be difficult to leave one whole area. Rather the result would be a spreading of resources more thinly, resulting in:

- reduction of data quality (and perhaps quantity) over time
- less analysis in market reviews
- no policy scenarios under EFSOS
- worse presentation of publications
- fewer meetings and workshops
- much reduced support to teams of specialists

Remarks

- The programme as a whole is strongly integrated, with powerful synergies between the different parts (for instance, data on forests, data on markets, market analysis, analysis of outlook and policy, statistical concepts). Thus removing one item would certainly weaken the others.
- The whole programme is integrated with FAO and ILO (and staffed in part by FAO staff), so fundamental changes in the scope or direction of the work would have to be discussed with the policy bodies of FAO and ILO.
- In addition, the programme has developed under the political leadership of, and in partnership with, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe, which has incorporated several Timber Committee/EFC programme elements into the pan-European programme of work on forests.
- There is a detailed distribution of labour between organisations, notably in the field of statistical data collection (FAO, but also EU, OECD, ITTO, notably with the Joint FAO/ECE/EUROSTAT/ITTO forest sector questionnaire).
- The “lower” rating for TBFRA and the “higher” rating for outlook studies reflect the activity cycle of those two projects, not their relative importance. TBFRA has just produced a major output, and EFSOS has been semi-dormant (for programme and post vacancy reasons) and is being relaunched, with major activity foreseen over the next two years.