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POLICY FORUM: FOREST CERTIFICATION—DO GOVERNMENTS HAVE A ROLE?

(Item 5 of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

The document presents a short information note and the provisional programme for the policy forum which will take place on 29 September 2005.

INTRODUCTION

1. As agreed during the joint UNECE/Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission bureaux meeting held in April 2005, a one-day policy forum during the 2005 Timber Committee session will be devoted to the topic “Forest Certification – do governments have a rôle?”. The policy forum will be held on Thursday, 29 September. A provisional programme is attached as annex 1. As instructed by the bureaux, half the meeting time will be devoted to discussion.

2. Although the process of forest certification may not assign a role for governments, their overall responsibilities and roles may influence developments in this area and may therefore necessitate that they take a position. Not only do governments have an overall commitment to promote sustainable forest management, inside and outside their own country, but they also own and manage forests themselves, procure goods and services according to agreed rules, set the rules for international trade and provide legal framework for domestic trade, standardisation and technical regulation and consumer information.

3. Different stakeholder groups urge governments to strengthen or reduce their actions in these different areas, posing complex issues for governments in the UNECE region and elsewhere. The aim of the policy forum is to explore these issues, for governments, but with the participation of stakeholders, to promote rational and balanced choices.

4. The UNECE Timber Committee has decided to focus on the following questions during the policy forum:

- Should governments use forest certification to promote sustainable forest management, and if so, how?
- Forest certification is an obstacle to international trade: do its benefits outweigh its disadvantages, and how can governments promote trade in wood and forest products which is sustainable in all respects?

5. *Delegations are invited to:*

- *Inform interested experts inside and outside government and urge them to attend the policy forum;*
 - *Participate actively in the discussions, notably presenting their own government’s view of the two questions proposed to the policy forum;*
 - *Towards the end of the policy forum, to indicate whether further work on this topic or other follow-up is necessary.*
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Annex 1

Provisional Programme

UNECE/FAO Policy Forum: "Forest Certification – Do governments have a role?"

Objective. This policy forum provides a multi-sector dialogue on the role of governments in forest certification. It is intended for all stakeholder groups, inside and outside the forest sector, including in particular those government officials responsible for standardisation and regulatory policy. The forum will have simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Russian.

When: Thursday, 29 September 2005

Where: Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Chair: Mr. Heikki Pajuojja, Chairman, UNECE Timber Committee

Morning session (10.00-13.00)

Should governments use forest certification to promote sustainable forest management, and if so, how?

- 10.00 Welcome note – **Wulf Killmann**, Director, FAO Forest Products and Economics Division
- 10.05 Presentation of the background paper – (speaker to be announced)
- 10.15 Germany's experience
Dr. Ulrich Bick
Federal Research Centre for Forestry and Forest Products (BFH), Hamburg
- 10.30 Sweden's experience
Ms. Malin Andersson
National Board of Forestry, Sweden
- 10.45 United States' experience
Dr. Carrie Denise Ingram
Policy Analyst, USDA Forest Service
- 11.00 Russia's experience - (speaker to be announced)
- 11.15 Tropical country's experience - (speaker to be announced)
- 11.30 Coffee Break
- 11.45 Open Discussion
- 13.00 Lunch Break

Afternoon session (15.00-18.00)

Forest certification is an obstacle to international trade: do its benefits outweigh its disadvantages, and how can governments promote trade in wood and forest products which is sustainable in all respects?

- 15.00 Technical regulation and harmonization authorities' perspective
Mr. Christer Arvius
Chairman of the UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and
Standardization Policies
- 15.15 Tropical producer country's perspective
Mr. Alhassan Attah
Executive Director, Timber Industry Development Division, Forestry Commission, Ghana,
and Chairperson of the International Tropical Timber Council
- 15.30 International Standardization Organization's perspective - (speaker to be announced)
- 15.45 International timber trader's perspective
Mr. Erik Albrechtsen
Head of Forestry and Environment Department
Dalhoff Larsen & Horneman A/S, Denmark
- 16.00 Questions
- 16.15 Coffee Break
- 16.30 Open Discussion
- 17.45 Conclusions and next steps – Chairman, Mr. Heikki Pajujoja
- 18.00 End of the forum
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