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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**TIMBER COMMITTEE**

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**UNECE/FAO IN A CHANGING INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT:  
BRIEFING AND DISCUSSION OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS\***

Note by the secretariat

This document presents to the Committee the 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 the issues presented. Representatives of the bodies concerned will be invited to brief the Committee orally.

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\* This document was submitted late for processing since clearance in finalizing this document took longer than anticipated.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. As in previous years, this agenda item presents an opportunity to brief the 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 2005. Representatives of the bodies concerned will be invited to brief the Committee orally.
2. In May 2006, the Committee's sister body, the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC) discussed a similar agenda item. The EFC's decisions and reactions are also reported in the present document.

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

### United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and linkages to regional forestry bodies

3. The sixth session of UNFF (February 2006) set four global objectives on forests and agreed to make progress towards their achievement by 2015. These can be summarised as: reverse of loss of forest cover; enhance economic, social and environmental benefits; increase the area of protected forests and the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests; and reverse the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management.
4. In addition to deciding on its multi-year programme of work, UNFF is expected to adopt a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests at its seventh session in April 2007. An open-ended ad-hoc working group is planned to consider the content of this instrument. In order to strengthen interaction between global and regional activities, forest-related regional and sub-regional bodies were invited to provide input to the work of UNFF (see below). Furthermore, UNFF6 suggested that ECOSOC recommend that the General Assembly, at its sixty-first session, proclaim 2010 as the International Year of Forests."
5. The outcome of the sixth session, including a renewed mandate for UNFF until 2015, was considered by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) in July 2006 ([www.un.org/esa/forests](http://www.un.org/esa/forests)).
6. With regard to regional cooperation, UNFF invited "forest-related regional and subregional bodies, mechanisms and processes, in coordination with the UNFF secretariat, as appropriate, to strengthen collaboration and to provide input to the work of the Forum by:
  - (a) raising awareness of the work of the UNFF at the regional and sub-regional levels;
  - (b) addressing topics identified in the Multi-Year Programme of Work, with a view to sharing with the UNFF regional and sub-regional perspectives on these topics; and
  - (c) encouraging participation of interested UNFF members, especially from within the region, as well as Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) members, relevant regional organizations and major groups."

7. The Committee and the EFC, working in partnership, have provided a variety of links and inputs from regional to global level, including to UNFF. For example by:

- (a) focusing on the implementation of sustainable forest management in the region;
- (b) considering the developments in IPF/IFF/UNFF;
- (c) bringing the outcomes of the session to the attention of global fora through secretariat documents, panels and other special events;
- (d) encouraging broad participation by non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders; and
- (e) reporting to FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO).

8. These linkages can be further strengthened to facilitate the two-way flow of information from global to local level and vice versa, and to enable further inputs from the UNECE region to COFO, UNFF and other global dialogues.

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

9. The 14 members<sup>1</sup> of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests are committed to strengthening this voluntary partnership, as part of the international arrangement on forests, notably collaborative and well-coordinated activities at the regional and national levels. Recent developments in the CPF joint initiatives include:

- (a) development of a CPF joint information framework ([www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar](http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar));
- (b) launch of the Global Forest Information Service (GFIS) that catalogues key information resources, such as news, events, publications and job vacancies provided by partners. ([www.gfis.net](http://www.gfis.net));
- (c) agreement on the working definitions of natural forest, planted forest, forest plantation and forest management by the Third Expert Meeting on Harmonizing Forest-related Definitions for Use by Various Stakeholders (January 2005) ([www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-definitions](http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-definitions)); and
- (d) update of the CPF sourcebook on funding sustainable forest management to contain 600 potential sources of funding ([www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-sourcebook](http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-sourcebook)).

10. The sections below summarize the recent developments in major forest-related agreements, whose secretariats are members of CPF.

#### **A. International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA)/International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)**

11. A new International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) was agreed in January 2006. The two key objectives of the new agreement are to promote the expansion and diversification of

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<sup>1</sup> Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) member organizations: Center for International Forestry Research; FAO (Chair); International Tropical Timber Organization; International Union of Forest Research Organizations; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility; Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests; Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; World Agroforestry Centre; World Bank; World Conservation Union.

international trade in tropical timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested forests; and to promote the sustainable management of tropical timber producing forests. ([www.itto.or.jp](http://www.itto.or.jp)).

B. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

12. The CBD 2010 target (to “achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss”) has initiated the development of sub-targets and indicators in many of the Convention’s work programmes, including on forest biological diversity. The review of the implementation of the work programme will be carried out at COP-9 in 2008 ([www.biodiv.org](http://www.biodiv.org)).

C. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

13. This year is the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. At the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-7) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification (UNCCD), in October 2005, parties committed themselves to promoting collaboration among the (UNCED 1992) Rio Conventions and suggested a synergetic approach on sustainable forest management. They noted that UNCCD activities should involve efforts to combat land degradation through reforestation and afforestation. ([www.unccd.int](http://www.unccd.int)).

D. Framework Convention on Climate Change and Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC)

14. The Kyoto Protocol entered into force on 16 February 2005. Its financial mechanism, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), allows industrialized member countries to meet part of their greenhouse gas reduction obligations through offset projects, such as afforestation and reforestation, in developing countries. To date, no forestry projects have been approved. Negotiations for the second commitment period of the Kyoto protocol are due to begin in 2006 ([www.unfccc.org](http://www.unfccc.org)).

E. Global Environmental Facility (GEF)

15. As of mid-2005, GEF had funded 231 forest-related projects , amounting to US\$ 1.2 billion. The GEF Secretariat and the Implementing and Executing Agencies, including FAO, are investigating the potential for additional GEF support for sustainable forest management. ([www.gefweb.org](http://www.gefweb.org)).

**IV. FUTURE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE TIMBER COMMITTEE (TC), THE FAO EUROPEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION (EFC), AND THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS (MCPFE)**

Background

16. A convergence of themes, meeting participants and working methods between the three bodies can be observed, and there has been active partnership between them for several years..

17. Both the TC and EFC are UN statutory bodies (of UNECE and FAO respectively). MCPFE is a political process with annual expert-level meetings, and with Ministerial Conferences held approximately every five years, managed by a General Coordinating Committee (GCC) of four countries. All three processes 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.

18. Collaboration between EFC and the TC started in the 1950s. Both organizations have worked with the MCPFE in the years since the process was started. Examples include:

- (a) an integrated TC/EFC programme of work;
- (b) a shared UNECE/FAO secretariat in Geneva, co-funded by the two organizations;
- (c) contribution by UNECE and FAO to the implementation of the Resolutions of MCPFE;
- (d) joint meetings between EFC and TC every four years;
- (e) active participation in each other's meetings and planning (the Liaison Unit of MCPFE participates in EFC/TC joint bureaux);
- (f) joint preparation by all three bodies of reports on the state of Europe's forests for ministerial conferences; and
- (g) sharing of information on many technical issues.

19. In addition, the UNECE reform process called for closer cooperation of the Timber Committee with MCPFE.

#### Recent developments

20. At the MCPFE Expert Level Meeting in September 2005, it reflected on the existing teamwork between MCPFE, EFC and TC. The meeting concluded that while collaboration was already effective, there was potential for further strengthening joint work, especially on implementing sustainable forestry and national forest programmes and forest law compliance, as well as promoting sustainable forest management as a concrete means of applying the ecosystem approach. Creating weblinks from the MCPFE Liaison Unit to the FAO website was also suggested. Regional collaboration was on the agenda of the MCPFE Round Table Meeting in April 2006, discussed on the basis of a questionnaire processed by the Liaison Unit seeking members' views on the adequacy of collaboration and proposals for improvement.

21. The MCPFE Round Table Meeting considered that MCPFE has a role to play in translating and implementing global commitments in Europe. It was highlighted that MCPFE had an opportunity to contribute and share these experiences and should respond to the UNFF invitation by delivering a clear message that the MCPFE was ready to address the issues on the UNFF agenda from the regional perspective and to provide relevant input to the forum. The participants underlined that in this regard the MCPFE could benefit from the collaboration between the MCPFE, FAO, and UNECE. These bodies are complementary to each other so they should consult with each other on streamlining the communication between the regional bodies and UNFF. It was also proposed that the ministers at the Warsaw conference should decide on a mandate, specifying the role of the MCPFE with regard to the regional component of the International Arrangement on Forests. In that context, coordination and collaboration between MCPFE, FAO, especially the European Forestry Commission (EFC), and the UNECE Timber Committee was highlighted. The MCPFE Liaison Unit in Warsaw was encouraged to continue the co-operation with relevant institutions and organizations. The co-operation has to develop towards shaping the process and its future contribution to the global developments based on the priorities carefully chosen and decided by the ministers.

22. At the thirty third session of the EFC held in Zvolen, Slovakia, May 2006, the above issues were discussed. The secretariat note considered that more collaborative and synergistic approaches among these processes (i.e. EFC, TC, MCPFE) might be beneficial for member countries to reduce meeting costs, avoid duplication and better advance the common objective of sustainable forest management. Practical approaches could include:

- (a) an increase in back-to-back and joint meetings;
- (b) greater coordination of meeting scheduling (possibly also with other organisations such as the European Union, the European Forest Institute or the International Union of Forest Research Organizations);
- (c) introduce joint agenda items, as appropriate; and
- (d) harmonize work of working groups/teams of specialists.

23. The EFC approved the following:

- (a) The Commission commended FAO for its chairmanship of CPF and recommended that FAO further facilitate cooperation among the CPF members and development of joint programmes. It stressed the role of FAO in contributing to the achievement of the four global objectives on forests. It also recommended that when the Commission and the Timber Committee review their next programme period, they consider providing a regional input to UNFF, and contributing to the achievement of the global objectives through their Integrated Programme of Work.
- (b) The Commission appreciated the valuable cooperation between the Commission, MCPFE, the Timber Committee and recommended that FAO further strengthen its collaboration with UNECE and MCPFE.
- (c) The Commission requested that the Joint Bureaux of the Commission and the Timber Committee proactively guide and coordinate the teams of specialists and other subsidiary bodies, and explore the opportunity for increased cooperation with the General Coordinating Committee of MCPFE.
- (d) While respecting the need to maintain the distinction between the different roles of MCPFE, EFC and TC, the Commission welcomed the planned further coordination of meeting schedules and agendas among the three bodies and requested FAO, in collaboration with UNECE and the Liaison Unit of MCPFE, to investigate options for:
  - (i) organizing back-to-back meetings between EFC, TC and MCPFE, when appropriate and beneficial to all three bodies; and
  - (ii) organizing a European forest week in 2008, which could also provide a regional input to UNFF.

24. The bureaux of the Timber Committee and EFC are being consulted on these issues, and the Committee will be informed of progress. At the initiative of the secretariats, a joint calendar of European forest meetings is being put together by UNECE, FAO, MCPFE, EU and CEPI. It will be posted on the websites and opened to contributions from other organisations.

25. The Committee is invited to review these developments and proposals and propose a direction for further action, to be discussed with partner organisations.