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**CROSS-SECTORAL ACTIVITIES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,
GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE
WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS)**

DOCUMENT FOR INFORMATION

Note by the secretariat

In addition to providing information, this document has as its objectives to assist delegations in:

- Evaluating the extent of current cross sectoral activities.
- Measuring the degree to which the Committee is supporting global United Nations mandates.
- Determining potential new areas for cross sectoral developments in the programme of work.

I. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. Sustainable development of trade has become an increasingly important policy framework for UNECE activities regarding trade, industry and enterprise development in 2002-3. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) prompted the redefinition of work within the secretariat, focusing on all three dimensions of sustainability, namely, environmental, economic and social. This resulted in distinct shifts in modes of work within UNECE, encouraging genuinely cross-sectoral initiatives. A primary example is the work between the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (CTIED) and the UNECE committees on timber and on environmental policy to promote trade in sustainably managed forest products (one such project is described in the following section on “Improved Trade Logistics for the Sustainable Use of Biomass”). This initiative has stimulated greatly enhanced collaboration between UNECE and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as well as with the Trade Division of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Committee on Trade and Environment of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This activity has also significantly strengthened UNECE’s links with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly the major environmental NGOs (e.g., World Wildlife Fund, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Greenpeace, International Institute for Environment and Development, World Business Council for Sustainable Development, International Council on Trade and Sustainable Development).

2. In July 2002 the UNECE secretariat worked with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), to support a major regional preparatory workshop on trade and environment. This UNDESA-UNECE meeting, hosted by the Government of Greece at the UN Training Centre in Thessalonika, brought together senior representatives from all 26 countries with economies in transition. Ministers and senior officials from throughout Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) directly addressed the environmental constraints on the development of trade, both within the region and between UNECE member States and the rest of the world, in preparation for the WSSD. They focused particularly on the urgent need for capacity building throughout the region to strengthen their participation in the Doha Development Agenda in the multilateral trade negotiations, and to ensure that follow-up to the WSSD includes trade-related issues.

3. UNECE supports an extra-budgetary project in Russia and other CIS countries on capacity building for the sustainable management of trade in the forests and timber sector. The results of this project are reported to the CTIED in document TRADE/2003/14.

4. Furthermore, UNECE has been invited by the other UN regional economic commissions to contribute to a major project to be funded by the United Nations Development Account for 2004-2005 on “Capacity Building in Trade and Environment”. This project is targeted to achieving relevant Millennium Development Goals; the United Nations regional commissions have identified trade and environment as a priority issue in following up on the WSSD.

5. At its 2002 session the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6) requested that its Bureau undertake the necessary follow-up to its activities in sustainable development, *inter alia* by involving other principal subsidiary bodies and subsidiary bodies in cross-sectoral projects initiated by the Working Party.

6. In response to this request, the Working Party has participated in a cross-sectoral seminar dealing with the growing influence of environmental issues on the development of trade, and more specifically with “Strategies for the Sound Use of Wood.” Details of this presentation are highlighted below.

Trade and Environment: Certification in the Timber Industry

7. The Secretary of WP.6 presented a paper on certification in the timber industry at the seminar on “Strategies for the Sound Use of Wood”, jointly organized by the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission (Poiana Brasov, Romania, 24-27 March 2003). In his presentation, he explained that certification could help establish comparability and credibility in the timber industry through verification of conformity to standards or performance indicators.

8. Certification offers the following benefits to the timber industry:

- Promotion of the sustainable management of forests and the sustainable use of forest products from renewable and sustainable sources;
- Improvement of consumer information on the environmental qualities of sustainable forest management;
- Promotion of timber as an environmentally friendly and renewable raw material;
- Enhancement of the reputation of companies involved and of the forest industry as a whole;
- Elimination of illegal logging;
- Widespread environmental and social benefits.

9. The development of timber certification answers the growing demand for “green” products, which has led to the drawing up of a new generation of international standards, generic environmental management standards (ISO 14000 series) and many national and regional environmental standards, guidelines and certification schemes.

10. The purpose of this type of “eco” certification scheme is to reward producers who meet the consumer demand for environmentally friendly products by allowing them to increase sales, create new market niches or charge a price premium for such products.

11. However, there is a significant need for harmonization in the area of forest certification to resolve existing problems:

- Significant variations exist in the demand for “sustainably produced” wood from sustainably managed forests in different markets;
- Final importer/retailer requirements and definitions of “sustainably produced wood” also vary. As a result, exporters face paying the cost of adjustments to different markets and the expenses for testing and inspection, depending on the final destinations of their exports;
- The proliferation of “eco” schemes leads to confusion not only among exporters but, more importantly, among consumers, thus undermining the credibility of existing schemes. This could have a negative effect on international trade in sustainably produced timber and in all organic goods; Traders, in particular from developing countries, are increasingly concerned about market access and the trade distortion effects of such schemes, which could be used to discriminate against imported products and foreign suppliers;
- Forest owners fear the loss of control over their own property, exclusion from markets and the potentially high costs required to carry out certification.

12. Because of these concerns, the seminar sought to discuss and share experiences on how to reconcile trade and environmental matters in the forest sector, in order to:

- Promote the positive image of forest certification among consumers and producers;
- Avoid proliferation and competition between certification schemes;
- Ensure that forest certification remains voluntary in nature, so that it does not become a trade barrier to market entry;
- Identify issues of concern to main players for further analysis and debate.

UNECE Trade Development and Timber Division Project on “Improved Trade Logistics for the Sustainable Use of Biomass”

13. Many economies in transition are confronted with major challenges in the economic development of their forest resources. Russia, in particular, faces problems in promoting the sustainable development of what could be one of its principal renewable export products.

14. The Trade Development and Timber Division has therefore launched the project, “Improved Trade Logistics for the Sustainable Use of Biomass”, through which efficient trade networks for the export of biomass from the Russian Federation to European countries will be developed. Assistance in the field of trade logistics will be provided to facilitate biomass trade flows between the participating countries.

15. An extensive network of private and public partners has already been established through the UNECE Trade Development and Timber Division project, “Capacity Building to Improve Trade Finance and Investment Prospects for the Russian Timber Sector”. The Division’s new biomass project will build on these existing contacts.

Objectives

16. The immediate objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of participants to market their biomass resources in a sustainable way.
17. The long-term objective is to improve the sustainable trade performance of the participating countries by using the UNECE norms, standards and recommendations for the benefit of the private sector.

Expected Results

18. UNECE expects the following results from the project:
- Establishment of a logistics centre for the sustainable use of biomass;
 - Contribution to a regional plan for trade logistics aspects of the sustainable use of biomass;
 - Improved infrastructure and trade logistics for the sustainable use of biomass in the Leningrad Oblast and the Arkhangelsk Oblast, and, more specifically, in the areas of Customs cooperation, timber port logistics and the trade logistics chain;
 - Use of its experience with Russia to develop a model for other regions of the CIS.

Agricultural Quality Standards and Sustainable Development

19. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards (WP.7) has launched a research project on the impact of commercial quality standards on trade in organic produce. The goal is to facilitate trade in organic produce, as it has a positive impact on the environment and sustainable development, and offers trade opportunities to countries with lower labor costs.
20. The Working Party also has been invited to participate in a project initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop a Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

II. GENDER MAINSTREAMING: PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

21. In 2002, advisory services in this area focused on the following activities:
- Identification of gender-specific barriers to entrepreneurship;
 - Awareness-raising at the policy level of the need to build women's capacity to use information and communication technologies (ICT) for business development, and development of policy recommendations in this area;
 - Development of policy recommendations and strategic directions for action;
 - Establishment of sub-regional and regional networks;
 - Promotion of role models.
22. UNECE further developed its cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), as well as with sub-regional groupings including the Central

European Initiative (CEI), and with professional associations, such as the World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises (WASME) and Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales (FCEM).

Gender Mainstreaming in a Knowledge-based Society and the WSIS Process

23. As part of mainstreaming gender issues into the ministerial preparatory process for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the Regional Advisor on Gender and Economy organized discussions on ICT for women entrepreneurs at the following events in 2002:

- Round table session held at the Ministerial Conference of CIS countries (Bishkek, 9-11 September);
- Side event on "Building a Gender-Sensitive Information Society" at the Pan-European Ministerial Conference (Bucharest, 7-9 November).

Objectives of the Side Event in Bucharest

24. The side event in Bucharest was organized by UNECE and the Government of Romania, in cooperation with UNIFEM, UNDP and the ITU Working Group on Gender and ICT. It aimed at mainstreaming gender into policy debate during the WSIS process by:

- Raising awareness of trends and issues related to gender and ICT that are specific to the region;
- Establishing a platform for dialogue among governments and other stakeholders;
- Recommending follow-up actions and activities.

Impact of the Side Event

25. The side event in Bucharest raised awareness of a number of important issues.

- Attention to gender equality is critical for building an information society based on human rights and economic arguments.
- The WSIS process is a good opportunity to mainstream gender into the information society debate. The Bucharest side event could serve to develop best practices because the Ministerial Conference in Bucharest is the first regional preparatory committee where gender aspects of information society were an integral part of the meeting and were reflected in the final document.
- The involvement of all stakeholders in the preparation and discussion at the side event was highly appreciated and considered as a key factor in the follow-up process.
- Follow-up activities should focus on using ICT-related opportunities to advance gender equality against the background of women's potential and good education.

Conclusions

26. The official conclusions of the Bucharest Conference were presented at the closing plenary session by the Rapporteur, Ms. Ewa Ruminska-Zimny. Specifically, these conclusions called on ‘Governments and other stakeholders [to] provide the necessary conditions to ensure women’s equal access to information and knowledge as well as ensuring their equal role as producers and decision makers in all aspects related to the shaping of IT policies and frameworks.’

Recommendations for Follow-up:

27. These recommendations were addressed to all stakeholders: Governments, the private sector, civil society and the international community.

- The gender perspective should be included in the debate and preparation of national ICT strategies and women should be fully involved in the development of e-governance systems.
- Women’s capacity to use ICT for entrepreneurship and business growth should be developed.
- Government-initiated activities to encourage gender mainstreaming in telecommunication institutions should be elaborated, especially for infrastructure development and related projects ensuring affordable access, for disadvantaged women in particular (for example, those living in rural areas, single mothers and older women).
- National reports should be prepared to assess the situation of women and men as users, producers and decision-makers in ICT. Such reports should be jointly prepared by governments, NGOs and the private sector, with the support of international organizations. The reports should serve as a background for policy debate and as an input to WSIS 2003 Geneva and WSIS 2005 Tunis.
- Women should be actively involved in the WSIS process. At least 30% of national delegates to all WSIS meetings should be women.

Capacity Building in ICT for Women Entrepreneurs

28. The Regional Advisor on Gender and Economy made a presentation at the Workshop on Business Alliances for Women-Guided SMEs and Technology Centers, organized by the International Centre for Science and High Technology of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (ICS-UNIDO) and CEI (Zagreb, 28-29 October 2002).

29. She also organized a discussion of capacity building in ICT for women entrepreneurs at round table session at the CEI Economic Summit (Skopje, 13-15 November 2002). The round table session stressed the role of existing technology centers in encouraging women entrepreneurs to use ICT and the necessity of developing e-training, especially for women entrepreneurs in rural areas. The session also emphasized the importance of close cooperation between UNECE and CEI in support of women entrepreneurs. For the first time, a special stand for women entrepreneurs in the UNECE-CEI region was present at the exhibition associated with the CEI Summit.

Training for Women Entrepreneurs

30. At the initiative of the Italian Institute for Foreign Trade (ICE), a training course for women entrepreneurs was organized by UNECE, CEI, the Austrian Chamber of Commerce and the Institute for International Relations (IMO) in Trieste and Vienna (4-11 November 2002). The course focused on trade-related issues and addressed women entrepreneurs and representatives of women's business associations, trade development organizations and Chambers of Economy and Commerce. The course received positive evaluations and is expected to be given again in 2003. The tentative theme for the next course is "Bridging the Gender Digital Divide through e-Training for Women Entrepreneurs".

UNECE Forum of Women Entrepreneurs

31. The Regional Advisor on Gender and Economy organized the second UNECE Forum of Women Entrepreneurs. The Forum was rescheduled for 17-18 March 2003 due to the lack of hotel accommodation in Geneva in October 2002.

Excellent Women Entrepreneur of the Year 2002 Award

32. In recognition of the contribution of women entrepreneurs to the economic development and social progress of their countries, the UNECE, through the Regional Advisor on Entrepreneurship and SMEs, created the Excellent Woman Entrepreneur awards, with six categories:

- (1) Best Start-up Entrepreneur of the Year;
- (2) Most Innovative Entrepreneur of the Year;
- (3) Best Entrepreneur in Information Technology;
- (4) Best Entrepreneur in Craft;
- (5) Best Entrepreneur Facing Additional Challenges of Disability;
- (6) Best "3Rs" Entrepreneur: Reduce, Re-use and Recycle.

33. UNECE received 41 nominations for these awards, from 20 countries. The awards were presented at the Second Forum of Women Entrepreneurs.

Gallery of Excellent Women Entrepreneurs

34. Created in 2001, the UNECE virtual Portrait Gallery of Excellent Women Entrepreneurs presents successful women entrepreneurs. The project seeks to raise awareness of the need to support women's entrepreneurship in the UNECE region. The Portrait Gallery, developed by the Regional Advisor on Entrepreneurship and SMEs, is located at <http://www.unece.org/indust/sme/gallery.htm>. Its rapid expansion reflects the substantial contributions that women entrepreneurs make to the various sectors of the economy. As of 1 December 2002, the Portrait Gallery included about 200 women entrepreneurs from 30 countries.

Publication

35. “Women’s Entrepreneurship in Eastern Europe and CIS Countries” is the first publication in the new UNECE series “Entrepreneurship and SMEs” (OPA/AC.29/1; sales no. E.03.II.E.3). It presents the key trends and issues in the area and includes selected papers prepared for the First Forum of Women Entrepreneurs (Geneva, October 2001) and for the meetings of the Team of Specialists on Women’s Entrepreneurship. The Regional Advisor on Gender and Economy prepared this publication.

Team of Specialists on Women’s Entrepreneurship

36. On 21-22 March 2001, at its second session, the Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development (WP.8) established a Team of Specialists on Women’s Entrepreneurship. The Team’s mission is to support the development of women’s entrepreneurial potential in UNECE countries to stimulate economic growth and job creation. The Regional Advisor on Gender and Economy serves as Secretary to this Team.

37. At its first meeting, held on 12 and 15 February 2002, the Team of Specialists elected its officials, adopted its Terms of Reference and discussed its work programme (OPA/2002/3). Its second meeting was held on 30 August 2002. Progress report TRADE/WP.8/2003/7 describes the activities carried out by the Team of Specialists and by the Regional Advisor on Gender and Economy.

Sub-regional Meetings and New Contacts

38. The Regional Advisor on Entrepreneurship and SMEs presented the UNECE approach to the development of women’s entrepreneurship at the 13th International Conference of WASME (World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises) on 7-9 April 2002 in Gibraltar.

39. He addressed the Conference of the All-Ukrainian Association of Women Entrepreneurs “Women’s Alliance” held on 24-25 September 2002, and made a presentation on UNECE activities in the field of enterprise and SME development.

40. The Regional Advisor on Gender and Economy spoke on the UNECE programme for women’s entrepreneurship at the Second International Conference “Women in the 21st Century: the Role of Women in the Development of Democracy in Southeast Europe”, organized under the auspices of the First Lady of Macedonia (Ohrid, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 12-14 April 2002).

Other Related Activities

41. The Regional Advisor on Gender and Economy has created a UNECE web page for gender activities, which includes a page on women's entrepreneurship (www.unece.org/operact/entrep/women). It comprises an online network of women's business associations with 22 associations from 15 countries, as well as pages on the Forum of Women Entrepreneurs and the Team of Specialists on Women's Entrepreneurship.

III. ICT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

UNeDocs

Background

42. In recent years, the need for a new focus on the UN Layout Key (UNLK) has increased. Indeed, the growing use of advanced logistic concepts in global trade requires that developing countries and transition economies align their trade documentation to international standards if they want to participate in global trade. In addition, it has become necessary to integrate paper trade documents into the electronic information interchange systems that are now available to trade such as UN/EDIFACT (the United Nations Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport), XML (Extensible Markup Language) and the Internet.

43. The UNECE has therefore launched the United Nations electronic trade Documents (UNeDocs) project. The purpose of the project is to develop and implement solutions for efficient trade document systems based on international trade standards and technologies that are accessible to traders from SMEs and developing countries. The project combines existing UNECE standards for paper documents with e-business standards, such as the United Nations Trade Data Element Directory (ISO 7372) and UN/EDIFACT, to define the electronic equivalents for paper documents used in trade. The project provides a migration path from paper-based trading environments to advanced electronic systems. The electronic documents integrate UNECE trade recommendations and are thus an instrument to promote and implement trade standards on a global level.

Objectives

44. UNeDocs seeks to:

- Provide a new e-business interpretation of the UNLK;
- Provide tools and technical assistance to support the alignment of national trade documentation to international standards;
- Provide training on document-related trade facilitation instruments;
- Develop and publish electronic equivalents for paper trade documents;
- Provide support in the implementation of electronic window concepts;
- Encourage the development of national policies in support of the use and implementation of electronic documents, such as legislation for electronic signatures, security and confidentiality, and

harmonization of cross-border trade requirements.

Potential Contribution of the Trade Development and Timber Division to the Automation of the TIR Carnet (E-TIR), and Related Support to the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)

45. The second session of the Informal Ad Hoc Expert Group on the Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure took place in Prague at the end of 2002. The participation of the Trade Development and Timber Division representative in the session highlighted that the E-TIR project draws on key tools for the automation of information exchanges developed within the Trade Development subprogramme. For this reason, E-TIR is a highly interesting and groundbreaking project that would benefit from cross-sectoral cooperation between the Trade Development and Timber Division and the Transport Division.

46. The key aspect of the E-TIR project relates to the requirements, opportunities and constraints imposed by the existing paper document (TIR carnet). This paper document is very complex and has a dual function:

- (1) Description and monitoring of the transit process through the countries involved;
- (2) Transmission of the information required by the various Customs offices of the transit entities.

47. Because of this dual function, the automation of the TIR carnet requires that the transit process first be recorded and described in a systematic and detailed way, using modelling techniques. This will lay the foundations for the long-term automation of transit procedures. The tools developed by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) with the Unified Modelling Methodology are fully appropriate and support this objective.

48. The second function of the TIR paper document, the transmission of information, requires the computerization of the paper document in a cost-effective and technically feasible manner. Here, the experience gained and the solutions developed in the United Nations electronic trade Documents (UNeDocs) project for digital paper could be valuable for the automation of the TIR paper document.

49. At the SECIPRO1 meeting in Skopje at the end of 2002, the Trade Development and Timber Division presented its capacity-building project in trade facilitation and electronic business for the non-EU Mediterranean countries. The discussions following the presentation indicated that cross-sectoral technical cooperation between the Trade Development and Timber Division and the Transport Division could support the development of a "Sub-Regional Capacity-Building Project for e-Trade and Transport in South Eastern Europe", based on E-TIR and UNeDocs.

50. The development of such a sub-regional capacity-building project proposal based on UNeDocs was requested by the Swiss Secrétariat d'État à l'Économie, which is also considering funding the project. This project would support two of the objectives of the Stability Pact for South eastern Europe: the facilitation of transit procedures for road transport corridor 10, and the creation of the Stability Pact Free Trade Area in

1 SECIPRO is a network of national PRO Committees in Southeast Europe. A "PRO Committee" is a national body that aims to increase business and investment through the simplification and modernization of PROcedures and information exchange in administration, commerce and transport.

Ssoutheast Europe.

51. The project would build on ETIR and capitalize on the work done by the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) in cooperation with the Stability Pact.

52. The synergy gained from cross-sectoral cooperation between the Trade Development and Timber Division and the Transport Division would accelerate the acceptance of E-TIR and provide UNeDocs-based solutions for an automated TIR carnet. These results could also help facilitate the transit procedures for road corridor 10 in Southeast Europe.

53. UNeDocs is a model that can be sustained, promoted and implemented in southeast European countries. The UNeDocs concept of making electronic trade documents available through the Internet and the Web would support the facilitation and harmonization of electronic trade documents within the subregion. Harmonizing trade and transport documents through close cooperation with the Stability Pact would also help support the Stability Pact's Free Trade Area objectives and link the various countries to international trade corridors.

54. A first meeting has taken place between the Trade Development and Timber Division and the Transport Division in order to look at the feasibility of further cooperation and development of this project.

European Regional Meeting on the UN ICT for Development Task Force and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), 29 April 2002

55. As a contribution to the activities of the UN ICT Task Force, UNECE hosted a European Regional Meeting on the UN ICT Task Force Regional Network and its contribution to the WSIS (Geneva, 29 April 2002). The meeting addressed two major issues:

- The launching of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force Europe and the Central Asia Regional Node;
- The priorities, issues and themes for the European Preparatory Conference for the WSIS that was held in November 2002 in Bucharest.

56. The European and Central Asian Regional Nodes of the UN ICT Task Force were launched at the meeting, with the purpose of bringing together different stakeholders and contributing to the activities of the UN Task Force. More than 150 stakeholders from over 30 countries throughout the region participated, from civil society, research and education organizations and from the business community. A website for the Geneva Node of the UN ICT Task Force has been designed and implemented, with relevant information on the activities of the Geneva Node and the World Summit on the Information Society, as well as links to the UN ICT Task Force, the Moscow Node, the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) and the European database on Public Administration and e-government. More information can be found at the following website address: <http://www.unece.org/etrades/ict/>

57. The meeting concluded that the different processes identified in the discussions should converge into the preparation for the WSIS meeting in Bucharest, in which stakeholders from civil society, business and governments as well as international organizations like ITU and the European Union should be fully involved. The

many ideas and suggestions expressed at the UNECE meeting form the basis for a policy dialogue, which should contribute significantly to the development of national and regional ICT policies and strategies.

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