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### PROGRAMME OF WORK: ACTIVITIES ON COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION

(Item 6 of the Provisional Agenda)

Note by the secretariat

This document contains the report of the fourth meeting of the Team of Specialists to monitor and develop assistance to countries of central and eastern Europe in transition in the forest and forest products sector, held in Gmunden, Austria from 29 June to 4 July 1999. The Committee is invited to review the report and to discuss the activities which are being implemented by this Team. The delegations are specifically invited to give consideration to the three major priority areas of the team's work, as well as to its contribution to the pan-European process on the protection of forests. The prolongation of the mandate and terms of references of the Team until the year 2002 (as proposed in the report, items 43-44), as well as the allocation of sufficient secretariat time for this work, has also to be discussed and approved by the Committee.

**Team of specialists to monitor and develop assistance to countries  
of central and eastern Europe in transition in the forest and forest  
products sector**

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**Report**

**of the Fourth Meeting of the Team of Specialists**

(Gmunden, Austria, 29 June - 04 July 1999)

Introduction

1. The 4th meeting of the Team of Specialists (ToS) to monitor and develop assistance to countries of central and eastern Europe in transition (CITs) in the forest and forest products sector was held in Gmunden, Austria, in the premises of the Forestry Training Centre ORT, from 29 June to 04 July 1999. The ToS has implemented its mandate within the programme of work of the UN/ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission.

2. The meeting was invited by the Government of Austria through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as well as the Commission of the European Union have generously sponsored the participation of the delegates from countries in transition.

3. About 40 experts from Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Poland, Sweden, Ukraine and United Kingdom, as well as experts from the EU European Commission, IUFRO and the European Forest Institute attended the meeting. The Chairperson of the UN/ECE Timber Committee Ms. Astrid Bergquist, and Chairman of the FAO European Forestry Commission Dr. Peter Csoka participated in the meeting. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests was represented by the head of the Liaison Unit Vienna Mr. Peter Mayer.

4. Mr. Günter Siegel, on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Austria, and Ms. Astrid Bergquist, on behalf of the UN/ECE Timber Committee, welcomed the participants and presented opening addresses.

5. The provisional agenda was adopted as proposed by the UN-ECE/FAO secretariat and the leader of the team Mr. Stanislaw Zajac (Poland), who chaired the meeting.

Developments since the 3rd meeting of the Team (November 1997 - June 1999)

6. The secretariat informed participants about the work done since the last meeting of the team (November 1997), and highlighted the relevant decisions made by the parent bodies. The meeting reviewed the workshops, meetings, other projects and activities which could affect the current and future work of the team, and would help to formulate its conclusions. The team noted that the cooperation with countries in transition has continued to be one of the priority areas on the agenda

of the UN/ECE Timber Committee, the FAO European Forestry Commission and their joint subsidiary bodies.

7. Dr. Peter Mayer (Austria), Head of the Liaison Unit in Vienna, presented activities within the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, in particular the follow-up work after its third session (Lisbon, June 1998). The structure of the Pan-European Process(<http://www.minconf-forests.net>), its resolutions and commitments of countries, as well as recent developments(Expert-Level Meetings, ad hoc Working Groups on Biodiversity, Protected Areas and Related Subjects, Preparatory Group) were discussed.

8. The participants were informed about a special meeting on Resolution H3 which had been planned within the Pan-European Process. Although no exact date and place of this meeting had been fixed yet, but presumably it would be organised in 1999/2000, and possibly in Poland. The participants were invited to promulgate this information in their countries. Several delegates strongly supported the idea to hold such a meeting in the year 2000, as an earlier date would be "premature" and "overlap" with other related events.

9. Mr. Bernard Chevalier (France) noted that countries in transition themselves should not be too "silent", and they should take a more active position in the Pan-European Process as a whole, i.e. not only under H3 resolution, but also in other areas. Mr. Karen Ter-Ghazaryan (Armenia) emphasised the importance of "compatibility"of the Pan-European Process with other CSD/IFF activities and initiatives. Ms. Astrid Bergquist (Sweden) suggested that the possible topic for the next Ministerial Conference could be "Cultural and Spiritual Values of Forests".

10. The participants also stressed that a more active involvement of countries in transition into the international processes would require a financial support, a more high profile of forestry within the national economies of some countries, "continuity"and sufficient level of national focal points, solution of some cross-sectoral issues, etc. At the same time it was noted that situations in the forestry sectors are different in different countries in transition, and there are no "blue-prints" to be put into a national context, as well there are "no quick fixes in forestry". The transition process would need a lot of patience and persistence, based on a "step by step" approaches. As forestry is a "long-term theme", sufficient time would be needed to meet the high expectations raised in CITs.

11. The meeting stressed the importance of the co-ordination of activities of different international organisations and bodies in support of forestry sector of countries in transition. The work which is being done by the European Commission, UN-ECE/FAO, IUFRO and EFI in this context was mentioned in particular. The potential cooperation with other international organizations working on the CITs issues was also in the focus of the team's attention.

12. The team took also note of the other current developments in the CITs' area and the following activities done since November 1997:

- The 22nd session of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics (May 1999) confirmed the position concerning the promotion of the process of economic reform and transition to a market economy in the CITs. It

noted, in particular, that topics and themes in the programme of assistance should be in line with the priorities and needs seen by countries of the region;

- The Joint ECE/FAO/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training (Slovakia, September 1998) reviewed this area of its activity. In particular it over-viewed the results of a PHARE project, which was aimed to analyse the needs of the forestry sector of 13 participating countries in central and eastern Europe and to draw up a programme of action at the national levels. The implementation of these programmes would have been extremely beneficial to the countries, but unfortunately it could not be supported by the project due to a shortage of funds;

- The workshop on "Development of marketing of sawnwood and value-added products in countries in transition to market economies" was organised under the auspices of the UN/ECE Timber Committee and hosted by the Arkhangelsk Region Administration in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Finland, the FAO Forestry Department and the Arkhangelsk University (Arkhangelsk, Russian Federation, 24-28 November 1997). This workshop was the 3rd one in the row of workshops organised with financial support from Finland (Sopron, Hungary, November 1994; Tartu, Estonia, October 1995);

- The workshop on certification of sustainable forest management and markets for certified products in countries in transition was held in the Czech Republic (Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Forestry) in autumn 1998. One specific comment has come from this very interesting and useful workshop: some participants showed signs of rejecting the designation of "countries in transition to market economies" for their countries, and would prefer to be called "countries in central and eastern Europe". The team of specialists should be sensitive to this point when formulating its position on the matter;

- The Joint ECE/FAO/ILO Committee in September 1998 also noted that it should not any longer have "a separate programme for countries in transition, but rather ensure that their concerns were reflected in the design of its regular activities and foster the participation of these countries in its work". This view was echoed by several delegates from central and eastern European countries;

- The Timber Committee had initially planned to organise the next workshop on marketing of forest products in Belarus in 1998 (if an adequate co-sponsorship from other countries and organisations is secured). It has appeared not possible in absence of a proper financial support, and this workshop had to be re-scheduled;

- The meeting of the team of specialists on the public relations (PR) for countries in transition was organised in Sagadi (Estonia) from 15 to 19 May 1999 under the auspices of the ECE/FAO and the National Forestry Board of Estonia. This was the first meeting of the PR Team in a country in transition, although the issue of the PR capacity building in central and eastern European countries was specifically addressed at the meeting held in Austria in 1995. The team established a Subgroup on PR in central and eastern European countries, currently composed of representatives from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. This group would meet and determine their common needs for forestry communication (capacity building). Possible solutions to these needs had to be found through team members, bearing in mind that neither FAO nor ECE are funding agencies.

13. The above mentioned and a number of other relevant events have shown that the ECE/FAO work on countries in transition was very useful, but it has also been noted on different occasions that the needs and interests of many of these countries at this stage have become essentially the same as those of many other UN-ECE/FAO member states.

#### Country reports by participants

14. All countries (CITs, donor countries) and organizations participating in the meeting presented reports as a background information on progress and developments in the forest and forest products sectors. These reports, prepared along the proposed outline, had been made available in the written form (in English) in advance of the meeting, and provided good standpoints for discussions. The participants described and commented in their reports on the present situation in the forestry and forest products sector from the point of view of the transition process to the market economy, views on the trends and prospects in this area, on existing bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes, specific points, etc. The questions of "ensuring sustainable forest management in CITs", "promoting financial and technical assistance for forestry sectors of CITs" and "transfer of knowledge; infrastructure and capacity building", as well as aspects of the implementation of the Helsinki Resolution H3 were covered in the reports.

15. Mr. Tuomo Kotimaki (Finland), the TACIS project Director on the "Forest Resources Management in north-west Russia (Karelia Project)", presented technical and organisational aspects of the project, which was started in 1997 and has covered practically all the essential aspects of the National park Forest Resources Management, including the capacity building, education and training. The project has been aimed to improve the integration of the forest resource use with the nature protection, to strengthen national institutions to maintain a good condition of forests and to upgrade forest management capabilities in the north-west Russia (Voldozero National Park). The details of organisational aspects of planning and running the TACIS project were discussed.

16. Mr. Jan Ilavsky (Slovakia) informed the participants about the recently finalized EU-PHARE Multi-Country project "*Sustainable Forestry and Forest Biodiversity Conservation in central-eastern Europe*", specifically on the "Preparation of a Multi-Country Programme". The aim of the project was to collect a comprehensive information on country-specific forestry issues in order to develop multi-country profiles and give a common platform to identify priorities and priority actions for the forest and nature conservation in the central and eastern European countries and, in particular, the EU Associated Countries.

17. The participants noted that it would be useful if findings of this PHARE project were widely disseminated and applied in the activities of the team, e.g. by publishing the main findings as the Timber Committee discussion paper (DP). The project should also be presented to the Timber Committee session in September 1999, e.g. within "technical briefings" programme,. The secretariat was requested to provide necessary arrangements for the DP publication, and for the organisation of the technical briefing on the subject.

18. The country reports in written format from Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Hungary, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, The FYR of Macedonia and Ukraine are available from the secretariat.

#### Implementation of Resolution H3

19. The UN-ECE/FAO has continued to implement its mandate of the international coordinator for Helsinki Resolution H3 on forestry assistance to countries in transition. The electronic database, which includes the information supplied by national co-ordinators on a project by project basis, has recently been further developed under the guidance from Mr. Peter Csoka (Hungary). It is now available on the INTERNET (UN/ECE Timber Committee web site <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber>).

20. The participants of the meeting were informed on the developments in this area. They reviewed and commented on the database, on how to foster the H3 implementation, and the post-Lisbon dialogues in this important field. It was noted that the link of the H3 database with Internet had raised its usefulness greatly (and its actual use as well). Aspects of the maintenance, use and up-dating of the H3 database, its improving in the direction of making it a more useful tool for countries in transition, as well as further necessary activities at the national and international level in connection with the H3 resolution were considered.

21. The meeting noted that the detailed report on the implementation of the resolution H3 was prepared and successfully presented at the Lisbon Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (June 1998). The first Expert-Level Follow-up Meeting of the Lisbon Ministerial Conference expressed the need for continuous country efforts in the implementation of Resolution H3, and identified the ToS on Countries in Transition as a key player in analysing the situation and identifying areas of new activities.

22. The 56th session of the UN/ECE Timber Committee (October 1998) examined and endorsed the activities carried out and planned in support of CITS in the forest and forest products sector, mainly the monitoring of H3 implementation. The Committee concluded that "the database on forestry assistance to countries in transition, established under resolution H3 will be updated regularly and made widely available." The session noted once again that the value of the information on CITS assistance activities stored in the computerised database were dependent strongly on its completeness, regular updating and accessibility.

23. The H3 database should be accessible and well known as much as possible. The H3 implementation would be more efficient if all the signatory countries had provided the information to the database. The non-signatory countries in transition were also invited to do participate in the process. Putting the database on the WWW was considered as one of the best possible means for the database distribution and updating. The parent bodies should continue permanently request countries to provide information on forestry assistance to countries in transition to the secretariat, for inclusion in the data base, and to regularly update this information.

24. From a practical point of view, ToS participants were invited to check and update the information for their countries, which was distributed during the meeting in a diskette format (the work should also be done by the secretariat to summarise these corrections in the database). The next version of the Interim Report on the Implementation of Resolution H3, which should be prepared by the time of the pan-European H3 special meeting, as well as its findings should also be available on INTERNET.

25. The discussion on the content of the H3 database confirmed the importance of this work and interest of experts (those who worked with/in the transition countries) in the continuation of this activity. When discussing aspects of the database maintenance, the participants have found that the structure and the design of the H3 database should be improved, and future reports should provide more analysis.

ToS and UN-ECE/FAO activities to monitor and develop assistance to CITs

26. Participants reviewed the priorities and themes for assistance in the light of the specific needs and approaches of the transition countries. After the detailed discussion, the ToS confirmed (with some modifications) the three major programme areas of work, namely:

- Institution and capacity building and framework conditions; building of the legal and policy infrastructure for sustainable development of the forestry and forest products sector, including extension services, as well as education and training;

- Activities related to the development of market oriented and ecologically sound enterprises in the forestry and forest products sector, with specific references to cross-sectoral and private forest owners issues;

- Issues of general importance for the protection of forests, forest conservation and sustainable development of the forest sector and issues of concern for individual countries or group of countries.

27. The meeting stressed the role of each country to fix its own priorities according to a) specific national conditions, and b) progress which was made/achieved so far. On the basis of the list of priorities identified by the PHARE project (items 17&18), the CITs priorities should be "clustered" according to regional similarities, and countries should foreseen and up-date these priorities on the basis of their own needs.

28. The workshops and meetings organized by member countries under the auspices of the UN/ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission generally reflected the specific needs of countries. The ToS members expressed strong support to the UN-ECE/FAO activities on CITs, and demonstrated willingness to cooperate in achieving the goals of the transition of national forestry sectors to a market economy.

29. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe had ranked high the work which was being done by the ECE/FAO and the ToS on countries in transition in implementing Resolution H3 and encourage the continuation of this work.

30. The capacity building, education and training, institutional strengthening, adequate response to the private owners needs, putting the forestry legislation into the whole legislation systems of the country, are some of the main aspects of the National Forestry Programmes.

31. Although the importance of forestry issues has been rapidly rising in the public opinion during last years, the political and financial position of the sector as a whole was still weak in many countries, as well as at the international level. Many countries and organizations often give priority to the cooperation and the development of the assistance to countries in transition in other than forestry sectors. Forests and forestry issues should continue raising the interest of high political and administration levels. The team's public relations (PR) work has to be improved and the co-ordination with the ECE/FAO ToS on public relations in this area would be needed.

32. The development of the forestry and forest products information and statistical systems and services, which could cover all aspects of multiple-use forestry and sustainable forest management is an acute need in CITs. The needs of the private sector with this respect should also be taken into full consideration. The educational institutions should also help to the large number of private forest owners to prevent possibly bad management practices (e.g. over cutting).

33. The need of information for private forest owners could be met by giving them practical ideas of different solutions in donor countries regarding forest management, especially for the small-scale private forestry. Training programmes and exchange of experience with donor countries were again recommended by the team. The position of the forest owners in solving conflicts of different interests should be strengthened, e.g by establishing and the development of forest owners' association, providing training and extension services;

34. The organization of seminars, courses and workshops for countries in transition should take into account problems of improving conditions for investments in the forestry, timber and woodworking industries. The joint research projects in this area would be extremely useful and helpful to improve the investment climate in the forestry sector.

35. The team confirmed the actuality and validity of some other main conclusions and recommendations which were made during the previous ToS meeting (Ljubljana, 1997), and suggested that they all should also be in the focus of discussion at the special H3 meeting within the Pan-European Process to be held in the year 2000.

36. The participants concluded that the main objectives of the meeting, namely to ensure that the CITs' activities be in accordance with countries' needs and be performed in an effective and efficient way, was achieved. The work which had been done by the ToS was useful, although the limited funds and available resources (also from donors' activities) should be used in a more coordinated, and the better possibly ways. The ToS role in the dissemination of the information in this area, as well as the importance of the transparency of this work was emphasized once again.



Special topic:

Post-conflict reconstruction in the forest and forest products sector in the Balkans

37. The ToS meeting was a good opportunity to assess the situation the forestry and forest products sector and needs in the region in the light of "post-conflict reconstruction in the Balkans". The whole UN family, including ECE, was asked to consider their possible contribution for reconstruction in the Balkans, also in the forest and forest products sector. The Timber Committee would also be expected to play a role and prepare suggestions on the matter.

38. The initial notes prepared by Mr. Kit Prins (ECE/FAO), and the document prepared by the UN/ECE Economic Analysis Department "Chapter 1. Post-war reconstruction and development in the South-East Europe" were distributed at the meeting and served as background documents for discussion on the subject. Mrs. Astrid Bergquist, Chairperson of the Timber Committee, in her introductory remarks on the subject stressed its importance and transmitted the spirit of the UN/ECE "intensive discussion" on the matter to participants.

39. Some practical proposals for the reconstruction in the region from organisational and technical points of view were presented by Mr. Jeremy Wall (EU/DG III) and Mr. Karen Ter-Ghazarjan (Armenia). An obvious advantage in using wood and wood-based materials where possible, and in particular in the provision of WEMS ("Wooden Emergency Mobile Shelters") for the affected regions were demonstrated in the Mr. Wall's presentation.

40. The WEMS specifications were described, and those who would be interested in possibly helping with this project (depending on its future development) were invited to contact Mr. Jeremy Wall "W.E.M.S. Project" with the indication of the nature of possible help: advise/experience; design assistance; participation in a possible pilot phase; manufacturing capacity and/or contracts, etc. The details on the "Wooden Emergency Mobile Shelters" presented by DGIII are also available in the UN/ECE secretariat.

41. A detailed format of the draft "Emergency Assistance Programme (EAP)" which included strategic and guiding principles of the assessment of current situation in the forestry sector of the region, as well as future trends, objectives and expected results of programme, actions to be taken and needs for resources and material, was presented (as a possible "template") by Mr. Ter-Ghazarjan. This draft programme was elaborated taking into account the experience in emergency situations in the Caucasus region.

42. The team of specialists took note of the above presentations, including the reports of the participating Balkan countries which were delivered during the meeting, and it will pay a special attention to the developments in the forestry sector of the region, taking account the affected countries needs in the ToS current and future work.

Future activities of the team of specialists

43. The team concluded that the process of transition of forestry sector to market economies had been of a dynamic character and the issue of adjustment of the priorities should be further kept on the agenda of the team of specialists. The ToS confirmed its commitment to implement the mandate and to continue its support to the UN-ECE/FAO activities in this area.

44. Considering that the subject would be acute for a long period, the team stated that the duration of its work should be prolonged until the year 2002. The prolongation of the ToS mandate and adjustment of the Terms of Reference should be confirmed by the forthcoming session on the Timber Committee.

45. The ToS has addressed the parent bodies with the to further provide all possible support to the activities of the team, including the allocation of sufficient secretariat time for this work, providing linkages and contacts with donor agencies (including national institutions) for the financial support, in particular, for travels of experts from CITs for the participation in relevant meetings and activities.

46. The publication of country profiles on the forestry and forest products sectors of countries in transition (the activity is being done by the ECE/FAO in cooperation with national experts as regularly as resources allow and available) has been postponed for the period of the Temperate and Boreal Forest Resources Assessment (TBFRA-2000). The wide range of the background information on forest resources of all CITs will be included in the Assessment. The work on country profiles will start again after the TBFRA-2000 is published (depending on the resources available).

47. Participants noted some other forthcoming activities which were relevant to the UN-ECE/FAO CITs work, namely:

- The sub-regional workshop on the "Follow-up to FAO projects on implementation of forest policy and new legislation" was tentatively planned to be held in Slovakia in November 1999 (subject for confirmation) with the participation of 8 (eight) central-European countries in transition. It was suggested that analogous workshops be organised in other sub-regions;

- Mr. Heinrich Schmutzenhofer (IUFRO) announced that the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Symposium on "Experience with New Forest and Environmental Laws in European Countries with Economies in Transition" will be held in Ossiach (Austria) from 29 September to 3 October 1999;

- The workshop to introduce marketing principles for wood and non-wood forest products will be organised in Moldova ("Moldsilva"), in co-operation with the Finnish Ministry of Environment, and other organisations in September 2000 (provisionally, pending funding);

48. The participants provisionally agreed that the next meeting of the team of specialists should be held at the end of the year 2000 or at the beginning of the year 2001, taking into the consideration the results of the scheduled special H3

meeting within the Pan-European Process. The exact date, place and the programme of the 5th ToS meeting is to be elaborated in due time in the collaboration between the UN-ECE/FAO secretariat and the Ministerial Conference Liaison Unit in Vienna.

The CRC satellite meeting and other business

49. A one-day satellite meeting on the 2 July 1999, which included presentations and the discussion of the follow-up work to the Costa Rica - Canada initiative, and which was aimed to facilitate activities within the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, was organised within the ToS framework. The information on the subject, delivered by Mr. Jacques Carette (Canada), Mr. Jose-Maria Solano (Spain), Mr. Günter Siegel (Austria), Mr. Mike Dudley (United Kingdom), Dr. Astrid Skala-Kuhmann and Dr. Christian Mersmann (Germany) and some other global forest policy experts, was accepted with interest by the ToS members. The participants have found this information and discussion useful for their future work at the national and international levels. All participants were extremely co-operative and active during the lively discussions.

50. The field excursion to the mountain forests and discussions "on the spot" of practical sustainable forest management issues, also with private forest owners, as well as the excursion to Salzburg, gave the participants an opportunity not only to learn more about the host country, but also to build personal contacts, which will be helpful in the further work of the ToS on countries in transition .

51. Participants heartily thanked the Austrian organisers and hosts, especially Mr. Günter Siegel and Mr. Alexander Foglar-Deinhardstein, as well as the management and the employees of the Vocational Training Centre Ort, for their hospitality and the remarkable and efficient work which had been done in the preparation, organization and running the Meeting.