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**FOREST POLICIES
AND INSTITUTIONS
IN EUROPE
1998-2000**

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Note

The designation employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Abstract

The paper contains a synthesis of national reports on developments in forest policies and institutions between 1998 and 2000, based on national reports to the European Forestry Commission. Sections include: forest policy framework, national forest programmes, legal framework, institutional framework, criteria and indicators, certification of sustainable forest management, conservation of biological diversity, the international dimension in national forest policy, and the economic viability of European forestry.

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Table of contents

	Page
Preface by the secretariat.....	iv
Executive summary.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Forest policy framework and national forest programmes	2
National forest programmes.....	5
Legal framework.....	8
Institutional framework.....	10
Sustainable forest management: criteria and indicators, certification and standards.....	12
Conservation of biological diversity.....	15
The international dimension in national forest policy.....	15
Forest issues in countries in transition	15
Economic viability of forestry.....	16
Conclusions	18
Some facts about the Timber Committee	19
UN-ECE/FAO Publications	20

Preface by the secretariat

Since its foundation in 1947, the FAO European Forestry Commission has monitored developments in forest policy and institutions, basing its analysis on national statements delivered to its biennial sessions. At its session in 2000, the thirtieth held jointly with the ECE Timber Committee at FAO HQ in Rome. The EFC reviewed developments since 1998, when European forest policy had been comprehensively reviewed, first at the third Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Lisbon I June and then by the EFC in Lahti, Finland in October. The synthesis of the latter review was later published under the title *State of European forests and forestry, 1999* (ECE/TIM/SP/16).

For the 2000 review, county statements were received in July 2000 and a synthesis prepared by the secretariat was submitted to the Rome session (reported in FO:EFC/2000/REP). After the session, countries were invited to check the synthesis. Several countries also submitted national statements after the session. The synthesis was revised in the light of the new information, reviewed and approved for publication by the bureaux of the EFC and the Timber Committee.

The national statements in their original form, without any editing, may be consulted on the Timber Committee website at <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/welcome.htm>.

The secretariat wishes to thank the national delegations for very informative and interesting statements, which made it possible to prepare a comprehensive synthesis, as well as to the bureaux and colleagues in FAO Forestry Department who made useful comments and suggestions. However this publication is issued on the secretariat's own responsibility.

FOREST POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS IN EUROPE 1998-2000

Executive summary

In October 2000, the FAO European Forestry Commission reviewed recent trends in forest policy and institutions on the basis of national reports from 24 countries. This document synthesises these reports. The main conclusions are as follows:

- Forest policies are under intense scrutiny and being rapidly updated to take account of recent developments, inside and outside the sector; most European countries completely reviewed their forest policy legislation and institutions in the second half of the 1990s
- Increasingly, European countries are initiating national forestry programmes (nfps), with a participatory and holistic approach;
- National forest policies are being altered to take account of the results of the international forest dialogue at the global and regional levels, and of the commitments made there;
- Especially profound and rapid changes are necessary in those countries in transition, notably to manage the restitution process and to help and guide the many thousands of new, small-scale forest owners;
- Within the pan-European forestry process (Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, MCPFE), thirty-seven European countries are participating in the development and implementation of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, and have progressed to varying degrees in the adaptation of the commonly agreed upon set of criteria and indicators to national conditions and needs;
- Certification schemes are being implemented on the ground in a pragmatic way, with coexisting international (FSC and PEFC) and national systems. To avoid disruption and confusion from differing standards or techniques of forest management being called for by different certification systems, some countries have developed consensus-based national forestry standards to which all certification systems can refer;
- A major issue is the economic viability of European forest management;
- Participatory processes are being used increasingly in all parts of the forest sector.

Introduction

The FAO European Forestry Commission, at its regular sessions (every two years) reviews the state of forestry in the region, concentrating on developments for forest policy and institutions. This review was carried out by the EFC at its session at FAO HQ, Rome, in October 2000, held jointly with the ECE Timber Committee. The discussion was based on national reports, synthesised by the secretariat. The present survey contains the synthesis of the national reports, revised in the light of the discussion, and of information received after the session¹. It has been reviewed by the national delegations and approved for publication by the Executive Committee of the EFC. This survey is based on information made available by the twenty-four countries that provided national reports: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway,

¹ Most national reports were prepared in summer 2000, and often referred to events forthcoming in 2000 or 2001. In most cases, it has not been possible for the secretariat to check what has happened between the time of drafting the national reports and early 2001, when the document is being finalised. Thus formulations such as “are expected for autumn 2000” have not been modified.

Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom. The full reports are available on the Timber Committee website (<http://www.unece.org/trade/timber>).

This survey synthesises the national reports, where possible using the original wording, to avoid unnecessary distortion of the idea being expressed. It does not represent the official opinion of the EFC, its members or the secretariat.

Countries provided information on developments since 1998 in forest policies, law and institutions. Quantitative information on all aspects of the forest resource, including area and change of forest and other wooded land, growing stock, increment and fellings, biodiversity and nature conservation, carbon flows, forest condition etc. has been published recently in *Forest Resources of Europe, CIS, North America, Australia, Japan and New Zealand* (TBFRA-2000), published in May 2000 (ECE/TIM/SP/17, UN sales number E.99.II.E.36). Developments in policies and institutions before 1998 were reported to the third Ministerial Conference on Protection of Forest in Europe, held in Lisbon in June 1998.

Forest policy framework and national forest programmes

Almost all countries reported on recent developments in the forest policy framework, notably on recent statements or modifications of broad policy objectives, national debates on forest policy goals etc. as well as on national forest programmes (nfp). These statements are briefly summarised below.

All reporting countries stressed the vital necessity of sustainable forest management and the need to balance the economic, ecological and social functions of forests. Many stressed the importance of a holistic, cross-sectoral approach and linked forest policy and programmes to rural development and environmental conservation. Many further demonstrated the vitality and relevance of the global and regional forestry dialogue, by stating that national policies are explicitly linked to, or based on, the results of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF) or the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE). EU members and candidate countries frequently referred to major EU documents and stated that they are bringing national forest policy into line with broad EU objectives, as stated in the EU forest strategy and the various directives and regulations.

It is worth noting the wide difference between countries in methods of formulating forest policy, even when the content of the policies themselves is broadly similar.

- The national Strategy for Agricultural Development in **Albania** (“Green Strategy”) covers forest and pastureland (which are administered together in Albania). The Strategy was formulated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and approved by the Council of Ministers. It identifies general principles and technical perspectives as regards the conservation, management and use of forest and pastures.
- **Austria** has defined nine “forest development objectives,” based on EU rural development and agricultural policy and the EU Forest Strategy, and considering the Resolutions of the MCPFE. “Modules of resources” to achieve these objectives have been developed at the national level after widespread consultation at the national and sub-national level.
- In **Belgium**, forestry is a fully regionalised matter, which means that the three regions² are entitled to develop their own independent forest policy. The Flemish Long Term Forest plan (1996) describes the strategy for forest policy to 2100. A general policy document describes the vision and mission for forest policy in Flanders. The first step towards realisation of the strategy is formulated in the Forestry Action Plan which is being finalised and made ready for ratification by the Flemish

² Flemish Region, Walloon region and Brussels Capital Region

government. This Plan is part of the Flemish Environmental Policy Plan 1997-2001 (MINA2). In the Walloon Region a policy document, analysing strengths and weaknesses and defining objectives, has been drawn up by the Forest and Nature Division but has not yet been the subject of a consultation process. It will shortly be discussed by the Council on Forests and the Forest Sector.

- **Cyprus** has developed a National Programme for Development of the Forest Sector in a process that started in May 1998 and lasted about 18 months. The programme was based on a strategic review. The forest programme specifies, in general terms, the actions needed to implement the strategy in the next 10 years.
- The **Czech Republic** has drawn up a “Concept of forest policy” as a component of the concept for the Ministry of Agriculture in the period preceding accession to the EU. The Concept was approved by the Government in January 2000. In **Estonia** the current forest policy dates from 1997. On this basis a new ten-year development plan has been drawn up for 2001-2010. The objective of this development plan is to maximise the contribution of the forestry sector to national economic and social well-being on a sustainable basis.
- In **Finland**, forestry policy was comprehensively revised in the mid-1990s, culminating in the passing of the Forest Act and the Nature Conservation Act in 1997. One of the major starting points for the revision was the wish to bring Finnish forest policy in line with international agreements and political commitments. At present, the focus is on implementation of the new forest policy, which has gone smoothly. A new working group, appointed in 1998, is revising the Finnish national set of criteria and indicators. The new set was scheduled for finalisation in September 2000. Thirteen regional forestry programmes cover the country.
- **Germany** established, in September 1999, a process to develop a national forest programme, which will provide a comprehensive forest policy framework for ensuring sustainable forest development in the future, based on the IPF proposals. In December 1999, the Strategy for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in German forests was endorsed. It was worked out by the forest sector at federal and *Länder* levels and is supported by NGOs.
- In **Greece**, the General Secretariat for Forest and Natural Environment, the national forest service, manages six-year development programmes for carrying out forest technical work, funded by the Investment Budget and the EU.
- Since regaining independence in 1991, there have been fundamental changes in **Latvia**. The process of land reform and restitution of property rights to forestland has been almost completed, with the result that about 50% of forests are privately owned and 50% owned by the State. The forest sector industry – logging and wood-processing – is completely private. Latvian forest sector entrepreneurs have entered the European markets and acquired stable positions there. A national Forestry Policy has been developed which defines the basic principles of long term development strategies and tactics for the development of the country’s forest sector, aimed at the over-riding goal: sustainable management of forests and forest lands.
- In **Lithuania**, the Forest Law, which dates from November 1994, was updated in 1996 and 1999. A draft of a new forestry policy statement is under preparation, taking account of a review by FAO experts of Lithuania’s policy in the light of international agreements and commitments. The draft will be submitted for comment to NGOs and other interested parties, then modified and presented for public discussion. It is expected that the new policy document will be approved by the Government in 2001. Measures have also been taken to harmonise cross-sectoral policies related to forests (e.g. environment, agriculture etc.).
- In **Norway**, forest policy was revised in 1998/99. The policy was adopted by Parliament in June 1999. The process of policy revision is a continuing one, carried out by inter-ministerial committees,

with appropriate mechanisms to ensure participation. A new Forest Act is being prepared, upholding the principles of the present Act and reflecting the balance between the economic, cultural, social and environmental functions of forests.

- The State Forestry Policy of **Poland**, which was approved by the Council of Ministers in 1997, covers the period to 2030. It accounts for all key provisions of international forestry policy and all forestry reform objectives. It is in the spirit of UNCED and the pan-European process, conforms to Polish laws for other sectors and is fully consistent with the EU Forestry Strategy.
- In **Portugal**, the Forest Policy Act was passed by Parliament in 1996. Based on this is the Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Portuguese Forest (PSDPF), adopted by the Government in March 1999, which is a sectoral policy tool, setting out strategic orientations, resulting from a participatory process and linked with other planning and management tools, notably plans for other sectors. The PSDPF sets up Regional Forest Plans and Forest Management Plans (officially created in June 1999), fiscal and financial incentives for the sector, a National Plan for Forest Research and a Forest Information System.
- In **Romania**, the policy developed in 2000 through the National Forest Policy and Strategy lays down the overall goal of forest policy (“the development of the forestry sector to increase its contribution to the economic social and environmental well being of Romania based on the sustainable management of the forest resource”), and sectoral policies for silviculture/management, logging, transport and wood processing, marketing and research education and career development.
- In **Slovakia**, the Strategy and Conception of Forestry Development in Slovakia and the Principles of State Forestry Policy in Slovakia, both adopted in 1993 and intended for the transition period 1993-1996 are still in force. However, it is necessary to update the policy and legislation and bring them into line with the forestry strategy of the EU. In 1999, a draft revised policy and strategy were drawn up with the help of FAO. The Programme for Forest Development of the Slovak Republic identifies the main problems, the main tasks for the period to 2010 and specifies tasks for 2010 and 2002. The latter become obligatory for the ministry and for the stakeholders. In 2000 a proposed Concept for forest policy by 2005 was drawn up covering notably forestry strategy at the beginning of the twenty-first century, targets, policy tools, costs, resources and risks, as well as intersectoral aspects.
- In **Slovenia**, forest policy and strategy are defined in the Forest Development Programme of the Slovenia (FDPS), adopted by parliament in 1996, on the basis of a draft coordinated between government departments on the basis of a draft prepared by the Forestry Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food with participation of a wide range of stakeholders. Article 7 of the 1993 Forest act, the basis for the policy work mentioned above, stipulates that the programme should set out a national policy of close-to-nature forest management, guidelines for the conservation and development of forests and conditions for their exploitation and multiple use. The goals, objectives and guidelines of the FDPS are provided in the national report, and stress close-to-nature aspects as well as safety and health of forest workers.
- The **Spanish** Ministry of Environment, since it was founded in 1996 has been conscious of the need to update the forest law (dating from 1957), to accommodate changes in forest owners’ organisations and above all the Autonomies, which are responsible for forest issues. The Ministry has worked to create a climate of consensus. This has culminated in the approval of the Spanish Forest Strategy, which aims to create an organisational framework taking into account the general demand for economic, social and ecological functions.
- In **Sweden**, attention at present is focused on implementation of existing policy, notably through a large scale training and information campaign called “Greener Forests”, whose aim is to demonstrate

how forestry can combine high economic production with site-adapted nature conservation. Forest policy is evaluated every four years, the next time in 2001.

- The **Swiss** Forest Act of 1993 forms the basis for national forest policies, maintaining two principles accepted since 1902 – protection of the forest area and sustained yield – while adding another: the equal importance of all the functions of wood production, conservation of biological diversity, protection against natural hazards, and recreation. The Act also provides for consultation and participation and sets down minimal requirements for forest management and planning, as well as providing the framework for national funding.
- In **Turkey**, the Ministry for Forestry has carried out a Forest Sector Review, with the help of the World Bank. The objectives are to develop strategies to improve the standard of living of 7.2 million low-income forest dwellers and to foster rehabilitation of forest resources and their sustainable management. The Eighth Forest Sector Development Plan, for the period 2001-2005 is being prepared with goals, strategies and principles for the period.
- In the **United Kingdom**, forestry has become a devolved matter with the creation of the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament. A Forestry Strategy for England was published in 1998, focussing on forestry for rural development, for recreation, access and tourism, for economic regeneration and for environment and conservation. Country strategies for Scotland and Wales are being prepared.

It is clear from the above overview that the speed of change in forest policy and political attention being given to forest policy issues has not diminished over the last two years. On the contrary, most reporting countries have either recently completed a fully revised statement of national forest sector policy or are in the process of preparing such a statement.

Another striking feature is the interaction of debate and policy formulation at the national and international levels. It appears that the “processes” triggered by UNCED at the global and regional levels, including IPF/IFF and the MCPFE, have not only served to define an international consensus on the situation and needs for action, but have triggered official national responses, which might not have taken place without the stimulus of the international debate. While it is impossible to prove this assertion, it would provide, if true, a powerful justification for international activities that have been criticised in many quarters for being too slow, too abstract and not sufficiently action-oriented.

The wide diversity of approaches to formulation of forest policy is apparent from this brief survey of the main points countries made in their statements.

National forest programmes

This section focuses on one tool for forest policy formulation, endorsed by IPF/IFF, and in many cases supported by international agencies: the **national forest programme** (nfp). In Europe, formal nfp, characterized by a holistic approach and a participatory process, have in some cases replaced traditional policy formulation but, more often have been incorporated into the traditional processes.

IPF/IFF, with the help of FAO, monitors progress in implementing these recommendations, including progress in nfp. The status of those activities identified by countries as nfp (or which appear to correspond to the IPF/IFF definition) is briefly described below. This section could serve as a brief overview of the nfp process in Europe.

- In **Albania** a national forestry programme is being prepared with contributions from international development agencies, notably FAO. An ecological survey, an assessment of existing forest cover by

remote sensing and an environmental assessment have been carried out. The main lines of the proposed project are in the national report.

- **Austria** sees its nfp as a significant vehicle for guiding forest related policies, in particular the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action, at the national and sub-national level. Austria has started to establish a national report, including forest policy guidelines, identification of IPF/IFF proposals most relevant to Austria, analysis of degree of implementation and development of a framework for future reporting.
- In **Belgium**, the Long Term Forestry Plan for the Flanders region is effectively an nfp, like the forest policy document under discussion in the Walloon Region (both described above). Both take an inter-sectoral approach. The Flemish correspondent considers there is good integration and consultation mechanisms for those areas of direct importance to forestry in Flanders (e.g. environment, nature conservation, land-use management, recreation and tourism) but there are not downstream measures to promote forest industries or trade, which are the competence of a different department.
- **Cyprus** has just completed a national forest programme that was the final phase of a detailed investigation and strategic review. The review took 18 months, covers the period 2000-2010, and provides a new strategy for the forest sector development in Cyprus. It provides a flexible framework for continuous development.
- Work started in January 2000 on a ten-year Forestry Development Plan for **Estonia**. All interest groups have been informed and asked to co-operate in its preparation. The Plan should be ready by December 2000.
- In February 1998, the government of **Finland** decided to initiate the drafting of a National Forest Programme, with a wider scope than earlier programmes and specifically designed to take into account the relevant international documents and commitments. The programme was completed in 1999, although the report stressed that it should be seen as a process, subject to revision.
- **Germany** established a process to develop a national forestry programme in September 1999. It will be a comprehensive policy framework, based on the IPF proposals, and incorporating the results of a wide participatory process. It is planned to present it to the public in autumn 2000.
- Work has started on a National Forest Programme (NFP) for **Latvia**, with the support of an FAO Technical Cooperation Project. The long-term objective of the NFP is to increase the contribution of the forest sector to the socio-economic development of the country through an appropriate valuation of its current forest asset and a long-term strategy and human resources development. The expected outputs of the project are revised forest policy principles, with an updated set of objectives, taking account of the present situation, a forest sector strategy prepared in the light of the revised forest policy and legislation and directly co-ordinated with the national development strategy, and a National Forestry Programme, fully integrated with national rural development efforts.
- The Plan for the Sustainable Development of the **Portuguese** Forest sets strategic directions on the basis of a participatory process, and thus seems to have the characteristics of an nfp, although the national report does not make this explicit
- In **Romania**, the National Forest Policy and Strategy (NFPS) has been developed through an open, consultative and participatory process, involving stakeholders from all related sectors. It is a comprehensive and integrated framework for the sustainable development of the country's forest resources, with different sections covering legal and institutional framework, forest conservation, forest harvesting and non-wood products. It defines overall national policy and prioritises a series of

strategic actions to achieve policy goals, thus providing the basis for the coordinated and sustainable development of the sector.

- The **Spanish** Forest Strategy, published in January 2000 was based on a widespread two year consultative process and will be the basis of a revised Basic Forest Law and Spanish Forest Plan. The general basis of the Strategy is consolidation of public forests, liberalisation of privately owned forests sustainability of management plans and coordination between administrations.

Table 1
Tabular summary of reported national forest programmes in Europe

	Start	Finish	Title	Remarks
Albania	1995		National forestry programme	Waiting full funding. Co-operation with FAO, World Bank.
Austria	2000		National Forest Programme	Report, with "policy guidelines" and explicit comparison of Austria with IPF/IFF Proposals for Action
Cyprus	1998	2000	National Programme for Development of the Forest Sector in Cyprus	Includes cost-benefit analysis, reform of organisation and structure of the sector. Assistance from FAO.
Czech Republic		2000	Concept of Forestry Policy/ National Forestry Programme	Linked to EU accession process.
Estonia	2000		Forestry Development Plan for 2001-2010	Stakeholders involved, working groups set up
Finland	1998	1999	Finland's National Forest Programme 2010	Designed to meet new international forest policy norms. A process involving widespread participation.
Germany	1999	2000	National Forest Programme	Based on IPF Proposals as a broad inter-sectoral approach. Scientific analysis, widespread consultation.
Greece			Six-year development programme	Basis for EU funding
Latvia	2000		National Forestry Programme	Supported by FAO TCP
Lithuania	1994/96		Forestry and Wood Processing industry Development programme	Action Plan (to 2023). Links to rural development.
Norway		1999	White Paper on forest policy	Continuous process, with linkages to other sectors
Poland			Preparing to launch nfp	Forest policy approved 1997. In conformity with EU documents
Portugal		1999	Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Portuguese Forest	Result of a participatory process, linked to other sectors. Sets up Regional Forest Plans and Forest Management Plans
Spain	1997	2000	Spanish Forestry Strategy	Will be the basis of revised forest law and forest plan
Sweden			Forest Policy last evaluated 1997	Emphasis on extension ("Greener forests")
Switzerland			Under preparation	Delayed by storm ("Lothar")
Turkey	1997	2000	Forestry Master Plan 1990-2009, to be revised/widened	Forest sector review and Eighth Five-year Development Plan in place. Assistance from FAO, World Bank
United Kingdom		1994	UK Sustainable Forestry Programme, now under revision	Forestry strategies for England (done), Wales, Scotland

Legal framework

Many countries described the laws in place, and the legal basis for the forest sector. Despite the interest of this information, it was not possible even to summarise the contents of the laws here. Readers are referred to the national reports for this information.

However, the main recent changes in the legal framework (as opposed to the actual content of the laws) are briefly described below

- In **Albania**, the Forest Law was revised in 1992, at the beginning of the transition process. At present the 1996 law on transferring use and administration of forests and pasture lands to communes is under active consideration for revision. This regulation is the primary mechanism to implement the very innovative decision to hand over forest lands for the use, control and management of communes. Concern was expressed in the statement about the enforcement capacity as other agencies sometimes do not co-operate with the forest authorities.
- In **Belgium**, the Flemish Forest Law of 1990 (itself replacing the Belgian Forest Code of 1854) was amended in 1997 by the decree on Nature Conservation and the Natural Environment, instituting the Flemish Ecological Network (VEN), consultation on nature conservation issues and stronger limits on deforestation. Other developments in Flanders include a revision of the legislation on town and landscape planning (for an increase in forest area) and a new instrument to stimulate co-ordination between forest owners (public and private), and to give a juridical basis to the Flemish Forest Inventory. In the Walloon Region, there have been decrees on hunting (1994), forest access (1995), permanent forest inventory (1995 and 1997), and a new law encouraging regrouping of small private forest holdings. Finally, the 1854 Forest Code is being revised to assure the harmonious coexistence of the multiple functions of the forest.
- The Forest Law of **Cyprus** was last revised in 1999.
- In **Estonia**, the Forest Act has been in effect since 1998, and has been implemented through a number of regulations on such matters as forest monitoring and assessment, classification of biotopes, forest seeds and vegetative reproduction material etc. The Law on Protected Natural Objects will be revised in 2000.
- Forest legislation in **Finland** was completely reformed in the late 1990s with a new Forest Act (1997), the Sustainable Forestry Financing Act (1997) and the Nature Conservation Act (1997). Now the focus is on implementing the new legislation that is going smoothly. These acts and their accompanying regulations, however, set minimum requirements: a forest owner who wants to achieve both profitable timber production and good forest ecosystem management ought to manage his forests better than the law prescribes. Silvicultural recommendations have been drafted to help private owners achieve this goal
- The **Greek** Constitution protects forests, notably by prohibiting any changes in forest land use, unless in the public interest. A number of decrees translate this into practice.
- In **Latvia**, since the revision of national forest policy (including institutional reform), the forestry legislation has been overhauled: the Law on the State Forest Service has been in force since January 2000 and the new Forest Law since March 2000. The Law on Hunting, in force since March 2000, has been slightly revised to reflect institutional changes in the forest sector Authority.
- In **Lithuania**, the Forest Law was passed in 1994 and revised in 1996 and 1999. It is the basis for a number of regulations (e.g. on rules for forest harvesting and for roundwood marketing, both promulgated in 1999). The Law will probably be revised in 2000. Also relevant are the Law on

Restoration of the Right of Ownership (1991, revised 1991-97), where customary and traditional rights of forest owners have been promoted, and the Environmental Protection Law (1992, updated 1996 and 1997).

- A new Forest Act is under preparation in **Norway**. It will follow the same broad lines as the present Act but will stress the responsibility of forest owners to manage their land and take environmental considerations and international commitments fully into account.
- The **Polish** Forestry Act of 1991 was amended in 1997, to support the intention to improve environmental protection. In particular the scope of forest management was extended beyond the individual stand to the entire ecosystem. Improvements in the legal system are designed to accelerate and intensify efforts to adjust environmental protection laws to EU standards, to have a legal basis for co-operation with other sectors of the economy, and to provide a legal and financial basis for supporting costs of conserving biodiversity.
- The legal framework of the **Portuguese** forest sector was completed in June 1999 with the decree laws which created the Regional Forest Plans (RFP) and the Forest Management Plans (FMP). RFP will be drawn up for 21 regions of mainland Portugal and the FMP will regulate all forestry intervention at the management unit level. They are mandatory for State owned, State managed, and communal forests and for large private forest holdings. The EU Birds and Habitats directive was applied in Portugal, and 21% of the area of mainland Portugal was included in the Natura 2000 network. Also in 1999, a new decree established the framework for use of non-indigenous forest species, including a list of forest species that can be used in afforestation projects.
- In **Romania**, the 1962 Forest Code was revised in 1996 to take into account the transition process. Since then a number of laws have been passed, notably on afforestation of degraded lands (1999), regulation of forestry regime and management of the forest resources (1999), which enforces a legal framework for sustainable forest management, whatever the ownership form, enforcement of forest legislation (2000) and restitution of forest land to former owners (2000).
- In **Slovakia**, the urgent need for a new legal framework, is recognised and a draft has been prepared with the help of FAO. The preparation of the new act continues: it will be delivered to government and parliament in the second half of 2001.
- **Slovenian** forestry is regulated by the 1993 Forest Act, which lays down the respective rights and duties of forest owners and state services, including the requirement for a forest management plan for all forests. The Nature Protection Authority, set up by the Nature Conservation Act of 1999 is responsible for biodiversity conservation, prepares legislation for protected areas and is responsible for their management.
- Forestry in **Switzerland** is regulated at the federal level by the 1993 Forest Act, which provides, among other things, for information and participation by stakeholders, for setting minimum requirements for forest management and planning and a framework for public funding. The Swiss Confederation is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the legislation and developing national policies and strategies, while the cantons adopt executive regulations and are responsible for application in their territory.
- Two Articles in the **Turkish** Constitution of 1982 deal with forests, and the original forest law of 1924 has been frequently updated and revised. The Ministry of Forestry issues regulations and guidelines to implement these laws. Recent amendments and regulations concern national parks and protected areas, relations with forest villages (rural development issues), afforestation, etc.
- In the **United Kingdom**, forestry is regulated by the Forestry Acts of 1967 and 1979, and the Plant Health Act 1967, as well as a number of regulations. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) is also important.

It is apparent from the above overview that European countries overhaul their legal framework for forestry when necessary, notably when there are major changes outside the sector. Examples of developments which have necessitated changes in the forest law in several countries in the 1990s are:

- the transition process from a centrally planned to a market economy, notably property restitution and organising the new relationship between the state and the private forest owners,
- devolution/regionalisation of political power,
- changing environmental demands,
- a greater stress on participation in forest decision making,
- the interaction with other sectors of government and the economy (agriculture, rural development, energy etc.), and
- the need to find new ways of financing SFM now that the economic viability of forestry financed exclusively from wood sales is becoming doubtful in many regions.

Institutional framework

Countries reported on the institutional framework for their forest sector, providing, in some cases, considerable detail of the functions of the various agencies, and their relationship to each other. The main changes in recent years and significant concerns are summarized below:

- In **Albania**, there is concern about the forest service's capacity to enforce the forest laws, as there is frequently no support from other agencies, and there are sometimes conflicts with laws for other sectors, such as environment or mining. There is a need to find sufficient resources for technical training schools and to reinforce extension services. The Directorate General of Forests and Pastures, the national forest service, has been streamlined and reorganized.
- In **Austria**, the ministries of Agriculture and Forestry and of Environment have been merged to form the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, which is responsible for all aspects of forest policy issues. A contact platform has been established on international forest policy issues, involving all relevant major groups, stakeholders and NGOs.
- In **Estonia**, the state's regulation/authority functions are kept separate from the ownership and administration of the state's forests. Responsibility for forestry is with the Ministry of the Environment. The Forest Department has the main responsibility for policy, while the State Forest Management Centre acts as a profit-making organization in the administration of the state forests. There are also environment services responsible for implementing national policies at the county level, and county forest councils to co-ordinate forestry related activities. There are also private forest owners' organizations.
- In **Latvia**, there has been a complete overhaul of forest sector institutions based on the principles of separating Authority functions (regulation, supervision and support) from the management of state-owned forests, and of separating policy formulation from its implementation. The Minister responsible is the Minister for Agriculture, who co-ordinates policy with ministers responsible for rural, regional and economic development, protection of environment and international agreements. The Forest Section of the Ministry is responsible for regulation and support (extension): it is responsible for policy, legislation and the nfp, as well as international representation, and information functions. The State Forest Service is an independent state institution, under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture whose mission is to ensure implementation of the supervisory and support functions in accordance with the basic principles of the policy. It enforces legislation on forests of all ownership's, evaluates the effectiveness of legislation, informs society about the condition of the forest resource, creates conditions for long term stability, promotes private forestry and

entrepreneurship and secures forest fire prevention. The State-owned joint stock company Latvijas Valsts Meži (LVM, Latvia's State Forests) manages state owned forests, ensuring preservation and improvement of their value and earning profits for the State, while simultaneously supplying social and ecological services. Finally, the Forest Consultative Board co-ordinates the points of view of social and professional organisations on forest policies and delivers proposals to the Minister.

- In **Portugal**, there have been significant changes in the structure of the forest administration. The Directorate General of Forests (DGF) is the central body responsible for policy development, planning, studies and international affairs. The regional forest services have been transferred to the Regional Administration of Agriculture. The DGF also monitors the fulfilment of regulations within the framework of forest policy. This change aims to reinforce the support given by the administration to private forestry, which includes also decentralisation and the development of new partnerships.
- In **Romania**, the forestry institutions have been profoundly restructured. The central public authority, the Ministry of Forests, Water and Environmental Protection has been strengthened, with the setting up of the General Directorate for Forests, and seven regional inspections. The National Forest Company (RNP) has been restructured to concentrate on essential forestry activities carried out on an exclusively commercial basis. Likewise the Forest Research and Management Institute has been restructured and put on a commercial basis. Market prices and forest products exports have been liberalised, and state harvesting and processing enterprises (about 160 large scale and over 1200 small scale) have been privatised.
- In **Slovakia**, the central body for state administration of forestry and game management is the Forestry Section of the Ministry of Agriculture which deals with strategic and conceptual issues as well as the legal framework. Recently there has been a restructuring of the implementation mechanisms at the regional and local level, which are present under the Ministry of the Interior. However, it seems necessary to resort to the specialised system of state administration of forestry and game management to the Ministry of Agriculture. In June 1999, the former 6 state forest enterprises were merged into one (*Lesy Slovenskej republiky* or Forests of the Slovak Republic), with headquarters in Banská Bystrica. However, the area of forest land managed by state organisation has been decreasing. Forest management plans, drawn up by the specialised institute *Lesoprojekt Zvolen* or by private companies, are compulsory.
- In **Slovenia**, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food is responsible for forestry, for preparing forestry legislation and supervising the Slovenian Forest Service (SFS) as well as the independent Inspectorate for agriculture, forestry hunting and fishing which is responsible for supervision of the implementation of the Forest Act. The SFS is responsible for monitoring forest protection, orienting forest management and construction of forest roads, keeping records and data bases, giving specialised advice, providing reproductive material and controlling state financed work. The main responsibility of the Slovenian Forest Service is defined in the report as a guidance/counselling role, with a responsibility to monitor and control adverse effects on the forest and to ensure, along with the inspection service, the conservation and development of forest and their functions. The forest service is considered responsible, with their owners, for all forests (i.e. not only state owned forests). The Fund for Agricultural Land and Forests is responsible for ensuring the most effective management of the state forest, through concession contracts with private companies and the SFS. The Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry carries out extension work and professional training, and supports and coordinates cooperation between forestry education and research
- The **Turkish** Ministry of Forestry has four general directorates; forest (i.e. economic management), afforestation and erosion control, village and forest relations and national parks and hunting/wildlife. It has a well-established central and provincial organization.
- In the **United Kingdom**, devolution has brought about major changes. Forestry has become a devolved matter. The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food has responsibility for forestry in

England; the Scottish Executive has responsibility for forestry in Scotland and the Welsh Assembly for forestry in Wales. For matters affecting the UK as a whole, the Ministry takes the lead. The Forestry Commission and the Northern Ireland Forestry Service are the Government departments responsible for advising the UK forestry ministers on policy and implementing it. The Forestry Commission remains a Great Britain cross-border Government department serving all three countries and is able to develop policies tailored to the needs of each country.

Sustainable forest management: criteria and indicators, certification and standards

The debate on sustainable forest management (SFM) which has taken place at the national, regional and global levels over the last decade has turned around two questions:

- What is sustainable forest management and how should it be measured?
- How is one to verify and demonstrate that a particular forest is managed sustainably?

Many countries reported on developments as regards the interlinked questions of criteria and indicators (C&I), forest management standards and certification systems.

As regards criteria and indicators within the overall framework of the pan-European process:

- In **Belgium**, both the Flemish and Walloon regions are developing the capacity to collect data on indicators (based on the pan-European set) and to introduce target values to judge the effectiveness of policy measures.
- In **Finland**, a new working group was appointed in 1998 to revise the national set of C&I. In a participatory process, a large number of organizations were working together to produce a revised set by September 2000. They are used to monitor progress in implementing the various international commitments and the nfp.
- **Norway** has developed a national set of C&I, which are based on, and fully compatible with, those approved at the Lisbon Ministerial Conference. They are significant tools for policy development, policy monitoring and reporting. Norway has also developed national standards for forest operations at the management unit level. These standards form the basis for forest certification.
- C&I for SFM at the forest management unit level were developed in **Portugal**, in a first phase as a support tool for a series of pilot projects to demonstrate SFM at field level. There has been a widespread process of consultation and it is expected to release the final version in August 2000.
- **Romania** has started a process of research to adopt the 6 pan-European criteria and the associated indicators as a basis for international reporting and to develop national indicators.
- Indicators of sustainable forest management are being developed for the **United Kingdom**. The indicators will adopt the framework of the Pan European Criteria and Indicators, but will also have to address the requirements for monitoring in the UK Forestry Standard and the country Forestry Strategies. Where possible, the indicators will use the terms and definitions agreed for the Temperate & Boreal Forest Resource Assessment 2000. Consultation on the indicators will take place during 2000-01, with the aim of publishing an initial set of indicators in 2001.
- A few countries developed national forestry standards over the past two years, intended both as tools of forest policy and to integrate the national forest management practices into the international structures being set up in the context of certification systems:

- In **Estonia**, a working group was established to draft the Estonian Sustainable Forestry Management Standard, based on the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Principles and Criteria, although the intention is to apply for acceptance by both FSC and Pan-European Forestry Certification (PEFC).
- A **Romanian** Working Group for national standards for forests and forest products certification was set up in 1999.
- In **Switzerland**, associations and organizations, with the Swiss Forest Agency, defined the requirements to be met by forestry for forest certification in Switzerland. The National Standards for Forest Certification in Switzerland supplement existing provisions and should be applied in addition to legislation in force. For instance they have stricter requirements on the use of introduced species, leaving dead wood in the forest and the creation of forest reserves.
- The **UK** Forestry Standard brought together in 1998 the criteria, indicators and standards for sustainable management of forests in the UK, detailing practices for use at the national and individual forestry level, and providing an opportunity to monitor UK forests and express a vision for UK woodland in the future. It provides a basis for grant schemes, forest design plans, and research priorities.

Forest certification relates to agreed upon standards with which forest management must conform to be considered “sustainable”. Over the period in question, many countries defined their attitude to the options for forest certification which have been developing, deciding which strategy was most fitted to their position and priorities. There are however several countries which did not report any developments in the field of certification, another indication that in some parts of Europe, governments may not attach priority to this controversial topic.

- According to **Austrian** federal law concerning the certification of wood from sustainably managed sources, standards have been developed and tested in the field, and studies carried out, particularly on the chain of custody. In Austria, as a private initiative the forestry and the forest industry sector have decided to join the PEFC. The PEFC system well suits the forest ownership structure in Austria, with 80 % private owned land and a majority of small forest owners. The Austrian scheme has been established, and it is expected to have Austrian PEFC certified timber by the end of this year. Recently, there has also emerged a certification process on the basis of FSC.
- In **Belgium**, the Flemish Forest Service supports the FSC system and the *Forests and Timber* campaign of WWF_Belgium. Three forests owned by the Flemish Region are FSC certified as a pilot project. However it appears that market interest is still low and certification has not affected wood prices. In Wallonia, the forest and forest products sector has created a collective label *Bois wallon*, which, linked to the monitoring of sustainable forest management by the permanent forest inventory, guarantees indirectly to the consumer that the wood is grown sustainably. This seems a realistic alternative to certification at the level of the forest management unit or holding. The Walloon system should join the PEFC system.
- The **Estonian** Sustainable Forestry Management Standard, based on the FSC Principles and Criteria, was drawn up and reviewed. The questions of group certification and chain of custody were also analysed from an Estonian viewpoint. The intention is to apply for acceptance of this standard by FSC, and to test it in practice, as well as to make the first assessment of the PEFC scheme.
- For several years there have been active discussions of certification in **Latvia**: an FSC working group has been established, a national certification scheme has been prepared and the basic document (the FSC Latvian Forestry Certification standard) is to be confirmed. The manager of the state owned forests, LVM Limited, applied for membership of FSC and announced in 1999 its intention that 50% of state forest land would be certified in two years time. LVM Limited has started to prepare itself for SFM certification, but this requires significant resources, human and financial; foreign technical

assistance and expertise is needed by LVM and other members of the forest sector. Several preparatory activities have also been started to enable PEFC certification as soon as possible: a Latvian PEFC council has been established, a national certification scheme prepared and the basic document (the PEFC Latvian Forestry Certification standard) is to be confirmed.

- The **Lithuanian** Department of Forests and Protected Areas analysed, starting in 1997, the merits of the different certification schemes from the Lithuanian standpoint, considering the interests of all stakeholders. Since 1999, Lithuanian representatives have been participating in the PEFC process, and preparations have started to become a member of PEFC. The Department also implements certification in Lithuania: it is planned that the forests of two state forest enterprises, for a total area of 70,000 ha should be certified according to FSC principles and a certifying company has been engaged. They are expected to receive the certificates in the first half of 2001.
- In **Portugal**, two complementary approaches are being pursued: the development of a national standard and the adaptation of PEFC to national conditions. For the first approach, a technical commission has been established to develop a national standard to address issues like tracing, criteria and indicators at forest management unit level and good practice. The national standard is closely related to ISO 14001, although it cannot be considered an official adaptation thereof. A national group was also created to adapt PEFC to Portuguese conditions. The results of the above technical commission will be considered for submission to the PEFC Council as soon as they are available.
- In **Sweden**, there are two private certification initiatives and no public ones. A Swedish FSC working group was established in 1996, the standard was accepted by FSC in 1998 and at present over 9 million ha have been certified to FSC standards. The Swedish Federation of Forest Owners and the regional associations of forest owners have developed their own standards, adapted to family based forestry and they are now working together with sawmilling associations under the umbrella of PEFC. A common feature of the regional standards is that they are attached to EMAS and/or to ISO 14001. A Swedish temporary PEFC Council was established in December 1999 and made a proposal for a Swedish PEFC standard, which was submitted to the PEFC European Council for approval. The objective is to develop regional standards in accordance with the national standard. The existing standards of the forest owners associations will be attached to these standards; 953,000 ha are certified according to these standards.
- In **Switzerland** also, there are two parallel approaches, FSC and the Swiss “Q” Label, based on ISO 14001. It is planned to have the “Q” Label recognized by PEFC. The requirements for forest certification in Switzerland were defined through the national standard mentioned above. There is increasing interest in certification, and all stakeholders need clear guidelines. A presidential conference will formulate practical recommendations, based on the results of parallel certifications running in test areas. The aim is to continue to harmonise existing systems.
- The **UK** Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) was launched in June 1999. It is a voluntary scheme developed by a partnership of forestry and environmental organisations in response to growing consumer demand. The scheme is designed to provide independent assurance that wood comes from sustainably managed sources. In December 1999, the entire estate of the Forestry Commission qualified for certification under UKWAS.
- The above brief overview shows that in several western European markets, and in countries exporting to those markets, varying systems are becoming operational rather fast, and that there is often coexistence of two international certification schemes (FSC and PEFC) and/or a national system. Efforts are being made to minimise the divergence of content between the different systems, notably through the use of widely accepted national standards, emerging from participatory processes, bringing together all stakeholders (Estonia, Portugal, Switzerland, UK)

Conservation of biological diversity

As mentioned above, under policy objectives, all countries attach great importance to conservation of bio-diversity, and most report the existence or creation of a network of forest protected areas. Among other specific measures mentioned were the following:

- Identification of areas for protection under the programme Natura 2000, and various EU directives e.g. on Wild Birds (Austria, Estonia);
- Strategy to implement the Conventions on Biological Diversity (Austria, Germany, Romania, Turkey) and desertification (Turkey);
- Inventories of sites (e.g. key habitats) and other parameters of relevance to biological diversity (Austria, Latvia, Norway, Sweden);
- Environmental impact studies as part of forest strategies (Finland);
- Training and extension programmes on biodiversity (Sweden).

The international dimension in national forest policy

There is an increasingly intense interchange of ideas and commitments between the national and international levels of forest policy. It is clear from the national reports that international documents have a direct influence on national policy, even if, as is usually the case, the international texts are not of a legally binding nature. Many countries reported the setting up of special arrangements to implement the commitments they had made in international fora. The international agreements, resolutions etc. which were referred to by the reporting countries are as follows:

- UNCED and IPF/IFF
- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Convention on Desertification
- Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol
- The three pan-European Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe
- The EU Forest Strategy, and various forest related directives (EU members and candidates)
- EU regional programmes
- Natura 2000
- International Year of the Mountains

Forestry issues in countries in transition

Those reporting countries whose economies are in transition drew attention to a number of features which had to be taken into account in their forest policy and practice. Some of the most important of these are as follows:

- restitution and/or transfer of ownership either to private individuals (Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Romania) or to communes (Albania);
- need to support the private sector, by communication, training and extension;
- need to raise awareness of forest issues at the highest political levels
- negative impact of rural poverty on sustainable forest management.
- Imbalances in road infrastructure, and advanced degradation of large deforested areas (Romania).

Romania pointed out that the transition process in the forest sector (no doubt in other countries too) is strongly determined by more general transition related factors, including weak institutions, legal and fiscal system and the lack of public financing.

However, it is possible to observe increasing convergence between the pre-occupations of this group of countries and the others. In fact, many of the transition countries have highly modern and coherent forest policies, as they have been comprehensively re-examined and reviewed in the light of recent thinking.

Economic viability of forestry

A number of countries mentioned the interlinked questions of the economic viability of forestry and of compensation to forest owners for supplying non-wood benefits, such as biodiversity, recreation or landscape. Switzerland noted that because of low wood prices and high harvesting costs, and despite an improvement over the past two years, forest enterprises had a deficit of CHF 29 million in 1998, or CHF 12/m³ harvested. It also noted that the trend in Swiss forests towards older, thicker trees runs contrary to the trend of the timber market, which favours smaller trees. This could lead to many forest owners being left unable to sell their large sized timber. Their investments made over a century or more would have to be written off.

Poland made a strong statement, as follows “the biggest obstacles on the way to durable and sustainable forest management of forests lie in the realm of finance and particularly in the profitability of forest management. The economic standing of forestry in Europe has declined along with eroding profit margins of forestry companies, the lowering of social security standards, a decrease in the social status of foresters and a diminishing number of career opportunities available in forestry. Due to the meagre share forestry production has in national revenues and the state budget, forestry management is relegated to a marginal role in economic strategy planning. The significance of forestry as driver of economic growth is low (with the exception of Scandinavian countries). In fact the economic impact is not a reliable basis for building forest management’s position in the macro-economy. The significance of forestry can be seen much better from the regional perspective. At a time when developed countries cut back on public spending and reduce subsidy funds, pressures to promote non-productive functions of forests clash frequently with financial policies. Once more emphasis is placed on environmental protection and the pro-social approach; the Polish forest management is likely to see its profitability decline. As long as forestry derives most of its revenues from the sales of timber, it’s not in a position to run environmental protection programmes without external financing.”

A new law in Romania provides support for owners who do not harvest the wood of their protection forests.

The UK “has a concern about the economic viability of forestry with declining timber prices and forest profits, all of which jeopardises the outputs that forestry provides. It is believed that, besides timber and other economic outputs, forests produce a range of environmental and social outputs, which are highly valued by the public. Many of these do not have a market place, which means that forest owners do not have any financial incentive to recognise them, especially under the current financial situation. It is therefore essential that, where possible, these environmental and social outputs are valued for the development of sustainable forest management policies. It is then necessary to direct public money towards these public benefits in order for them to be delivered.”

However, **Latvia** noted that successful development of that country’s forest sector has made a significant contribution to the economic development of the country as whole, encouraging the development of connected sectors and helping employment in rural areas and in service sectors. Wood and wood products (including pulp and paper and furniture) now account for 10-12% of Latvian GDP. The Government of Latvia has decided to support investment in a world-scale pulp mill in Latvia and a new company (Baltic Pulp), jointly owned by Latvia, Södra Cell (Sweden) and Metsäliitto International (Finland) has been set up to implement the project, expected to be operational by 2005.

The topic of economic viability of forestry was mentioned by several delegations to the joint session as being of concern in their countries.

Some countries mentioned programmes to mitigate problems of the economic viability of forestry:

- **Finland's** Act on the Financing of Sustainable Forestry guarantees State subsidies for such management activities in private forests which themselves would not be profitable for the land owner, notably pre-commercial thinning. Forest owners can be provided with financial support for the maintenance of biological diversity in their forests. The forest owner can be provided with partial or total financial support for the economic losses caused by maintaining biological diversity, especially with respect to "special importance" habitats.
- In **Belgium**, Flemish forest owners who comply with the officially approved criteria for sustainable forest management can receive a financial contribution from the state, e.g. for planning, certain silvicultural activities (higher grants for indigenous and hardwood species than for softwoods), for public access and for joint planning with other holdings. Similar measures are implemented in the Walloon region.
- In **Slovenia**, although forest owners are responsible for executing all work in their forests, it is the duty of the state to ensure that all the forest work is carried out. Thus the state finances the forest service from the budget and also provides compensation for reduced yield from protective forests and forests with a special purpose, and subsidises the management of private forests, by covering a percentage of the costs for a certain number of silvicultural operations. Increased support is available if ecological and/or social functions considerably affect or determine forest management, for forest owners who work together in larger groups or for difficult natural conditions.
- The **Swiss** project VAFOR (**V**alorisation of **F**orests) aims to encourage forest owners and enterprises to develop a spirit of enterprise, notably in offering certain services against remuneration, so that the many beneficiaries of forest services, especially for recreation, sports and tourism, contribute to the costs of tending, thus providing a third source of revenue in addition to wood sales and public funds. VAFOR is an ambitious project with long term goals and cannot really expect quick results. The main difficulty is in finding appropriate products and services, developing them and selling them under market conditions.

In its discussion of this issue the joint session "noted the importance of balancing the environmental, social and economic elements of sustainable forest management. It stressed that economic viability is a key part of long-term management. This could be achieved in a number of ways, for example through public recognition of wood as an environmentally friendly raw material and the promotion of timber and non-wood forest products, the encouragement of cooperation between small-scale owners, compensation for the supply of non-marketed benefits, or various forms of incentives." (ECE/TIM/95, para. 35)

Conclusions

The main features of the situation over the past two years, as reported by countries, can be summarized as follows:

- Forest policies are under intense scrutiny and being rapidly updated to take account of recent developments, inside and outside the sector;
- Increasingly, European countries are initiating national forest programmes (nfps), with a participatory and holistic approach as defined by IPF/IFF;
- National forest policies are being altered to take account of the results of the international forest dialogue at the global and regional levels, and of the commitments made there;
- Especially profound and rapid changes are necessary in those countries in transition, notably to manage the restitution process and to help and guide the many thousands of new, small-scale forest owners;
- Within the pan-European forestry process (MCPFE), thirty-seven European countries are participating in the development and implementation of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, and have progressed to varying degrees in the adaptation of the commonly agreed upon set of criteria and indicators to national conditions and needs;
- Certification schemes are being implemented on the ground in a pragmatic way, with coexisting international (FSC and PEFC) and national systems. To avoid disruption and confusion from differing standards or techniques of forest management being called for by different certification systems, some countries have developed consensus based national forestry standards to which all certification systems can refer;
- A major issue is the economic viability of European forest management;
- Participatory processes are being used increasingly in all parts of the forest sector.

Some facts about the Timber Committee

The Timber Committee is a principal subsidiary body of the ECE (UN Economic Commission for Europe) based in Geneva. It constitutes a forum for cooperation and consultation between member countries on forestry, forest industry and forest product matters. All countries of Europe; the former USSR; United States of America, Canada and Israel are members of the ECE and participate in its work.

The ECE Timber Committee shall, within the context of sustainable development, provide member countries with the information and services needed for policy- and decision-making regarding their forest and forest industry sector ("the sector"), including the trade and use of forest products and, when appropriate, formulate recommendations addressed to member Governments and interested organizations. To this end, it shall:

1. With the active participation of member countries, undertake short-, medium- and long-term analyses of developments in, and having an impact on, the sector, including those offering possibilities for the facilitation of international trade and for enhancing the protection of the environment;
2. In support of these analyses, collect, store and disseminate statistics relating to the sector, and carry out activities to improve their quality and comparability;
3. Provide the framework for cooperation e.g. by organizing seminars, workshops and *ad hoc* meetings and setting up time-limited *ad hoc* groups, for the exchange of economic, environmental and technical information between governments and other institutions of member countries that is needed for the development and implementation of policies leading to the sustainable development of the sector and to the protection of the environment in their respective countries;
4. Carry out tasks identified by the UN/ECE or the Timber Committee as being of priority, including the facilitation of subregional cooperation and activities in support of the economies in transition of central and eastern Europe and of the countries of the region that are developing from an economic point of view;
5. It should also keep under review its structure and priorities and cooperate with other international and intergovernmental organizations active in the sector, and in particular with the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) and its European Forestry Commission and with the ILO (International Labour Organisation), in order to ensure complementarity and to avoid duplication, thereby optimizing the use of resources.

More information about the Committee's work may be obtained by writing to:

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