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Global Preparatory Meeting for the
Second Consultation on the Wood and
Wood Products Industry*

Nairobi, Kenya, 24-27 April 1990

REPORT OF THE REGIONAL MEETING FOR LATIN AMERICA IN
PREPARATION FOR THE SECOND CONSULTATION ON THE
WOOD AND WOOD PRODUCTS INDUSTRY**

Guaruja, Brazil, 4-6 December 1989

75/17

* Organized by UNIDO in co-operation with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).

** This document has not been edited.

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

1. The Regional Meeting for Latin America in Preparation for the Second Consultation on the Wood and Wood Products Industry was held in Guarujá, Brazil, from 3 to 6 December 1989.
2. Seven persons attended the meeting: four representatives of Latin American countries, two participants from Brazil and one UNIDO representative (list of participants included as annex I).
3. The meeting elected Dr. Amantino Ramos de Freitas as Chairman and Dr. Agustín Moreno, Chile, as Rapporteur.
4. The UNIDO Representative explained the origin and aims of the System of Consultations and the purpose of the meeting.
5. The meeting adopted the following agenda:
 - (1) Presentation of discussion documents on the situation of the wood industry in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Mexico;
 - (2) Discussion of the bottlenecks affecting secondary processing in the region;
 - (3) Subjects to be suggested for discussion at the Second Consultation on the Wood and Wood Products Industry;
 - (4) Consideration and approval of the report of the meeting.
6. The meeting adopted the present report at its final session on 6 December 1989.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

7. RAW MATERIAL

(a) To ensure adequate present and future raw material supply by promoting the sustainable use of forest resources and making the principles of conservation compatible with technology and economic and social development.

(b) The relevant public and private agencies should focus their activities on reforestation as a source of raw material, with the following benefits:

- High productivity;
- Uniform quality;
- Shorter transport distances;
- Ecological benefits, in particular a reduction in the greenhouse effect.

(c) With a view to increasing raw material supply, the use of less well-known species should be encouraged.

8. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PROCESSING

(a) It is necessary to effect appropriate modernization of the primary processing industry by ensuring, through technology transfer and funding, the

replacement of the present obsolete equipment by modern equipment that is relatively cheap, but far more rapid in operation and generates less waste than current equipment.

(b) To promote the establishment of scientific and technological research centres whose objectives would include:

- Development of the industrial use of less well-known species;
- Improvements in industrial processes;
- Quality control.

(c) Establishment of data banks of products generated by the secondary processing industry in order to keep entrepreneurs and consumers permanently abreast of the most recent advances in the industry.

(d) Strengthening or establishment, at existing training centres, of facilities relating to wood processing, wood technology and wood applications, so as to improve technical skills at all levels.

9. MARKETING

(a) To establish data banks on world product demand, international prices, tariff and non-tariff barriers, forms of funding, means of transport and standards and legal requirements in importing countries.

(b) To encourage promotional campaigns for tropical wood products in order to counter the damaging effects of certain "ecological" campaigns.

(c) To promote the extensive use of wood in the construction of all kinds of dwellings on the basis of the thermal and energy qualities of wood.

(d) To use the findings of research carried out on less well-known species to promote their marketing and thus reduce the pressure on well-known species and those threatened by extinction.

III. DISCUSSION

10. The participants mentioned the importance of conservation and management of forest resources in terms of sustained yield guaranteeing the supply of raw material for the industry. It was pointed out that, although the industry depended on the utilization of woodland and plantations, the importance of the industry as a forest product consumer was relatively modest, representing on average some 10-15 per cent of total forest product consumption.

11. Some participants indicated that meeting the requirements of good forest management might lead to a rise in production costs and that consumers - both domestic and international - should be prepared to cope with the increased costs. It was also suggested that, in view of present initiatives in some consuming countries aimed at imposing levies on imports of tropical products as a means of restricting the harmful effects of the dismantling of tropical forests, preference should be given to products originating from properly managed forests.

12. Some participants indicated that the impact of the cost of transporting logs and sawn timber to secondary production and consumption centres was too great. In that connection it was pointed out that, in most Latin American countries, the road

infrastructure was inadequate, maintenance was deficient and the climatic conditions rendered communications arteries impassable for a large part of the year. It was suggested that encouragement should be given to multi-modal transport systems, existing roads improved, the river transport infrastructure developed and the railway network incorporated in the long term.

13. It was stated that wood was a material requiring a small amount of energy for its processing compared with other building materials, which needed a large quantity of fuel for their production, giving rise to CO₂, sulphur and other forms of pollution in the process. The wood industry could and ought to be clean and practically self-sufficient in terms of energy through the use of residual products. It was also pointed out that wood industry residues were degradable in the more or less long term, depending on the species.

14. The participants agreed on the need to promote the establishment of Chambers of Forestry bringing together all institutions connected with forestry in discussions with governments and to establish links between such chambers within Latin America and worldwide.

15. Considering the extent of the housing shortage in Latin America and the high costs involved, it was suggested that pre-fabricated construction systems should be promoted, offering the following main advantages:

- Cheaper than conventional systems;
- Shorter construction and amortization time;
- Better thermal insulation;
- Greater useful surface area with thinner panels;
- Possibility of using wood with defects on the inside of panels.

16. Despite the acknowledged existence of standards governing wood products for use in construction in various countries, efforts should be made to introduce standards with the same level of technology in all countries and to attempt to unify existing norms in order to standardize products throughout Latin America. Such standardization would facilitate the domestic use of wood in each country and, logically, would promote exports, for which the conditions relating to dimensions, durability, appearance, etc. were of course pre-defined.

17. Technological progress in the modern world was currently so rapid that campaigns were required to publicize it. Such campaigns ought to be directed primarily at industrialists to help them take better-founded decisions regarding machinery investment. The campaigns should be designed to promote familiarity with the many modern wood products among primary users (engineers and architects) and final consumers.

18. The increased level of processing in wood-producing countries frequently made it possible to use less well-known species since, in many cases, the wood's aesthetic characteristics were less important than its mechanical properties.

19. The group concluded that it was necessary for equipment manufacturers to realise that the scale of production in Latin America and in other developing countries was lower than that in developed countries. Nevertheless, ways and means should be sought for incorporating relevant technological advances in equipment. The international funding agencies should establish appropriate credit lines to permit replacement of equipment which was, in the majority of instances, obsolete.

20. The lack of knowledge and of availability of suitable machinery at competitive prices for the production of sawn wood and other products generated high levels of waste. Mention was made of the need to develop low-waste wood-processing machinery. It was very important to establish a correlation between end-product and by-product size and quality requirements on the one hand, and the dimensions and characteristics of the logs to be extracted to yield such products on the other. In short, there should be greater integration of secondary production with timber extraction and primary production.

21. With a few exceptions, there was a shortage of suitably-trained personnel in the wood and wood products industry. The industry required greater professionalism in decision-taking at all levels, from entrepreneur to operative.

22. The participants agreed that, in many cases, enterprises failed to comply with the minimum industrial health and safety requirements. A number of experiments carried out at specialized centres providing assistance were examined, and reference was made to the usefulness of some of them, financed by contributions from workers and entrepreneurs on a private basis.

23. Efforts should be made to promote the correct use of wood preservatives in order to prevent damage to forest products by fungi and insects, with the primary aim of reducing production costs. The international dissemination of suitable chemical preservation products which were also less harmful to man, both during application and in end-use, was recommended.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Brazil

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Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Descripción de la Industria Forestal y la de Productos Derivados, con énfasis en los procesos secundarios by Mario González Rusek

La Madera y la Industria de Productos de Madera con énfasis en procesos secundarios by Arturo Hernandez d'Amato

Review of wood and wood products industry in Brazil by Reinaldo Herrero Ponce

El Sector Fabril Chileno by Agustín Moreno

Situación Actual de la Industria Maderera en el Perú by Alberto Palacios