

CEPF statement

at the Forest Europe Expert Level Meeting, 11-12 May 2016 in Bratislava

The Confederation for European Family Forestry (CEPF) expresses its gratitude for the opportunity to share our views. CEPF is the European umbrella organisation of national forest owners organisations, representing the interests of millions of private forest owners across Europe who are responsible for managing about 60% of Europe's forest area.

CEPF wishes to express its strong support to the work of FOREST EUROPE's General Coordinating Committee and especially the Slovakian secretariat. FOREST EUROPE plays a key role in placing the views of the forest sector in the international policy arena. Considering the increasing importance of forests, a holistic policy framework and strong legal reference at pan-European level, based on key principles such as the sustainable management and multifunctionality of forests, is more than ever needed.

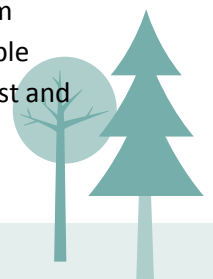
In the context of the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme to be discussed and adopted at this meeting, CEPF wishes to highlight our continued support for a Pan European Legally Binding Agreement. We do hope that the signatories remain fully dedicated to further developing and adopting an LBA in the near future. Giving up or missing this opportunity is not an option. Constructively moving forward towards a future LBA would provide a strong political signal.

Having an LBA in the near future would greatly support the European forest sector in enhancing its political integrity and consistency. We therefore call for a firm commitment and engagement from all responsible ministers and governments to provide their strong leadership and guidance towards a future forest convention at pan-European level.

Further, CEPF believes that promoting and applying the pan-European criteria and indicators for SFM in all forest-related assessments should be at the core of FOREST EUROPE. Otherwise the forest sector is likely to risk losing its holistic approach and integrity on SFM, as multiple other policy sectors and industry-led initiatives increasingly touch upon and have started to define forest sustainability from their particular perspective.

For the forest sector, FOREST EUROPE serves as a strong reference as it significantly helps to better promote and further develop the concept of sustainable forest management (SFM) and multifunctional forestry.

Generating, maintaining and enhancing green jobs and income, rural development, long-term economic viability and competitiveness of our sector in Europe require an active and sustainable management of our forests and a stronger promotion of the use of wood. This requires robust and supportive policy conditions.





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Furthermore, enhancing the role of SFM in a green economy is of crucial importance for the European forest sector. FOREST EUROPE ought to better promote and politically strengthen the role and contributions of Europe's forest sector to the Bioeconomy, and promote the multiple benefits of SFM in this context, including the positive role of SFM for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

SFM offers huge potential to adapt to climate change and to mitigate climate change by maintaining or enhancing carbon sequestration in growing forests and providing forest products that store carbon and replace and substitute carbon-intensive materials and energy.

In the context of the review of the FOREST EUROPE process to be discussed at this meeting, CEPF supports and wishes to actively contribute to this review process.

We fully support a strong future FOREST EUROPE. Only an invigorated FOREST EUROPE process can move forward with meaningful actions in response to the current and new opportunities and challenges.

We believe that strengthening the FOREST EUROPE process (with a view to achieve its increased effectiveness and recognition at pan-European and global levels) will ensure and further develop the sustainable management of European forests and their multi-purpose use for the benefit of everyone.

CEPF welcomes a review of the FOREST EUROPE structure, procedures and work modalities, reflecting on the lessons learnt, making it more effective and meaningful for the future. In this context, CEPF strongly recommends also to assess the European institutional arrangement on forests in general, which also includes the set-up and work of FAO, UNECE and others.

A mutual understanding of and a trustful dialogue between various actors on SFM, both on the ground and at high political level, is more important than ever. The biggest merit of the Forest Europe process is its transparent and constructive participatory dialogue, which currently involves 46 European governments and the European Commission as well as numerous forest sector stakeholders and other international organizations.

European forest owners and managers have always supported the process and have contributed with their highly valuable practical experience and knowledge, which come from the practical implementation of SFM. An open and transparent dialogue is the essential guiding principle of this process, ensuring that those who own and actually take care of the forest in Europe remain well involved in all future debates and decisions.

Reinforcing its commitment, Europe's forest owners maintain their full political support and remain a constructive partner to FOREST EUROPE, encouraging the Signatories to lead this process to a more concrete and ambitious level. CEPF calls for a strengthened FOREST EUROPE to respond adequately to today's and tomorrow's challenges as well as opportunities for our sector, aiming to maintain and enhance a productive and sustainable forest management in Europe.



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