



## **A joint contribution of European Forest Owners**

**to the**

### **first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe**

27 February 2012

At the Forest Europe Ministerial Conference in Oslo in June 2011, the signatory parties adopted a mandate for negotiating a Legally Binding Agreement (LBA) on Forests in Europe including the establishment of an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC). The first session of the INC takes place from 27<sup>th</sup> of February to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2012 in Vienna, Austria.

The undersigned associations, representing and managing the vast majority of Europe's forests, herewith express their support and like to highlight the following aspects to be taken into account when negotiating and drafting a LBA on Forests in Europe.

#### **Forest owners' strong commitment to LBA**

Forest owners in Europe highly welcome the Oslo decision towards a LBA. For a prosperous and vital future of forests and forestry, it is decisive to strengthen the forest and forest based sector in the globally competing spheres with other sector policies. The visibility and the political recognition of the unique role of our sector can clearly be strengthened in the long term by a feasible LBA that meets with legal instruments covering other sector policies. To manage the current challenges, an early availability of the LBA is needed. Therefore, the timetable agreed on in the Oslo decision should be maintained. In the past 21 years, the pan-European region has created a comprehensive opus of political commitments and implemented various measures on the ground. The ambition to capture the holistic nature of forestry within a LBA at a pan-European level can be achieved only by well integrating and making best use of the already existing results of the FOREST EUROPE process.

#### **Credible and powerful involvement of stakeholders**

Over the last decades a trustful dialog developed between governmental and stakeholder representatives, combining governance and practical know-how and experience in a powerful forum. This direct and open dialog should be still the guiding principle within the FOREST EUROPE and the LBA process. The participation and involvement of those who are responsible for the implementation of policy decisions is crucial and therefore shall be facilitated at its best.

#### **Sustainable forest management to strengthen Europe's green economy**

Green economy can be implemented only with managed natural resources, allowing legal and sustainable harvesting and ensuring sufficient raw material supply, both to the industry and other users. The economic functions of forests are crucial in fostering a green economy. The generation and maintenance of green jobs and income, rural development, long term economic viability and competitiveness of our sector, request an active and sustainable management of our forests, and a stronger promotion of the use of wood. In addition, the increased supply from productive plantations will help to meet the increasing demands on timber supply. The targets of the EU 2020 Strategy cannot be achieved without an increased production and use of biomass. Harnessing its long experience in sustainable forest management and industrial wood processing, Europe's forest-based sector is committed to act as a main pillar of the green economy and to ensure the maximum exploitation of all its advantages regarding its potential for green

jobs and livelihoods, resource and energy efficiency as well as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Multifunctional use of forests to ensure multiple benefits for the society**

Europe's forests serve multiple and interrelated social, economic and environmental functions, often at the same time and place. Safeguarding such a high multi-functionality requires sound management and policy decision-making approaches as well as a vital economy. Sustainable forest management provides a solid framework, which balance various interests.

### **Capitalizing on all benefits of the forest-based sector in mitigating climate change**

Forests are a relevant part of the solution to cope with climate change, but only if they are sustainably managed and have competitive downstream industries to refine wood to a variety of products. Our sector offers a significant contribution to Europe's greenhouse gas mitigation strategy, which includes the storage of carbon in forest ecosystems, in harvested wood products, and the substitution of fossil based products and energy. The main elements to implement Europe's strategy for climate change mitigation are the increase of forest growth and wood increment through afforestation, active and sustainable forest management, and the increased production and use of wood, maximizing the substitution effects.

### **Biodiversity and protective functions - key elements in sustainable forest management**

Forests in Europe have been managed to serve the needs of the society. Consequently, they are altered and fragmented. Forest management practice in Europe has changed towards a greater integration of biodiversity and landscape aspects during the last decades. There is an increasing use of natural regeneration and mixed tree species, and forest area, growing stock and the amount dead wood per hectare are growing. Forest and biodiversity protection has to be handled within a multifunctional approach integrating production and conservation functions, as defined by FOREST EUROPE and the concept of sustainable forest management. New voluntary forest protection tools have proved to be efficient and have managed to include forest owners in forest biodiversity conservation in a positive way. Forests deliver multiple ecosystem services to the society, contributing to the economic development and today's wellbeing of people in Europe. Enhancing valuing and marketing of forest ecosystem services, such as biodiversity, water purification and management as well as various protective functions of forests could provide a significant impetus towards a multiple and balanced use of Europe's forest resources.

### **Broad participation by all signatories needed**

A key strength of the FOREST EUROPE process is its pan-European scope, receiving the commitment of 46 member countries. It is a policy process for the sustainable management of the continent's forests, with a global meaning. Founded in the early 90s, the continuous co-operation of multiple actors has led to several positive achievements such as the definition, the guidelines and the criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. The collaboration of governments and stakeholders responsible for forests in Europe has been of great economic, environmental and social importance at national and international level. The decision from Oslo 2011, to go ahead with the negotiations towards a LBA on Forests represents a major step towards creating the necessary structure for a coherent approach at pan-European level. Focusing on European needs, conditions and potentials in a global context, we strive for a viable instrument to foster sustainable delivery of multiple benefits from the forest sector to Europe's environment, economy and society. Therefore forest owners call for a wide contribution and clear commitment from all FOREST EUROPE signatory parties and observers in this process.

Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF)  
Union of Foresters of Southern Europe (USSE)  
European Farmers and European Agri-Cooperatives (Copa-Cogeca)  
European Landowners' Organization (ELO)  
European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR)  
European Federation of Municipal Forest Owners (FECOF)