



GENERAL DECLARATION

The Signatory States and the European Community,

- A. Recalling the First Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Strasbourg in 1990, where ministers agreed that close cooperation between the Signatory States for the protection and sustainable management of forests was necessary, that common objectives and principles, including that of conservation, should be progressively implemented at the scientific and technical level, and that the efforts of international organisations with similar objectives should be stimulated,
- B. Appreciating the importance of the follow-up work carried out since the Conference in 1990 and taking note of the need to continue to develop further the cooperation between European states,
- C. Considering that the countries of Europe are responsible for the stewardship of approximately one quarter of the world's forests, the production of wood from which is and will remain an essential function, and that the increasing demands for non-wood goods and services that are made on the European forests should be met in a manner that is consistent with their sustainable management and conservation and appropriate enhancement of their biodiversity,
- D. Appreciating the role of the Helsinki Conference and its Resolutions for the long-term prospects for forestry, so that it may better contribute to national and regional objectives with respect to the rural sector, to the environment and to economic growth, trade and sustainable development in all European countries,
- E. Taking into account the difficult economic situation faced by the forestry sector, including some forest industries, of certain European countries,
- F. Concerned with the threat to the health of European forests from air pollution, fires, pests, diseases, game, storms and receding of ground water tables, which stresses the need for further control or protection,

- G. Aware of the limited resources currently available to combat the decline of forests and forest lands and to implement sustainable forest management in European countries with economies in transition,
- H. Aware of the further contribution that the forestry sector could make to the mitigation of climate change and also that the process of such change might require a degree of adaptation through forest management so that forests can be maintained on a sustainable basis,
- I. Recalling the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, and reaffirming the need to have regard to the commitments contained in the Helsinki and Sofia protocols linked to this convention,
- J. Recalling that the Signatory States and the European Community participated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro and that they signed the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and that by their adoption of Agenda 21 and the non-legally binding authoritative statement¹ of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests at that Conference, and by their support for the establishment of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, the Signatory States and the European Community demonstrate their will to promote the incorporation of the Statement of Forest Principles in the implementation of Agenda 21, in particular, in the context of the review of the implementation of Chapter 11 (Combating deforestation),
- K. Affirming their intention to keep the Statement of Forest Principles under assessment for its adequacy with regard to further international cooperation on forest issues,
- L. Stressing that the conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity is an essential element of sustainable management of all kinds of forests and forest ecosystems, and that therefore Resolutions H1 and H2 should be implemented in an integrated manner that is reflected in national guidelines and local technical solutions,
- M. Recognising the valuable work already carried out by international organisations and institutions on the implementation of the Strasbourg Resolutions thereby putting special emphasis on European forests,
- N. Acknowledging the desirability of enabling participation by local communities, forest owners and Non-Governmental Organisations in the formulation and implementation of forest policies and programmes, and

¹ Hereafter referred to as the Statement of Forest Principles

- O. Considering that each nation, while its separate identity must be respected, should assume its share of the responsibility to all European countries as regards the future of forests, and recognising the need for *follow-up* action to be coordinated in order better to ensure that progress is made towards fulfilling the commitments entered into by the Parties concerned;

declare their intention to:

1. Collaborate in the collection of data and the production of periodic reports on progress towards achieving the protection and sustainable management of forests in Europe,
2. Stimulate and promote cooperation and, if necessary, coordination of actions facilitating the adjustment of the forestry sectors in those European countries with economies in transition,
3. Take action through research to prepare the European forestry sector for a long-term process of mitigation of, and to explore, where appropriate, possibilities for adaptation to, climate change,
4. Stimulate and promote, without delay, the implementation of the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as they apply to the forestry sector, and of the Statement of Forest Principles in the European context and conditions,
5. Participate in, and promote, international activities towards a global convention on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, and
6. Implement the Resolutions of this Conference, by continuing, enhancing and improving the coordinated follow-up initiated in Strasbourg in 1990, building on the experience gained from this process and making use of existing institutions and mechanisms where this is appropriate and feasible, in accordance with the following principles:
 - 6.1. In the same spirit as that which presided over the conference proposal first made jointly by the French and Finnish and then shared by the Finnish and Portuguese Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry, further Ministerial Conferences could be convened as and when these are considered necessary by a sufficient number of Signatory States in the light of progress made towards fulfilment of the commitments entered into by them and of work carried out within the international bodies mentioned below. The chairmanship will be assumed by two participants, one of whom will have been co-chairman of the preceding Conference, during which the other will have declared candidacy for chairmanship. The host country or organisations will be in charge of the secretariat,

- 6.2. The follow-up of the Resolutions adopted at the preceding Conference will be guided by the two participants which assumed the co-chairmanship of the Conference,
- 6.3. The follow-up will also be included in the agenda of each Conference, as well as new proposals for joint action that may interest several of the participating countries put forward on the initiative of one or several ministers. Each proposal examined would be open for signature by those countries interested in joint action in the field in question, and
- 6.4. The proposals examined should be supported by expert research and consideration carried out in a spirit of openness, in diverse international bodies such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and in particular its Regional Forestry Commissions, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Council of Europe, the working groups of the European Community, and, *inter alia*, such non-governmental organisations as the International Union of the Forestry Research Organizations, the European Environment Agency, Greenpeace International, the World Conservation Union and the World Wide Fund for Nature.