



GENERAL DECLARATION

We, the Ministers responsible for Forests, at the Third Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Lisbon, 2-4 of June 1998, recalling the forest-related decisions and agreements of UNCED¹, UNGASS² and XI World Forestry Congress as well as the provisions of the United Nations Conventions, CBD³, FCCC⁴ and CCD⁵; recognising the progress and achievements made in the implementation of the commitments of the Strasbourg and Helsinki Ministerial Conferences; and being aware of the many challenges, opportunities as well as threats related to forests and sustainable forest management, share the following Vision:

In the 21st century, the European forest sector, while respecting the social, economic, environmental and cultural functions of forests, will optimise its contribution to the sustainable development of society, especially to the development of rural areas, the provision of renewable resources and the protection of the global and local environment.

Society, understanding the multiple roles of forests and recognising the importance of the conservation and sustainable management of forests, will support a sound development of the forest sector by providing conducive regulatory, institutional, economic and social frameworks for practising sustainable forest management, taking informed decisions on the best possible use of wood and non-wood forest products and services, and reducing existing strains on forest health and vitality.

An effective partnership between society and the forest sector will be strengthened, recognising the role of forests as a key renewable resource, the responsibility of forest owners in their sustainable management, and the responsibility of Europe in demonstrating the integration of all forest functions and in the innovative production and use of wood and non-wood forest products and services.

¹ UNCED: United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

² UNGASS: United Nations General Assembly Special Session

³ CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

⁴ UN/FCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The heritage of healthy and biologically diverse forests for future generations, the positive contribution to the global carbon and hydrological cycles, the protection of soil and water resources, the protection of population and infrastructures against natural hazards, the creation of income and employment particularly in rural areas and the excellence for providing recreational and cultural values for all people, are characteristics associated with forests on which generations of forest owners and society in general have built and will continue to build present and future values.

In the spirit of the above vision, we declare our commitment to :

1. Enhance the social and economic elements of sustainable forest management and strengthen the links between the forest sector and society by increasing dialogue and mutual understanding on sustainable forest management and the role of forests and forestry. Develop to their full value the potential contributions from the forest sector to rural development, employment, environment and to overall sustainable development of society by implementing the Resolution L1, "People, Forests and Forestry – Enhancement of the Socio-Economic Aspects of Sustainable Forest Management".
2. Further promote sustainable forest management contributing, *inter alia*, to the conservation of biological diversity, to the mitigation of the negative effects of air pollution and climatic change, and to the combat of the desertification, by:
 - a) Adopting the six Pan-European criteria for sustainable forest management, endorsing, implementing, while continually improving the Pan-European indicators for sustainable forest management and endorsing the voluntary "Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management", by implementing the Resolution L2, 'Pan-European Criteria and Indicators and Operational Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management';
 - b) Collaborating with the Ministerial Process "Environment for Europe", especially through endorsing the "Work-Programme on the Conservation and Enhancement of Biological and Landscape Diversity in Forest Ecosystems 1997-2000", promoting its implementation and future revision, in line of resolution H2⁶ and the proposals for action agreed at the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Forests;
 - c) Taking action to stimulate and promote the sound use of wood and other forest based products as environmentally friendly and renewable materials;
 - d) Evaluating the role of forest ecosystems to the mitigation of climatic change, in line with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as a carbon

⁵ CCD: Convention to Combat Desertification

⁶ H2: Helsinki Resolution 2 "General Guidelines for the Conservation of the Biodiversity of European Forests"

sink and reservoir, combined with growing use of long life-cycle wood products and enhancing the multiple contributions of forest ecosystems to the conservation and enrichment of soils and for the regulation of water cycles.

3. Take national as well as co-operative actions towards the implementation of the decisions of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) concerning the proposals for action agreed at the *ad-hoc* Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and contributing to the work of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests under the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD/IFF).
4. Continue to share the results obtained in the Pan-European Process with all interested parties and in all important international *fora*, within and outside the United Nations system, and thereby contributing positively with our experience and achievements to promote sustainable forest management at all levels, to build consensus on forest policy issues and to the implementation of the important forest related political commitments and agreements.
5. Develop a programme of work to implement the decisions of this Conference and to reinforce the implementation of previous commitments made at Strasbourg and Helsinki Ministerial Conferences, in collaboration with international bodies and organisations, in particular FAO⁷ European Forestry Commission, UN/ECE⁸ Timber Committee, UNEP⁹, ILO¹⁰, NGO's¹¹ and other relevant stakeholders. This programme will be based on scientific and technical co-operation in Europe, providing a dynamic approach to problem solving in European forestry.
6. Pursue within the spirit that presided Strasbourg and Helsinki Ministerial Conferences, reaffirming the principles agreed for the implementation of the decisions taken by these Conferences and continuation of the Ministerial Process. Further Conferences should be convened when considered necessary by a sufficient number of Signatory States and progress in implementing commitments has been made at national and regional levels.
7. Actively work towards consensus building on the need and possible elements of a global legally binding instrument on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests within the work of UNCSD/IFF, recalling our firm commitment to such an instrument.

⁷ FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

⁸ UN/ECE: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

⁹ UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

¹⁰ ILO: International Labour Organisation

¹¹ NGO's: Non-Governmental Organisations