



PRESS RELEASE

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European Forests Provide Global Benefits

Climate change mitigation and adaptation, reversing forest degradation and loss, and biodiversity conservation are major topics at the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF8), 20 April-1 May 2009, in New York, USA. The European concept of sustainable forest management plays a key role, capturing the multiple functions and objectives of forests. This is based on the principles developed by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE). The MCPFE provides a regional policy framework for forests and forestry in Europe. Europe's forests represent 25 percent of the world's forest resources and are increasing. The importance of the pan-European region for forestry and sustainable development at the global level is clearly shown in a report produced by European forest entities as a contribution to the current UNFF deliberations.

The report is a result of cooperation between regional organisations in Europe and presents a summary of pan-European achievements, major developments, challenges and plans for future actions for sustainable forest management in relation to issues that will be addressed at UNFF8. It has been jointly prepared by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), the UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission (UNECE/FAO), the European Forest Institute (EFI), and the Environment for Europe/Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (Efe/PEBLDS).

The report underlines the commitments of the 46 MCPFE member countries and the European Community to promote effective implementation of sustainable forest management and to contribute to the achievement of the Four Global Objectives on Forests, as well as to the implementation of the Non-legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests (NLBI) and the UNFF Multi Year Programme of Work for 2007 – 2015. The MCPFE aims to contribute to the work of the UNFF through activities included in the MCPFE Work Programme, said Arne Ivar Sletnes, Head of the MCPFE Liaison Unit Oslo during the panel discussion on regional cooperation at UNFF8 on 21 April in New York.

Regional cooperation for sustainable development

The MCPFE has been important for Europe, where forests now cover more than 40 percent of the land area. Reaching a common understanding of what sustainable forest management means has been an important part of the collaboration between European forest ministers in the MCPFE. They have developed common principles, criteria and guidelines for sustainable management of forest resources. This has established a solid ground for growth and diversity in today's forests. The MCPFE is of great economic, environmental and social importance at the national and international level.

Europe's forests represent 25 percent of the world's forest resources and are rapidly increasing. Since 1990, the forest area has increased by 13 million hectares - about the area of Greece - and the forest volume by 360 million cubic metres.

Strengthen international coordination and collaboration

Many sectors, such as forestry, agriculture, water, environment and energy, as well as international multilateral environmental processes and agreements, such as the UNFF, UN Climate Convention (UNFCCC), UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), address similar issues, face similar challenges and have broadly similar objectives. In order to increase effectiveness and efficiency and optimise the contribution of the sectors to the benefit of society and the environment, there is a need for increased collaboration, coordination and coherence, Mr Sletnes said.

The UNFF should identify the key elements and specific contributions of sustainable forest management vis-à-vis challenges and demands of other sectors. Good governance and secure land tenure as preconditions for sustainable forest management should be central in the work of the UNFF. In the process of the UN Climate Convention, the UNFF should promote the integration of sustainable forest management and tools to implement it, as well as measures included in the NLBI. The UNFF should strengthen its cooperation with the above-mentioned Rio conventions in order to develop practical tools such as joint work plans.

Background information:

The MCPFE

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) is the pan-European policy process for the sustainable management of the continent's forests. It develops common rules for its 46 member countries and the European Community on how to protect and sustainably manage forests. Founded in 1990, a continuous process has led to achievements such as the Sustainable Forest Management Principles, which are now being applied to 95% of Europe's forests. High-priority topics of the MCPFE are the elaboration of principles for sustainable production of bio-energy and biofuel from forests, and to enhance the role of forests in mitigating climate change, securing water supplies and protecting against droughts and floods. These are highly topical issues on the political agenda in Europe. Other important tasks are to develop a framework for future forest collaboration and to explore the possibilities for a legally binding instrument on forests in Europe. Norway currently holds the chairmanship of the MCPFE.

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