



MCPFE - Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe

PRESS RELEASE

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Sustainable Forest Management increasingly important for Climate-Change Mitigation

Expert-Level Meeting of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) highlights crucial role of European Forests

FOREST EUROPE: New brand name for the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE)

FOREST EUROPE, previously known as MCPFE, has underscored the crucial role of Europe's forests, particularly as a mitigating factor in climate change, during its Expert Level Meeting (November 24-25). The meeting also emphasised the importance of protecting and enhancing the full range of goods and services associated with the continent's forests. FOREST EUROPE's policies and tools protect and sustainably manage Europe's forests and provide a healthy basis for biodiversity, plants and natural products. A legally binding agreement on forests in Europe is considered as one option for strengthening cooperation on forests throughout Europe.

The Expert Level Meeting also decided that the political process, until now known as the MCPFE, should adopt the new brand name of "FOREST EUROPE". Processes and policies within the ministerial cooperation are still to be operated under the official name of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

FOREST EUROPE recognises the important role that Europe's vast forests play when it comes to climate change and constantly identifies and works on appropriate solutions. Healthy forests play a multifunctional role in nature and society and act as huge facilities for the storage of carbon. Forest biomass carbon reserves are huge and increasing. Currently some 53 gigatonnes of carbon are stored in forest biomass, an increase of 2 billion tonnes since 1990. Further substantial amounts of carbon are stored in forest litter and soils while wood products continue to store carbon throughout their life time. Wood is also an important source of renewable energy and an effective substitute for energy-intensive materials with high greenhouse-gas emissions.

"Sustainable Forest Management is an important source for the sufficient and sustainable supply of timber products, renewable energy, climate- change mitigation, biodiversity and good-quality fresh water in Europe and globally. We have to be aware that forests are an important source of renewable raw- material supply and for a new green economy throughout Europe", says Arne Ivar Sletnes, Head of the MCPFE Liaison Unit Oslo after the Expert Level Meeting.

Legally binding agreement on European forests: an opportunity to strengthen policy

The just concluded Expert Level Meeting resulted in a consensus among almost 70 participants from 28 signatory countries, the European Commission and 19 international observer organisations that developing a legally binding agreement on Europe's forests is an important option for strengthening the policy framework in Europe. The meeting resolved to clarify certain aspects, which will be presented to the Ministerial Conference in Oslo in 2011 so that a decision by ministers can be reached about commencing negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe. This move by the Expert Level Meeting underlines that the sustainable development for forests is vital for the well-being of society and calls for robust political solutions, effective means and a strengthened policy framework throughout Europe.

Background information:

FOREST EUROPE/MCPFE – The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe

FOREST EUROPE is the pan-European policy process for the sustainable management of the continent's forests. It develops common strategies for its 46 member countries and the European Union on how to protect and sustainably manage forests. Founded in 1990, the continuous co-operation of FOREST EUROPE has led to achievements such as the guidelines and criteria for sustainable forest management.

High-priority topics of FOREST EUROPE are to strengthen the role of forests in mitigating climate change, to secure the supply of good-quality fresh water, enhance and preserve forest biodiversity and provide forest products. 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 agreement on forests in Europe. Norway currently holds the chairmanship of FOREST EUROPE.

For further information, please contact:

MCPFE Liaison Unit Oslo

Kristin Dawes, Communications and Public Affairs

Mobile +47 941 49 351

e-mail: kristin.dawes@mcpfe.org

www.mcpfe.org