

PRESS RELEASE

Geneva, 14 December 2010

FOREST EUROPE Experts meet in Geneva to fine-tune plans for Ministerial Conference in Oslo 2011

Representatives from FOREST EUROPE's signatory countries are meeting in Geneva, Switzerland on 14-15 December 2010 to discuss issues that will be raised at the FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe scheduled for 14-16 June 2011 in Oslo, Norway. The ministers responsible for forests in Europe will take political decisions on the sustainable development of forests to safeguard their vital environmental and societal benefits. FOREST EUROPE is the pan-European policy process for the sustainable management of the continent's forests.

The Expert Meeting represents a major step forward in the process of preparing the FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference Oslo 2011 where important ministerial-level policy decisions will be taken concerning the future and protection of Europe's forests. Experts at the meeting will discuss the conference issues and guide how to further prepare for the commitments to be made at the Ministerial Conference. The meeting will be attended by around 100 representatives from 37 FOREST EUROPE countries as well as 13 observer organisations.

What will happen at the Ministerial Conference

The FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference next June in Oslo, is planned at a time when society is expressing widespread concerns that can be directly related to forests, says Arne Ivar Sletnes, Head of FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit Oslo. Impacts of climate change on forests, protection of biodiversity, water supply, provision of renewable raw material and energy, minimising risks from storms, floods, wildfires and droughts and protection against natural hazards are all on the political agenda in Europe and globally. The conference is expected to respond to these challenges by deciding on ways to strengthen the contribution of forests in mitigating climate change and as a natural protective environment for biodiversity, the protection of water resources and the provision of renewable forest products, Sletnes says. Ministers are expected to adopt a common vision, strategic goals and specific targets for forests in Europe. The conference will also address ways to strengthen cooperation in Europe, with the view to enhancing the role of sustainable forest management concerning the delivery of goods and services to society as well as contributing to achievement of international objectives. One possibility is to open negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.

The Ministerial Conference will also table the State of Europe's Forests 2011 report, which will provide a comprehensive picture of the status of forests and trends in sustainable forest management in Europe. The report will be a significant basis for the discussions at the conference.

International Year of Forests 2011

The FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference on 14-16 June 2011 in Oslo, Norway, will be a major European contribution to celebrate and highlight the importance of forests in the International Year of Forests. The overall objective of the United Nations initiative is to raise awareness about the need to strengthen the sustainable management, conservation and

sustainable development of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations. The International Year of Forests will be launched at the Ninth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), which takes place on 24 January to 4 February 2011 in New York, USA.

Follow the road to the Ministerial Conference Oslo 2011 via our website www.foresteurope.org

Background information:

FOREST EUROPE – 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 through FOREST EUROPE has led to achievements such as the guidelines and criteria for sustainable forest management.

High-priorities for FOREST EUROPE are to strengthen the role of forests in mitigating climate change, to secure the supply of good-quality fresh water, to enhance and preserve forest biodiversity, and to provide renewable forest products. Other important tasks are to develop a framework for future political collaboration and to prepare options for decision by ministers on a possible legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.

Norway currently holds the chairmanship of FOREST EUROPE and will convene the next Ministerial Conference on 14-16 June 2011.

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