



PRESS RELEASE

Oslo, 20 May 2011

FOREST EUROPE and the International Day for Biological Diversity on 22 May 2011

FOREST EUROPE, the pan-European policy process for the sustainable management of Europe's forests on occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity on May 22 underlines that its work pays a major role in preserving diversity. Forests are the most species-rich of all terrestrial ecosystems and provide essential benefits to society. In Europe, forest management practices increasingly promote conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the policies and tools of FOREST EUROPE play an important part in combating global biodiversity loss.

Forest biodiversity, both rich and complex, provides many vital services to human beings. The value of forests goes far beyond the source of timber; it directly contributes to the health and wellbeing of humankind and nature. Healthy forests help to regulate local temperatures, protect fresh water, act as carbon sinks and mitigate climate change. Forests also play important economic, social and cultural roles in the lives of many people, especially those of indigenous communities. In addition to forests providing significant environmental, economical and social benefits, forests also provide employment for around 4 million people in forestry and forest-based enterprises in Europe.

The importance of maintaining biodiversity

"Maintaining biodiversity of Europe's forests depends on sound forest management", says Arne Ivar Sletnes, Head of the FOREST EUROPE Liaison Unit in Oslo. The on-going collaboration between Europe's ministers responsible for forests within FOREST EUROPE has resulted in a common understanding of sustainable forest management. Participating countries have agreed on a joint definition of sustainable forest management to ensure that forests can perform their vital ecological, economic and social functions in perpetuity.

The greatest threats to biodiversity

Globally, forest biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate because of other needs of societies. The conversion of forests into agricultural land, overgrazing, unsustainable management, introduction of invasive alien species, infrastructure development, mining and oil exploitation, man-made fires, pollution and climate change are all having negative impacts on forest biodiversity. Another important policy area for FOREST EUROPE that has a direct bearing on biodiversity is forest fire prevention. Forest fires are a devastating factor connected to climate change, which can cause great harm to biodiversity. For this reason, the policy co-operation works on innovative strategies, best practice, policy instruments and recommendations for forest fire prevention.

"FOREST EUROPE has contributed to improving forest governance in the whole European region through developing the concept of sustainable forest management and implementation tools for Europe", Mr Sletnes says. With the aim of strengthening forest law enforcement, FOREST EUROPE has facilitated a scientific analysis of information about illegal harvesting and related trade, and convened a workshop on combating illegal harvesting and related trade.

What FOREST EUROPE does to promote biodiversity

FOREST EUROPE has developed common principles, criteria and guidelines for sustainable forest management in the pan-European region. Political commitments and concrete actions have established solid ground for growth and diversity in today's forests. Forests cover 44 per cent of



Europe's land area and they continue to expand. Europe's forests represent 25 per cent of global forest resources.

Since it was first convened, FOREST EUROPE has hosted a series of Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe and much progress has been made finding a common policy voice and appropriate action to recognise Europe's forests as a vital shared resource, not only among the signatory countries but also as a global resource. Norway, which currently holds the chairmanship of FOREST EUROPE will convene the next Ministerial Conference on 14-16 June 2011 in Oslo. It is expected that ministers in Oslo will adopt [European Forests 2020](#) where new targets and strategic goals including biodiversity are proposed.

The FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference also represents a major European contribution to celebrate and highlight the importance of forests in the International Year of Forests 2011.

- For more information about the FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference Oslo 2011 visit www.foresteurope.org/conference2011.
- For more information about FOREST EUROPE visit www.foresteurope.org.
- For further information about the International Year of Forests, visit www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011.

About 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 participating 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, indicators and criteria for sustainable forest management.

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 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.

For further information, please contact:

FOREST EUROPE
Liaison Unit Oslo
Kristin Dawes, Head of Communications and Public Affairs
Tel. + 47 64 94 89 32
Mobile: + 47 941 49 351
e-mail: kristin.dawes@foresteurope.org