



## **PRESS RELEASE**

Oslo, 16 June 2011

### **FOREST EUROPE: Ministers launch negotiations for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe European 2020 Targets set for protection and sustainable management of forests**

The health and sustainability of Europe's forests play an essential role in solving challenges like climate change, biodiversity protection and fresh water. Their vitality is also crucial to foster a green economy both in Europe and globally. Protection and sustainable management of Europe's forests require a stable and efficient platform for coherent policy development and implementation. Therefore, European ministers responsible for forests made an historical decision yesterday to launch negotiations for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe. They also adopted European 2020 Targets for forests. This far-reaching political step was taken at the FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, which takes place from 14-16 June in Oslo, Norway.

“The decision by ministers to go ahead with the negotiations towards a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests represents a major step towards creating the necessary structure for a coherent approach to the continent's forests,” said the Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food, Mr Lars Peder Brekk, chair of the FOREST EUROPE process. “A strengthened political cooperation in Europe will be vital to achieve a balanced and stable continuity of all environmental, economic and social forest functions and contribute to the achievement of international agreed objectives.”

As part of the future FOREST EUROPE strategy, ministers agreed on European 2020 Targets for forests. This decision comprises strategic goals, measurable targets and priority actions at national and international level to enhance sustainable forest management. It also prepares the ground for increased recognition of the role of forests and their sustainable management in a future, sustainable, low carbon economy.

The decisions taken by the ministers will further enhance Europe's concrete contribution to the International Year of Forests 2011, and highlight the pivotal role of forests for human well-being.

At the Ministerial Conference, Spain took over the chairmanship from Norway.

The conference in Oslo was attended by ministers and high-level representatives from 42 FOREST EUROPE countries. 6 observer countries from outside Europe and 29 international organisations including environmental and social NGOs, forest owners' associations, the forest industry and intergovernmental organisations participated as observers.

- For more information about the FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference Oslo 2011 visit [www.foresteuropa.org/conference2011](http://www.foresteuropa.org/conference2011).
- For more information about FOREST EUROPE visit [www.foresteuropa.org](http://www.foresteuropa.org).
- For further information about the International Year of Forests, visit [www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011](http://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 cooperation of FOREST EUROPE has led to achievements, such as the guidelines, indicators and criteria for sustainable forest management. In total, 52 countries outside Europe and international organisations actively contribute to the work of FOREST EUROPE as observers.

As a priority, FOREST EUROPE focuses on strengthening the role of forests in mitigating climate change, enhancing and preserving forest biodiversity, securing the supply of good-quality fresh water, and providing 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 has had the chairmanship in FOREST EUROPE from 2008 and hosts the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe on 14-16 June 2011 in Oslo.

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