Draft Ministerial Documents for the 7th Madrid FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference

Draft Ministerial Document 1

Note:

2015 will be an important year for the future forest policy cooperation at global level. At least four global processes will have significant impact on forests policies. The first one is the UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris, the second is the development of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) for the post-2015 development agenda, the third the UNCCD COP 12 in Ankara and the fourth is the review and decision on the future of the IAF (International Arrangement on Forests) at UNFF11.

The Review of the MCPFE 2009 pointed out the need to reach out to other sectors, to establish contact with other sectors both at regional and global level and having more visible links to global processes.

Forests are important for sustainable development. Forests play an important role in the sustainable development and well-being of the European society. Sustainably managed forests have the potential to contribute substantially to generation of jobs and income, in particular in rural areas. However, the economic viability of the forest and forest industries sector in Europe has been of concern for some time. The recent global economic crisis has affected whole forest based sector and reduced investments in forest management. A new momentum is needed.

Forests are important for climate change. The expanding forest area in Europe provides considerable carbon storage, capacity for sequestration and potential for substituting fossil energy and as a source of renewable material. Forests are a key factor in the global greenhouse gas balance. Between 2005 and 2010, about 870 million tonnes of CO2 have been removed annually from the atmosphere by photosynthesis and tree biomass growth in the European countries. This corresponds to about 10 % of the CO2 emissions in 2008 in Europe. Further substantial amounts of carbon are stored in forest litter and soils, as well as in forest products. Biomass from forests is by far the most important renewable energy source in Europe.

On this basis, the ministers at the 7th Ministerial Conference could aim at positioning the European forest policy response/approach to these global challenges, notably forest and climate change and sustainable development.
The following elements for a draft document for the ministerial conference are proposed:

**Title:** European forests at the global agenda/
European forests and the world/
European forests and its global role/
25 years working together to sustainably manage our forests

We, the Ministers responsible for Forests, at the Seventh Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Madrid on 20-21 October,

1. REITERATING the vision that all European forests are vital, productive and multifunctional.

2. RECALLING the mission of FOREST EUROPE to enhance the cooperation on forest policies in Europe under the leadership of ministers, and to secure and promote sustainable forest management with the aim of maintaining the multiple functions of forests crucial to society.

3. ACKNOWLEDGING that sustainable forest management has served as framework concept that works and whose implementation has restored the forest in Europe and contribute substantively to address global and regional challenges, notably climate change and social and economic development.

4. REAFFIRMING that forests are important for sustainable development and TAKING NOTE of the important role that forests play in the well-being of the European society.

5. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the work undertaken at the global level concerning forests and sustainable forest management, climate change, biodiversity, desertification as well as sustainable development that might have significant impact on forests related policies.

6. EMPHASIZING the need for increasing mitigation and adaptation efforts in combatting climate change and its consequences.

7. RECOGNISING that European forests are vital in combating climate change and that adaptation of forests to climate change will ensure a sustained mitigation effect and TAKING NOTE that the expanding forest area as well as sustainably managed forests in Europe provides sequestration and carbon storage in forest biomass and soils, as well as in forest products.

8. RECOGNISING that biomass from forests is by far the most important renewable energy source in Europe.
9. HIGHLIGHTING the protective role of forests and tree cover for preventing land degradation and desertification by stabilizing soils, reducing water and wind erosion, and maintaining water and nutrient cycling in soils.

10. TAKING NOTE of the recent findings of the State of Europe’s Forests 2015 report (to be developed taking into account the main findings of the SoEF 2015 once the report is finalized)

11. TAKING NOTE of the progress made on the achievement of G&2020 T (to be developed with the main findings of the Midterm evaluation of Oslo Goals and Targets once the report is finished)\(^1\).

12. ACKNOWLEDGING the achievements of FOREST EUROPE in its 25 years of existence and EMPHASIZING the status of FOREST EUROPE as the high political level process for forests in Europe that has achieved the establishment of SFM in Europe.

13. REAFFIRMING the role of the forests in a transition to a green economy as sustainably managed forests contribute to the emerging green economy by improving human well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

14. RECOGNISING that management practices and regimes must respond to increasing temperatures, more extreme events, including storms, fires, droughts, disease, and insects and that forest must be actively managed to protect the multifunctionality of their ecosystems as well as increase their productivity and services in the context of a rapidly changing environment.

As representatives of the Signatories of FOREST EUROPE, we commit ourselves to:

Addressing global challenges at the regional level

15. Raise awareness of the importance of forests in the post-2015 development agenda for the road towards sustainable development, and in particular their contribution to the achievement of several of the sustainable development goals and targets to achieve sustainable development. (to be further developed taking into account the progress made in this process)

16. Further promote the role of forests and sustainable forest management in combating the negative effects of climate change through both mitigation and adaptation measures.

\(^1\) In brackets and italics there are some reflections and explanations regarding the specific bullet point
17. Ensure through the sustainable forest management the adaptation of forests to climate change, as well as optimise the contribution of forests and the forest sector to climate change mitigation.

18. Use the FOREST EUROPE policy instruments for reducing emissions through land use, land-use change and forestry activities (LULUCF), as well as reduced deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD+).

19. Promote the use of sustainable forest management tools developed by FOREST EUROPE as a basis for further implementation of sustainable forest management in the future climate change regime.

20. Promote the role of sustainable forest management and forest ecosystem restoration in achieving a land degradation neutral in the context of sustainable development.

21. Ensure the sustainable use of goods and services from forest ecosystems and the development of agroforestry systems that have the potential to make the rural population less vulnerable to the potential impacts of desertification and land degradation.

22. Monitor and report the achievements on the implementation of the goals and 2020 targets.

23. Increase the efforts to raise awareness on the multifunctionality of forests and the benefits they offer to society, as well as to increase the efforts on communicating the role of sustainable forest management in managing and protecting forests in Europe.

24. Work on a further approach and openness to other related sectors such as climate change, biodiversity, desertification, and other areas as energy, rural development which have impact the forest sector, in order to build bridges and synergies with other processes and organizations.

**Actions**

25. Welcome the agreement at UNFF11 on the future International Arrangement on Forests and take measures for a regional follow-up to the decisions of the Forum. *(to be further developed taking into account the main outcomes of UNFF11)*

26. Further develop and update policies and tools for sustainable forest management in order to adapt them to the changing circumstances and to make them useful to address new challenges in the pan-European region, as well as global challenges.

27. Endorse the updated set of indicators for sustainable forest management and encourage FOREST EUROPE to continue developing the tools to implement sustainable forest management and to communicate to other relevant sectors the value of sustainable forest management and its tools.