Possible Structure of the Draft Ministerial Documents for the 7th Madrid FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference

Draft Ministerial Document 3
Protection of forests in a changing environment

The document is based on discussions at the RTM on topics and the ELM January 2015, on the Concept Notes sent to FOREST EUROPE focal points and on their inputs so far received.

This document is developed by the FOREST EUROPE General Coordinating Committee, GCC, for consideration by the Drafting Meeting on 25-27 March 2015.

Note:

FOREST EUROPE has since its inception worked on the protection the long-term capacity of forests and forest ecosystems to provide multiple goods and services of forests through its sustainable management.

The frequency and the severity of disturbances striking European forests (a changing climate, the pressure of a growing population, land-use changes, and natural hazards such as erosion, forest fires, desertification, and damage caused by pests or pathogenic organisms, among others) and its transboundary character represent an increasing threat to forest resources and led to an urge of taking action.

These impacts as well as gradual ecosystem changes require measures to ensure forests adaptation. Impact on societal benefits, including recreation, water security and supply, and provision of renewable energy depend on securing provisions of those forest services.

Forest management practices require a broadened scope in order to handle those new challenges, for example controlling damage risk and responding to it, or comprehensive and improved forest monitoring for better information on the forest status. Possible climate change impacts call for better and more precise information on forests regarding e.g. carbon data and other aspects of forest status and trends. Changes in the land use and their impact on forests and sustainable forest management due to e.g. increased demand for renewable energy are inter-linked to forest governance challenges (e.g. society participation in decision making, actively and effectively shaping policies on emerging secular issues, as well as local-global connectivity).
A possible response could focus on necessary adaptations in forest management to changed climatic conditions, including threats of pests and diseases, and catastrophic events like forest fires or floods. In addition, this topic could encompass activities focused on assessment of impacts of climate change on forests and vulnerability of forests in changing environmental conditions. Thus, knowledge base would be provided/improved to be able to adapt forests to climate change in order to ensure multiple forest functions and lasting provision of goods and services, including protection of biodiversity in forests.

Recent developments on international fora and the work by FOREST EUROPE throughout the last 25 years, generate a need and give the opportunity to reaffirm the meaning and significance of the protection of forests in the forest sector and to emphasize its importance as an integral part of sustainable forest management as defined in the Resolution H1 of FOREST EUROPE taking into consideration all the challenges ahead.

The following elements for a draft document for the ministerial conference are proposed:

DRAFT MADRID MINISTERIAL RESOLUTION

Protection of forests in a changing environment

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

1. RECALLING and BUILDING ON Strasbourg resolution 1, “European Network of Permanent Sample Plots for Monitoring of Forest Ecosystems”, Strasbourg resolution 3 “Decentralized European data bank on forest fires”, Strasbourg resolution 4 “Adapting the management of mountain forests to new environmental conditions”, Helsinki resolution 4 “Strategies for a process of long term adaptation of forests in Europe to climate change”, Vienna resolution 5 “Climate Change and Sustainable Forest Management in Europe”, Warsaw resolution 2 “Forests and water” and the Oslo Ministerial Decision “European Forests 2020”.

2. RECALLING that sustainable forest management integrates the protection of the long-term capacity of forests and forest ecosystems to provide multiple goods and services.

3. RECALLING that sustainably managed forests are more resilient.

4. AWARE of the pressure of a growing population, a changing climate, land-use changes, natural hazards such as erosion, forest fires, desertification, and damage caused by pests or pathogenic organisms, among others, that represent an increasing threat of transboundary character to forest resources.
5. **REAFFIRMING** the need of strengthening cooperation in the protection of the European forests given the transboundary nature of the current threats.

6. **RECOGNIZING** the protective function of forests as well as the need to protect forests ecosystems so they can fulfil such function.

7. **TAKING NOTE** of the on-going work on forest protection and risk management carried out by international organizations and processes.

8. **TAKING NOTE** that recent developments on international fora and the work by FOREST EUROPE throughout the last 25 years generate a need and give the opportunity to reaffirm the meaning and significance of the protection of forests in the forest sector.

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

**I. Enhancing the protection of forests**

9. Develop a definition / concept of Forest Protection to emphasize its importance as an integral part of sustainable forest management taking into consideration all challenges ahead.

10. Increase the work on the adaptation of forests and forest management to prevent and mitigate damages caused by changing climate conditions at local and regional scale in order to secure that European forests are healthy and resilient to natural hazards and protected against human-induced threats maintaining their productive and protective functions.

11. Strengthen and raise awareness of the role of sustainable forest management in protecting forests against threats and making them more resilient.

12. Exchange of experiences on restoration/rehabilitation of degraded forests caused by the harmful biotic and abiotic agents.

13. Promote national implementation of strategies and guidelines for dynamic conservation and appropriate use of forest genetic resources under changing climate conditions.

**II. Strengthening the cooperation in the pan-European region:**

14. Exchange of information on management experiences in maintaining productive and protective functions of forests, taking stock of the particular experiences and solutions under different climatic conditions.
15. Reinforce the collaboration with the neighbor countries in the region on the prevention and fight against forest fires, wind storms, floods, avalanches, the spread of diseases, pests, as well as handling invasive species, and combat desertification, erosion, natural hazards and any other threat of transboundary character.

III. Stressing the role of forests helping other sectors to adapt to climate change

16. Raise awareness on the contribution of the protective functions of forests to the adaptation of other sector to climate change, through among others the protection of watersheds, soils, human infrastructures, and the biodiversity of ecosystems.