

**Joint statement by the United Nations Economic
Commission for Europe (UNECE), Food and Agricultural
Organization Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
(FAO-REU)
and FOREST EUROPE**

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The United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2020 encourages regional and sub-regional processes and bodies to build and strengthen synergies between the Strategic Plan and their policies and programmes. The involvement of regional organizations and processes has always been crucial to translate global messages into regional and national action. The UNECE, FAO REU , and FOREST EUROPE would like to stress the importance of longstanding partnerships in the Pan-European region, which strengthen technical and policy work on forests in the region.

Partnerships in the region are not a novelty. In 1947, at an international meeting in Mariánské Lázně in the former Czechoslovakia, the UNECE Timber Committee (now called Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry) and the FAO European Forestry Commission were established and tasked with mobilizing wood for the post war reconstruction as well as to coordinate and support national efforts to improve the state of forests in Europe. North America and the former Soviet Union were also represented and participated in the cooperation. The work of the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC) evolved through the years from mobilizing wood for Europe's reconstruction, and assisting to correct centuries of misuse of forestlands, to ensuring the provision of many other goods and services from the forests.

The UNECE and FAO REU are proud to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the UNECE and FAO partnership to the benefit of the Pan-European forests this year, a partnership that has contributed to promote and enhance sustainable forest management in the region. Allow us to remind you of two important events this year during which we will celebrate 70 years of cooperation on forests and 'delivering as one'.

The first event will take place in Mariánské Lázně (Czechia), in the same venue where 70 years ago the first international timber conference gave birth to the related cooperation between UNECE and FAO in the region. At this meeting, experts will discuss challenges related to certification in the region, and a High Level Panel will look into addressing the challenges of forests in the region in the decades ahead. The second event is Las2017 (Las meaning forest in Polish) the next joint meeting of the COFFI and EFC, to take place in Warsaw, Poland, from 9 to 13 October 2017. The meeting will agree on the 2018-2021 integrated programme of work of COFFI and EFC in the region, and we trust the programme will make a significant contribution to the implementation of the UN strategic plan on forests.

We are also proud that this partnership on forests in the region has extended, over the last 25 years, to include cooperation with FOREST EUROPE. The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, also known as FOREST EUROPE, represents a pan-European, high-level voluntary platform for forest policy dialogue and cooperation. 47 signatories (46 countries and the European Union) have made a range of political commitments at seven ministerial conferences held to date. The mission of FOREST EUROPE is to enhance the cooperation on forest policies under the leadership of ministers, and secure and promote sustainable forest management with the aim of maintaining the multiple functions of forests crucial to society.

FOREST EUROPE has been recognized for its pioneering role and contributions to the concept of Sustainable Forest Management. The Pan European Criteria and Indicators provide a key tool in monitoring, assessing, and promoting Sustainable Forest Management by using a total of 34 quantitative indicators and 11 qualitative indicators. Other key recognized achievements, which were agreed upon and brought into practice in the very diverse conditions that are characteristic of Europe, include the Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management and the Pan-European Approach to National Forest Programmes. To date, 32 countries have a national forest programme in place, while national forest strategies exist in practically all FOREST EUROPE countries.

UNECE, FAO REU and FOREST EUROPE are working together on the implementation of their ambitious programmes of work to further enhance cooperation and to provide a stronger framework for regional cooperation in the Pan-European region. There are several activities developed jointly, however we would like to recall in particular the State of Europe's Forests reports that contribute to a better understanding of the situation of the region's forests at all levels. The State of Europe's Forests Report offers a comprehensive overview of European forests, their status, trends and insights into Sustainable Forest Management in Europe. It serves as a basis for discussions and decision-making on future opportunities, challenges and associated political responses. The State of Europe's Forests is produced by FOREST EUROPE, UNECE and FAO ahead of each ministerial conference.

The UNECE, FAO REU and FOREST EUROPE are also working together on the development of tools for sustainable forest management and forest reporting. Moreover, expert groups are working together to develop recommendations and guidelines on green forest jobs, adaptation of

forests to climate change and making known the value of forests. The policy dialogue at the next Ministerial Conference in Bratislava Slovakia in 2020 will take account of the outcomes of all this preparatory work that is being jointly undertaken.

Working in partnership requires coordination, participation of all actors, and frequent consultation. The UNECE, FAO REU and FOREST EUROPE have committed to this spirit of cooperation in order to better serve member States that are also signatories to the ministerial commitments, using complementary strengths and bringing national experts together. We do hope this partnership would be appreciated as a good example of commitment to strengthening the regional dimension of sustainable development, towards the full implementation of SDG 15 for the sustainable management of forests and beyond.

The UNECE, FAO REU and Forest Europe stand ready to support the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan on Forests, and we look forward to your suggestions and advice in this regard.