



**Statement by the FOREST EUROPE - Liaison Unit Bratislava on the
Implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030
at the thirteenth session of the UNFF,
7-11 May 2018, UNHQ New York**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the European region forests cover 33% of the total land area and the area of forests has been steadily expanding over the last 25 years. This positive trend in Europe reflects the overall development of society, but also results from the ongoing efforts to manage forests in a way which achieves balance of economic, environmental and social functions, which forests fulfil for the benefit of present and future generations.

The concept of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in Europe has been adopted and promoted through the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, also known as FOREST EUROPE. At the seven ministerial conferences held to date, 47 signatories have made a range of political commitments towards strengthening SFM.

Liaison Unit Bratislava (LUB) on behalf of FOREST EUROPE would like to express its readiness to support the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and with this statement would like to illustrate how FOREST EUROPE's activities contribute to achieving the Global Forest Goals as well as Sustainable Development Goals.

Contribution of SFM to a green economy and bio-based low carbon economy was highlighted by the ministers responsible for forests in Europe at the Ministerial Conference in Madrid. In this context, the work of the FOREST EUROPE Expert Group on green jobs addresses innovative approaches to overcome the sector's workforce issues, such as efforts towards gender equality or promotion of new decent work opportunities. Recruiting the next generation of foresters, making forest sector more appealing to the young generation, providing role models for girls by female foresters, could be steps towards strengthening the social aspects of forest sector workforce as well as improve diversity in the sector.

The importance of circular economy and bioeconomy concepts in the current policy agenda in Europe is growing in order to green our current economy and build more sustainable production and consumption patterns. Wood from sustainably managed forests can significantly contribute to the development in this direction. This also brings opportunities for the forest sector itself – enhancing its long-term competitiveness, creating new forest-based value chains and thus also providing new employment.

Through these activities, implementation of the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme seeks to contribute to the joint efforts of policy-makers, researchers and other stakeholders to mainstream use of wood and innovative wood-based products to other sectors and industries and thus contribute to the implementation of Global Forest Goals specifically 2, 3 and 4 and also number of SDGs, mainly SDG 8, but also SDG 4, 5, 11 and 12.

Besides the encouraging the use of wood and other forest products from sustainable sources, issues of forest ecosystem services play an equally important role in the implementation of the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme. Although the importance of numerous non-marketed forest ecosystem services to human society has many ecological, socio-cultural and economic dimensions, expressing the value of forest ecosystem services in monetary units is an important tool for policy makers. FOREST EUROPE Expert Group on FES aims at sharing experience and formulating recommendations for policy makers related to the valuation of FES and the broader implementation of payment mechanisms in the pan-European region.

FOREST EUROPE pays special attention to the promotion of benefits and impacts of forests for human health and well-being as well as to raising these issues in the policy agenda in Europe. The potential of forests and green spaces in enhancing human health, especially in urban areas, has been recently broadly recognized in Europe. Cooperation with partners from other sectors makes these positive health effects more visible and relevant to society living in cities. This working areas is fully aligned with the main topic of the International Day of Forests 2018 and contribute to SDG 3 and SDG 11.

With reference to SDG 13 as well as SDG 15, we would like to underline that FOREST EUROPE signatories also call for intensifying the work on the adaptation of forests and forest management to climate change to prevent and mitigate damage caused by changing conditions and to improve resilience to natural hazards and protection against man-induced threats. Ongoing survey among European countries will take stock of adaptation measures at a national level and will facilitate formulation of the recommendations for the integration of adaptation measures into SFM in the region. Since agroforestry presents, in many parts of Europe, a promising approach to climate change adaptation increasing resilience at the landscape level, contributing to rehabilitation of degraded land while providing livelihood and food security for people, this topic received due attention among FOREST EUROPE signatories.

Mr. Chairman, at the 6th Ministerial Conference held in Oslo in 2011, FOREST EUROPE signatories agreed on “*Goals and 2020 Targets for European Forests*”, which represent commitments of European countries to sustainable forest management at the regional level. Reporting on these pan-European goals and targets is now integrated into the ongoing pan-European monitoring and reporting. The descriptive part of the pan-European reporting will focus on SFM measures and actions at the national level, thus showcasing activities which may trigger the voluntary national contributions towards achieving the Global Forest Goals and Targets of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests.