



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Minister of Agriculture and Rural  
Development of the Slovak Republic  
Gabriela Matečná

Bratislava, 24 November 2017  
No.: 1810/2017-100

**Subject: The State of Europe's Forests 2020 Report**

Dear Executive Secretary,

As a Co-chairperson of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe (the process known as FOREST EUROPE), I have the honour to communicate this letter on behalf of the General Coordinating Committee (Slovak Republic, Spain, Germany, Turkey, and Sweden), the body that steers this pan-European ministerial process.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge and welcome that the Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section (Joint Section) expressed its willingness to cooperate with FOREST EUROPE in the preparation and publishing of the next State of Europe's Forests Report 2020 for the 8th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (the Report). As you know, the elaboration of this report follows a mandate given by European ministers responsible for forests. The 2020 report will be the fifth one (previous reports in 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015). Since the first report, it has been a collaborative effort of FOREST EUROPE with UNECE and FAO. Following this good practice, we have stressed that FOREST EUROPE would like to collaborate again with the Joint Section to prepare the next report in mutual cooperation.

The copyright of the report should, in our view, reflect that both the Joint Section, representing UNECE and FAO, and the FOREST EUROPE – Liaison Unit Bratislava contribute to the report's preparation and should therefore be held jointly. If such an arrangement is not possible - as the Publication Board of the United Nations suggests - we would like to follow the practice of the previous editions of the State of Europe's Forests Report. They have also been prepared jointly by FOREST EUROPE – a respective Liaison Unit and the Joint Section and the copyright has been vested in the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (FOREST EUROPE).

I appreciate the proposal for the contribution of the Joint Section in gathering data for the preparation of the next Report in line with the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work 2018- 2021. But it also needs to be taken into account that the Liaison Unit Bratislava - in accordance with the mandate given by the FOREST EUROPE Work Programme adopted by Signatories at the Expert Level Meeting in May 2016 - has so far taken the leading role, conducted all the preparatory work and fully managed the process of its preparation. FOREST EUROPE is also expected to provide the largest share of necessary personnel capacities and financial resources required for the preparation and finalization of the Report.

Under such an arrangement and exposure of FOREST EUROPE, the request communicated by the Joint Section to fully acquire the copyright to the resulting work, is in contrary to the previous practice between FOREST EUROPE and UNECE, and in addition, it would not reflect the fair allocation of the result of the work to be undertaken and resources (human and financial) to be provided by the Liaison Unit Bratislava and the Joint Section.

I would therefore like to propose re-examining the position taken by the Publication Board of the United Nations in relation to the joint copyright and investigate other alternatives available to us to correctly reflect the shared effort of FOREST EUROPE – the Liaison Unit Bratislava and the Joint Section in preparation of the Report. In this context, regarding the option of full United Nations copyright, we would appreciate a clarification of the consequences as regards burden-sharing, including financial aspects, in such an arrangement.

Reporting on forests and sustainable forest management (SFM) is a regular activity within the FOREST EUROPE process lasting more than 20 years and the Report is a reference source of information on the state of forests and trends in sustainable forest management in the region and a base for further analyses, strategic planning and decision making at regional as well as national level. It is prepared for signatory countries with a significant contribution of national correspondents as well as other independent experts or experts from other international organisations. The Report constitutes an excellent tool how to further advance SFM in Europe and promote and communicate the contribution of European forests to well-being of the society, which is something we see as our shared task and responsibility.

In the light of the time pressure which we are facing in preparing the next report, I would appreciate this important issue to be jointly and openly discussed and prepared by all partners for future reports. If substantial changes were to be made to the arrangements concerning this important FOREST EUROPE Report, such as the transfer of the full copyright to the United Nations, a decision would need to be taken by all FOREST EUROPE Signatories. Such a decision would need to be thoroughly prepared taking all aspects and future consequences into account. The discussion during the upcoming Expert Level Meeting (28-29 November 2017, Bratislava) is expected to provide further input regarding the issue.

In any case, I would like to express our willingness to investigate possible compromise solutions in the further discussion with UNECE and FAO.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long, sweeping tail that curves downwards and to the right.

Ms. Olga Algayerová  
Executive Secretary  
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe  
Geneva

Cc:

H. E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Ms. Ludmila Marušáková – Head of the Liaison Unit Bratislava, FOREST EUROPE