FOREST EUROPE develops common strategies for its 46 participating countries and the European Union on how to protect and sustainably manage forests. It aims at maximising the contribution of Europe’s forests to the ecological, social and economic well-being of the continent and across the globe.

The pan-European policies and tools for sustainable forest management

FOREST EUROPE, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, provides a regional policy framework for forests and forestry in Europe. It is a high-level policy process, involving 46 European countries and the European Union as signatories and more than forty organisations and countries from other continents as observers. Work started in 1990, and the Sixth Ministerial Conference will be convened on 14-16 June 2011 in Oslo, Norway.

Background and introduction
The pan-European policies and tools for sustainable forest management were developed in a transparent way, with broad participation from signatory countries and observer organisations throughout the European region. The policies and tools represent consensus within the pan-European process. They form a useful reference for national and global dialogue on forests, and they can contribute to the promotion of sustainable management of all types of forests globally.

Guidelines for sustainable forest management and for conservation of biological diversity
FOREST EUROPE agreed on two Resolutions on ‘General guidelines for sustainable forest management’ and ‘General guidelines for conservation of biological diversity of European forests’ in Helsinki in 1993. Also, a joint definition of sustainable forest management in the Pan-European region was agreed by European ministers responsible for forests in 1993 (Helsinki Resolution 1: General Guidelines for the sustainable management of forests in Europe, 1993. Pdf download www.foresteurope.org/HelsinkiResolution1). This concept has been further developed through later commitments, resolutions and declarations of the Ministerial Conferences, dealing with all dimension of sustainable forest management.

Criteria and Indicators
FOREST EUROPE was one of the first regional policy processes to develop and endorse criteria and indicators that facilitate the evaluation of progress towards sustainable forest management. The criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management were adopted by the ministers in Lisbon (1998), and further improved and endorsed in Vienna (2003) as ‘Improved Pan-European Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management’ (pdf download www.foresteurope.org/Vienna_Improved_Indicators). The six Pan-European criteria for sustainable forest management are:

1. Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles;
2. Maintenance of forest ecosystems’ health and vitality;
3. Maintenance and encouragement of productive functions of forests (wood and non-wood);
4. Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity in forest ecosystems;
5. Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of protective functions in forest management (notably soil and water); and
6. Maintenance of other socio-economic functions and conditions.
The criteria and indicators describe the different aspects of sustainable forest management in Europe. Similar criteria and indicators have been developed in other regional and international processes and they all have a close relationship to the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management, agreed by the United Nations Forum on Forests.

**The Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management**

The Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management, endorsed at Lisbon Ministerial Conference (1998) were elaborated to further promote sustainable forest management in Europe by translating international commitments down to the level of forest management planning and practices (pdf download [www.foresteurope.org/Lisbon Resolution 1.2](http://www.foresteurope.org/Lisbon Resolution 1.2)). They form a common framework of recommendations that can complement national and/or regional instruments for sustainable forest management. They contribute to improved communication, awareness building and implementation of appropriate action at the practical level for sustainable forest management.

**Pan-European approach to National Forest Programmes**

The Pan-European approach to National Forest Programmes, adopted at the Vienna Ministerial Conference (2003), was elaborated to promote sustainable forest management in Europe by translating international commitments. The approach constitutes a participatory, holistic, inter-sectoral and iterative process of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at national and/or sub-national level. Based on national sovereignty and country leadership, and on long-term, high-level political commitment, the National Forest Programmes aim to further improve sustainable forest management, and to contribute to sustainable development.

**Pan-European Guidelines for Afforestation and Reforestation**

FOREST EUROPE, in co-operation with the Environment for Europe/Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, has developed the Pan-European Guidelines for Afforestation and Reforestation, with a special focus on the provisions of the UNFCCC. The Guidelines, agreed in 2008, recognise the role of sustainable forest management in climate change mitigation. They form a set of recommendations for voluntary use and have been developed for national authorities as well as for other relevant bodies and stakeholders involved in respective afforestation and reforestation programmes and projects.

**Responding to new challenges**

Sustainable forest management is a dynamic and evolving concept that should adapt and develop in response to changing circumstances and new demands. New developments calling for political responses are discussed in preparation for the Sixth Ministerial Conference, to be held in 2011.

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**FOREST EUROPE - The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe**

FOREST EUROPE is the pan-European policy process for the sustainable management of the continent’s forests. It develops common strategies for its 46 participating countries and the European Union on how to protect and sustainably manage forests. More than 40 international organisations and countries from other regions are observers. Founded in 1990, the continuous cooperation of FOREST EUROPE has led to achievements such as the guidelines and criteria for sustainable forest management. High-priority topics are to strengthen the role of forests in mitigating climate change, to secure the supply of good-quality fresh water, enhance and preserve forest biodiversity and provide forest products. Other important tasks are to develop a framework for future forest collaboration and to explore the possibilities for a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe. Norway currently holds the chairmanship of FOREST EUROPE until the next Ministerial Conference, which will be held on 14-16 June 2011 in Oslo, Norway.

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