

Ministerial Roundtable 2: Sustainable forest management – our joint answer to the vision of sustainable development

Thursday 15 April 2021, 9:35 – 14:30 hrs.

I. Background

Forests are among the world's most productive land-based ecosystems and are essential to life on earth¹. They provide multiple environmental, economic and social benefits to the society. They have a huge potential to address current global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, land degradation, social inequalities and poverty. The unprecedented ecological and socio-economic crises our society faces, has been compounded by the current COVID-19 pandemic. Forests can substantially contribute to solving the current planetary crisis.

To achieve that, we need forests that are healthy, resilient, productive, and multifunctional. Not only today, but also tomorrow. Sustainable forest management, as a holistic, dynamic and evolving concept, is intended to maintain and enhance the environmental, economic and social functions of forests for benefits of present and future generations. It is a principal tool for balancing the provision of multiple functions of forests to contribute to the three dimensions of sustainable development.

In Europe, the relationship between people and forests has been evolving for centuries. At present, in the situation of rapidly growing societal demands on forests, globalized markets and changing climate (with all its negative impacts), forests are under a bigger pressure than ever and sustainable forest management becomes a more and more challenging task. Under these circumstances, we can see even more evidently the limits in the capacity of forests to respond to and meet all those demands and requirements from society. Balancing various objectives and interests, while considering possible trade-offs, will therefore remain one of the biggest challenges foresters in Europe and the world face.

In this context, it is important to note that the Bratislava Ministerial Declaration, to be endorsed at the Conference, introduces a set of ten 2030 European Targets for forests, as well as the updated vision for European forests.

Moreover, raising awareness of and communication on the important role and multiple benefits of sustainably managed forests for European society at large and for achieving the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a vital task as well.

III. Objective and modalities of the Ministerial Roundtable

The main objective of the Ministerial Roundtable is to provide an opportunity for ministers and heads of delegations to present their views and participate in an interactive discussion on main challenges European forests and the forest-based sector face and on how to address those in the most effective way through policies and concrete actions.

The Ministerial Roundtable will consist of two main elements:

- (1) an interactive panel discussion with a professional moderator and panellists that will be followed by
- (2) ministers' and observers' statements.

¹ United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030

In order to achieve the objective of the roundtable and enhance interactivity between these two elements, ministers / observers as well as panellists are encouraged to follow the guiding questions below when making interventions and statements and, as far as possible, refer to other speakers. **The maximum duration of each statement by ministers and heads of delegations is four minutes for signatories and three minutes for observers**, which will be strictly enforced. The panellists will have the opportunity to share observations and conclusions on the overarching messages at the end.

II. Guiding questions

1. What role do or will forests and sustainable forest management play in your country in achieving the multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? How does your country cope with the limits of forests to meet all societal demands?
2. How to better explain and communicate to society on the role of sustainable forest management, as a key nature-based solution, in addressing current planetary crisis?
3. How to better integrate climate and biodiversity aspects into sustainable forest management? Which concrete actions and measures should be taken to promote the implementation of the updated 2030 European Targets (ET) for forests that specifically relate to climate (ET III, ET V) and biodiversity (ET VI)?