

Draft Bratislava Ministerial Resolution “Improve the adaptation and mitigation capacities of forests towards climate change”

GCC proposal

We, as representatives of the Signatories of FOREST EUROPE, at the 8th Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Bratislava on 28-29 October 2020

1. RECALLING and BUILDING on numerous relevant FOREST EUROPE resolutions, declarations and decisions.
2. RECALLING that the impetus for the first ministerial conference (Strasbourg, 1990) was the need to jointly combat air pollution’s negative effects on forests and STATING that our forests now face similarly grave threats.
3. RECALLING that the climate change is the defining issue of our time and its impacts are global in scope and unprecedented in scale.
4. EXPRESSING concern that urgent actions are necessary to implement the objectives of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change State to maintain and enhance the condition and functions of our forests also for future generations.
5. RECALLING that sustainable management maintains the biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential of forest to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems.
6. EXPRESSING concern that the impact of climate change on forests has the potential to alter tree growth and mortality rates and that these impacts will in turn alter global carbon and methane cycles are most likely to further increase in the coming years.
7. HIGHLIGHTING that the further development of forest-based, renewable resources into innovative bio products (such as biochemical, biomaterials and bioenergy) and long-lived wood products (such as residential and commercial buildings made from wood), as well as the ecosystem services healthy forests provide, can make significant contributions to sustainable development and climate change mitigation; and that the increased use of biomass from sustainably managed forests can be a key component of transition to a low carbon economy.
8. EMPHASIZING that sustainable forest management plays a critical role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as contribute to the implementation of other international commitments including the Paris Agreement, adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity’s Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests.

9. RECALLING the vision for forests in Europe of the Sixth FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference (Oslo, 2011) and SHARING the UN Strategic Plan for Forests' vision of a world in which all types of forests and trees outside forests are sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development and provide economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for present and future generations.
10. EMPHASIZING that these negative effects on forests pose a significant threat to countries' possibilities to achieve Agenda 2030's Sustainable Development Goals and the transformation to a bio economy.
11. NOTING that forest management strategies need to be adapted to climate change and should be based on sound research and development.
12. REAFFIRMING the urgent need to strengthen inter-sectoral and cross-border cooperation on the protection of European forests due to the transboundary nature of threats and to increase research in this field to ensure science-based and well-informed policy decisions.
13. WELCOMING the on-going work on forest protection and risk management carried out by international organizations and processes and invite those actors to cooperate with FOREST EUROPE.

As representatives of the Signatories of FOREST EUROPE, we commit ourselves to:

I. Strengthen our national efforts in order to improve the protection of forests

14. Further increase our work on adaptation of forests and forest management to climate change to prevent and mitigate damage caused by changing conditions at the local and regional scales in order to secure all functions of European forests as well as their resilience to natural hazards and protection against human-induced threats, maintaining their productive and protective functions.
15. Continue to raise public awareness on the vital role of sustainable forest management in protecting forests and increase our efforts in the field of communications.
16. Strengthen our efforts to promote national implementation of pan-European strategies and guidelines for adaptation and appropriate use of forest genetic resources under changing climate conditions and the protection of those resources.
17. Provide adequate resources for research in the field of adaptation of forests and forest management to climate change.
18. Invest in education and training of skilled and experienced forest staff in order to promote sustainable forest management.
19. Reaffirm to accelerate our actions to ensure that the global contribution of forests and forest products to climate change mitigation is maintained and further supported and enhanced by 2050, in order to support the achievement of the long term goal of the Paris Agreement.

II. Improve transnational cooperation in the pan-European region in order to improve the protection of forests

20. Strengthen our efforts to exchange information on lessons learned, experiences and best practices in, inter alia, forest management with a specific focus on preparedness against and prevention of climate change effects.
21. Continue to exchange experiences on restoration and rehabilitation of forests affected or degraded due to the adverse effects of climate change.
22. Further promote interaction between research, policy and forest management practice about forest hazards and thus support international organizations and initiatives active in this field such as inter alia the European Forest Institute.
23. For the above mentioned purposes, work towards a coordinating forest risk knowledge hub / facility at the pan-European level mainly to
 - provide science-based best practice guidance to inform policy makers and forestry practice on how to enhance forest resilience and foster the adaptive capacity in the forest sector in response to increasing forest disturbance risks,
 - support cross border cooperation for disturbance risk management,
 - promote risk prevention and preparedness to improve the ability to cope with future disturbance events,
 - empower personal and institutional expert capacity in disturbance risk management by organizing training workshops and exchanges of experts,
 - engage in public relations and media outreach to keep all actors well informed.
24. Analyse options to establish such a coordinating forest risk knowledge hub / facility taking into account already existing mechanisms and networks at European or sub-regional level with the aim to synergise efforts, add value and avoid duplications. Following aspects should be analysed in that context, among others:
 - possibilities of funding such a hub / facility and the potential role and input of national focal points,
 - verifying if and how already existing mechanism and networks at European or sub-regional level could be taken into account with the aim to synergize efforts, add value and thus strengthen the overall adaptive capacity and response power of the pan-European forest sector.

Relevant Resolutions of FOREST EUROPE/MCPFE

- Strasbourg Resolution 1, "European Network of Permanent Sample Plots for Monitoring of Forest Ecosystems", Strasbourg Resolution 2 "Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources", Strasbourg Resolution 3 "Decentralized European Data Bank on Forest Fires" Strasbourg Resolution 4 "Adapting the Management of Mountain Forests to New Environmental Conditions",
- Helsinki Resolution 1 "General Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Forests in Europe", Helsinki Resolution 4 "Strategies for a Process of Long Term Adaptation of Forests in Europe to Climate Change",
- Vienna Resolution 4 "Conserving and Enhancing Forest Biological Diversity in Europe", Vienna Resolution 5 "Climate Change and Sustainable Forest Management in Europe",
- Warsaw Declaration, Warsaw Resolution 2 "Forests and Water"
- Oslo Ministerial Decision "European Forest 2020"
- Madrid Resolution 2 Protection of Forest in Changing Environment and Madrid Ministerial Declaration "25 years together promoting Sustainable Forest Management in Europe"