

Ministerial Decision on Resuming the Negotiations on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe

Adopted by the FOREST EUROPE Expert Level Meeting in Bratislava on 6 December 2018 for consideration by the ministers responsible for forests of FOREST EUROPE signatories through a written procedure in 2019.

RECALLING the Oslo Ministerial Mandate for Negotiating a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe, June 2011, establishing the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe (INC),

ACKNOWLEDGING the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in 2012 and 2013 and taking note of the outcome as contained in the report of the fourth resumed and final session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee as presented at the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference in Madrid in 2015,

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Madrid Ministerial Decision from 21 October 2015 to explore possible ways to find common ground on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe at the latest by 2020,

NOTING the results of the Round Table Meeting on a legally binding agreement on forest in Europe in Bratislava on 19-20 September 2018.

As representatives of the signatories of FOREST EUROPE, we:

1. ARE READY to resume the negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.
2. AGREE that further negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe take place and be finalized under the auspices of the UN system.
3. RECOGNIZE that the Draft Negotiating Text for a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe (DNT) shall serve as the basis for further negotiations, and UNDERSCORE that the aim of the negotiations should be to reach agreement on paragraphs of the DNT not agreed *ad ref* while considering that DNT paragraphs agreed *ad ref* shall not be re-opened, unless needed to reflect recent policy developments, such as the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests, and their corresponding terminology.
4. DECIDE that all countries and the European Union listed in the Annex 1 of this decision, based on the Annex 2 of the Oslo mandate are entitled to participate as full parties in the negotiating process and the ultimate legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.
5. NOTE that observers of the FOREST EUROPE process should be invited to participate as observers in the negotiations.
6. EMPHASIZE that the negotiations are to be conducted with due urgency and in a time and cost-efficient manner with a view to their successful conclusion as early as possible.
7. ACKNOWLEDGE that the funding of the negotiation process will have to be provided from extra-budgetary resources.
8. CALL UPON negotiating partners to provide voluntary financial contributions for enabling a successful negotiating process.
9. INVITE the UNECE, with the support of FAO, to convene and service jointly further negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe by setting up a negotiating process in an appropriate format based on the parameters contained in this decision.
10. INVITE the Minister of the Slovak Republic to send this decision on behalf of FOREST EUROPE signatories to UNECE and FAO to facilitate further negotiations of a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.
11. INVITE the UNECE and FAO to act on this decision with due urgency.

ANNEX 1 of the Ministerial Decision on Resuming the Negotiations on a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe

1. Albania
2. Andorra
3. Armenia
4. Austria
5. Azerbaijan
6. Belarus
7. Belgium
8. Bosnia and Herzegovina
9. Bulgaria
10. Croatia
11. Cyprus
12. Czech Republic
13. Denmark
14. Estonia
15. European Union
16. Finland
17. France
18. Georgia
19. Germany
20. Greece
21. Holy See
22. Hungary
23. Iceland
24. Ireland
25. Italy
26. Kazakhstan
27. Kyrgyzstan
28. Latvia
29. Liechtenstein
30. Lithuania
31. Luxembourg
32. Malta
33. Monaco
34. Montenegro
35. Netherlands
36. Norway
37. Poland
38. Portugal
39. Republic of Moldova
40. Romania
41. Russian Federation
42. Serbia
43. Slovak Republic
44. Slovenia
45. Spain
46. Sweden
47. Switzerland
48. Tajikistan
49. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
50. Turkey
51. Turkmenistan
52. Ukraine
53. United Kingdom
54. Uzbekistan