Forest Europe
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Stockholm Ministerial Declaration

FOREST EUROPE – Sustainable Forests for Resilient Societies

Adopted by the Expert Level Meeting on 25 March 2026, for consideration and signature by the Ministers at the Tenth FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference

We, the representatives of the Signatories of FOREST EUROPE, at the Tenth Ministerial Conference of FOREST EUROPE, held in Stockholm on 2–3 June 2026,

THE FUTURE OF FOREST EUROPE

1. RECOGNISING the rapidly evolving environmental, economic, social and geopolitical challenges affecting pan-European forests, and REAFFIRMING our shared responsibility to ensure that resilient forests and sustainable forest management (SFM) continue to provide multiple benefits and vital ecosystem services for present and future generations.

2. EMPHASISING the role of FOREST EUROPE as the voluntary high-level political process for dialogue, cross-sectoral and transboundary cooperation on forests and forestry in Europe, which strengthens international collaboration. ACKNOWLEDGING the leading role of FOREST EUROPE in defining SFM, with an outstanding role in promoting and advancing this dynamic concept in the pan-European region.

3. REAFFIRMING that SFM, as defined by FOREST EUROPE in Helsinki Resolution 1[1], remains a central and guiding principle of the FOREST EUROPE process, HIGHLIGHTING the process as a unique pan-European, intergovernmental platform for further developing SFM, including the Criteria and Indicators (C&I) and the State of Europe's Forests (SoEF) report, as the basis for informed, evidence-based policymaking.

4. RECALLING the FOREST EUROPE resolutions, declarations and decisions, particularly the Vision for European Forests 2030[2] and the Bonn Ministerial Declaration[3] and Decision[4] of 2024.

5. REAFFIRMING the importance of keeping FOREST EUROPE fit for the future through continuous evaluation of the priorities most relevant to Signatories with reference to the evolving science and evidence base that underpins SFM. SUPPORTING inclusive dialogue to address emerging forest-related policy issues promptly, effectively and based on science. RECOGNISING the need for continuing the dialogue with Observers contributing to education, capacity-building and public awareness.

6. RECOGNISING that while the rotation of the Lead Country in FOREST EUROPE brings opportunities for new insights and approaches, there is a need to maintain continuity and institutional knowledge to ensure consistency and efficiency. STRESSING the need for stable and predictable funding to ensure the effective functioning of the FOREST EUROPE process. RECOGNISING the importance of broad and regular contributions from Signatories and other sources to ensure the long-term functioning of the FOREST EUROPE process and the delivery of its core work programme.

1 H1 Helsinki Resolution, the Second Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, Helsinki, Finland, June 1993
2 Bratislava Ministerial Declaration, 2021
3 Bonn Ministerial Declaration, "FOREST EUROPE – Keeping the concept of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) fit for the future"
4 Bonn Ministerial Decision, "Sustainable Forests Management as a tool to enhance forest resilience"

STRENGTHENED SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

7. STRESSING the importance of further developing common strategies to strengthen and advance SFM in the pan-European region, taking into account relevant international commitments including but not limited to the three Rio Conventions, the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and its Global Forest Goals and the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, based on the best available scientific evidence and the continuously evolving environmental, economic, social, and political context in which forest management is practised.

8. ACKNOWLEDGING the wide range of ecosystem services provided by forests, UNDERLINING the essential and cross-cutting role of sustainably managed and multifunctional forests for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity, supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation, contributing to rural development and local economies, ensuring a sustainable supply of forest products, improving human well-being, their role in addressing current and future environmental, economic and social challenges, while contributing to the effective implementation of international commitments on sustainable development.

9. EXPRESSING CONCERN that forests in the pan-European region are increasingly impacted by climate change and extreme weather events, outbreaks of pests, diseases and invasive species as well as forest fires. STRESSING the need for adaptive, sustainable forest management to safeguard forest health, resilience and productivity and the provision of ecosystem services including carbon sequestration and supply of renewable materials. HIGHLIGHTING in this regard the importance of high-quality and the most suitable forest reproductive material, forest tree breeding and assisted migration, in addition to natural regeneration, as appropriate. EMPHASISING the need to adapt to climate change in order to contribute to a sustainable and climate-neutral economy while ensuring vital, resilient and diverse forests.

10. ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of the sustainable and circular forest-based bioeconomy for replacing fossil-based resources and contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and RECOGNISING the economic opportunities this creates in providing renewable bio-based resources as well as increased security and resilience for society as a whole. NOTING the ongoing need for innovative approaches and new technologies in the forest-based sector while ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of integrated approaches in SFM to balance the environmental, social and economic forest functions.

IMPLEMENTATION AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

11. ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of the joint pan-European data collection effort as a collaboration between UNECE, FAO and FOREST EUROPE, supported by National Correspondents and the UNECE Team of Specialists on Monitoring SFM. RECOGNISING the role of national forest inventories, FAO and UNECE as key international data providers and the value of their jointly developed online platform for efficient data collection and dissemination.

12. REAFFIRMING the crucial role of forest owners and managers in implementing SFM, SUPPORTING inclusive policies and incentives that enable them to contribute to biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, rural development, green job creation, economic development, while enabling the supply of sustainable forest services, wood and non-wood forest products.

13. RECOGNISING that the practical implementation of SFM on the ground is supported by the coherent combination of legislation, technical guidelines, voluntary certification schemes and other initiatives.

14. STRESSING that a skilled workforce is essential for the implementation of SFM, EMPHASISING the value of promoting standardised and internationally recognised qualifications and training systems within the forest sector and RECOGNISING the role of the forest sector in creating green jobs, especially those that attract and keep young generations in rural areas.

15. WELCOMING the progress achieved through EUFORGEN and FoRISK as important tools for enhancing forest adaptation and resilience through knowledge exchange and as long-term and complementary initiatives with EUFORGEN advancing the conservation, characterisation, sustainable use and monitoring of forest genetic resources in Europe, and with FoRISK serving as an innovative tool related to disaster risk management. In this regard WELCOMING the enhancement of the European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources (EUFGIS) managed by EUFORGEN.

COLLABORATION, POLICY COHERENCE AND SOLIDARITY

16. UNDERLINING the importance of FOREST EUROPE in providing policy guidance for cooperation and coherence. HIGHLIGHTING the importance of ongoing cooperation with international forest-related processes and institutions to share experiences and strengthen coherence and synergies, including with the UNFF, UNECE, FAO, the Montreal Process, as well as other relevant regional and global actors and processes, while using existing cooperative structures, inter alia, the European Forest Alliance, without duplicating efforts.

17. ACKNOWLEDGING that forests, forestry and their related value chains, as well as associated infrastructure, are strategic assets for societal resilience in the pan-European region, with regard to geopolitical threats, and HIGHLIGHTING their essential role in strategic crisis preparedness, response systems, and the security of resource availability.

18. REITERATING the Ministerial Decision from August 2022 to support Ukraine during and after the war in building back better its forest sector, along with the necessary reforms after the war-related breakdown to conserve, restore, and sustainably manage its forests and BEING CONCERNED about significant negative impacts of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine on the environment and natural resources in Ukraine, resulting in long-term consequences in the recovery process of the forests and forest sector.

commit ourselves to:

1. continue to promote and implement the dynamic concept of SFM as a holistic and integrative framework for forest strategies, plans and programmes, adaptable to emerging challenges and societal demands across the pan-European region, ensuring the resilience of forests and societies for the future.

2. develop a roadmap, building on past and ongoing work, to ensure the regular and evidence-based review of the C&I for SFM and present, as appropriate, modification proposals, in order to strengthen their relevance, comparability, and high quality, including improved reporting and adaptation to evolving policy priorities and societal demands.

3. keep FOREST EUROPE fit for the future by exploring different ways of strengthening governance, continuity, institutional memory, and operational capacity to ensure its continued leadership.

4. support the financial sustainability of FOREST EUROPE, as referenced in the annex containing the “Framework of the new voluntary funding model” recognising that this voluntary support ensures the future of the process and the delivery of a core work programme, including key outputs such as the SoEF report and the ongoing development of the C&I for SFM, while appreciating past support. We further endeavour to contribute in-kind to specific activities outlined in the work programme, in accordance with our national circumstances.

5. contribute to improving the accessibility, relevance, and long-term impact of the SoEF report. In this respect, further explore possibilities to engage with UNECE, FAO and other relevant organisations and processes with the aim of securing the long-term collection, validation, and availability of data.

6. promote Green Forest Jobs and strengthen forest education as well as research and innovation as key enablers of a transition towards a sustainable and circular forest-based bioeconomy, ensuring a skilled workforce and inclusive economic opportunities across forest-related sectors.

7. strengthen the resilience of forests and the forest sector in the pan-European region. In this regard, support the conservation of forest genetic resources in the pan-European region by contributing to the work of EUFORGEN on the characterisation of forest genetic resources in EUFGIS as well as by further developing the work of FoRISK, that promotes transboundary cooperation and cross-sectoral disaster risk management within the framework of SFM.

8. work on strengthening knowledge exchange and cooperation on the forests' and the forest-based sector's role in crisis preparedness in the pan-European region, with regard to geopolitical threats.

9. strengthen the recovery and sustainable management of Ukrainian forests and the rebuilding of its forest sector during and after the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, including through coordinated actions and long-term bilateral and multilateral cooperation and support, as appropriate and possible. Explore the possibilities of contributing to a Ukraine-led "Forest Friends for Ukraine" working group to help develop and coordinate such actions in cooperation with relevant organisations and initiatives, building on past and ongoing efforts, in particular the FAO Forestry Support Strategy for Ukraine 2023-2027 and invite Observers and partners to join.

Annex to the Stockholm Ministerial Declaration

Background

The Bonn Ministerial Declaration in 2024 decoupled membership of the GCC from a mandatory financial commitment to the FOREST EUROPE process. Signatories and Observers were instead invited to contribute if in the position to do so.

The funding of FOREST EUROPE is thus now entirely dependent on voluntary financial and in-kind contributions. This system poses several challenges to long-term stability, predictability, and fairness. The FOREST EUROPE process and core Work Programme have fixed costs. If the funding is insufficient, the core Work Programme cannot be properly planned or implemented.

So far, this new funding model has resulted in unpredictable financial contributions (many coming at the end of 2025) meaning that there are several challenges to planning and budgeting, and the long-term financial stability of the FOREST EUROPE process. Financial support, while voluntary, requires a collective political will to share the burden in order to avoid unduly high costs for a small number of Signatories.

Framework of the new voluntary funding model

The new model supports the FOREST EUROPE process requirement for stable and predictable voluntary funding from Signatories and other sources, to provide long-term financial stability. It emphasises the collective responsibility of the Signatories while aiming to provide flexibility and ensure transparency.

The voluntary nature of the funding of FOREST EUROPE is maintained with a ministerial commitment by the Signatories to support the financial sustainability of the process. Committing to secure funding signifies political will, not a legal obligation.

Predefined levels, or tiers, are established for the voluntary contributions. 'Standard Tier' contribution, covering the essential operating costs of FOREST EUROPE, including its core Work Programme, are expected from all Signatories, except for countries with economies in transition[5]. Higher level 'Strategic' tier contributions, or ad hoc financial or in-kind contributions, may be made at any time to support the implementation of the Work Programme and support additional activities.

The baseline used for calculation of the tiers should be a realistic and sustainable estimate of the resources required to operate the process effectively. This funding model assumes that the Ministerial Conference and the staff at the Liaison Unit (rotating with the Lead Country) are financed by the Lead Country.

At the beginning of its term, the Lead Country shall propose indicative amounts for the Standard and Strategic tiers, to be reviewed and approved by ELM, and invite the Signatories to provide their annual voluntary contributions. The Standard tier would be the expected minimum contribution. In this way, all Signatories share equally in covering essential operating costs of FOREST EUROPE. Where Signatories face temporary or exceptional budgetary constraints that make it difficult to provide the Standard tier contribution, they may contact the Lead Country to explore another suitable solution.

All Signatories still participate on the same level in the process, regardless of their level of contribution, i.e. the right of all Signatories to sign FOREST EUROPE's Ministerial Documents and participate in the decision-making process at all levels (MC, ELM) remains.

The new funding model should be a long-term solution spanning several Chairmanship terms. The contributions should, as is currently the case and as decided at the Ministerial Conference in Bonn, be placed in a Multi-Donor Trust Fund. This ensures that the contributions received in one year can be used the following years, notwithstanding changes in chairmanship, and surpluses remaining in the Trust Fund.

5 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, (Belarus), Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine.